

The Power of Convening:

Building a Learning Community
and Fostering a Network
in the Building Bridges Initiative



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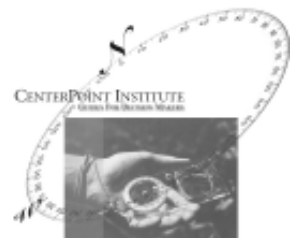
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Front cover photo: Students from the Boomerang Program of the University of Quilmes, near Buenos Aires Argentina, in August, 1999.
Photo Credit: Kathryn Heidrich, Ph.D.

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Preface

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation initiative, *Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education*, 1997-2002, held four networking meetings designed to build a learning community among the members of the project teams. This paper describes the major lessons learned from these meetings. A glossary of terms appears in Appendix A.

The Power to Convene

Convening people in networking meetings fosters innovation. The meeting dynamic may be compared to mixing compounds in a chemistry experiment: the meeting may be a catalyst for change – maybe even explosive change. While networking meetings are a commonly used tool in foundation work, they are not often intentionally studied. Networking meetings in the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's (WKKF) Building Bridges Initiative, however, were used purposefully to create a learning community among the initiative's participants and were studied throughout the five-year initiative (Camino & Heidrich, 2000; Camino & Zeldin, 1998; Camino and Zeldin, 2000; Camino and Zeldin, 2001; Larson, Frank, & Fahrback, 2002; Martinez, 2002).

WKKF's experience with the Building Bridges Initiative Learning Community Meetings contributes to institutional learning and should inform the design of future networking meetings. This paper considers the following questions:

- What interventions transformed the Building Bridges Initiative networking meetings into vehicles for creating a learning community?
- How can an external change agent (WKKF/CenterPoint) create a learning community among a group of grantees?
- What are the outcomes when this level of activity is supported?

The first two sections of this paper provide information important for readers not familiar with the Building Bridges Initiative. First, we discuss the roots of the Building Bridges Initiative, including the concepts and purpose that guided its development. Next is an overview of the initiative: its scope and infrastructure. With this background, the remainder of the paper focuses on the transformation of the initiative's networking meetings into Learning Community Meetings.

The Roots of the Building Bridges Initiative: Background and Context

Conceptualization of a New Higher Education Initiative in Nonprofit Management and Leadership

Beginning mid-year in 1995 and continuing through the summer of 1996, the WKKF Philanthropy and Volunteerism [P&V] program area conducted a series of inquiries that led the Foundation to conceptualize a new higher education initiative in nonprofit management. Over 90 individuals participated in this effort. The work was led by Dr. Robert F. Long, Program Director at WKKF, and Dr. Katheryn Heidrich, President at CenterPoint Institute (Heidrich, 1995; 1995; 1996). Among others, findings indicated:

- **Universities need to provide more relevant programs.** Nonprofit professionals indicated that they prefer to take courses based on the real-world experience of

The [networking meetings] are more valuable than they are given credit for. Getting practitioners and academics together in the same room talking to each other is not easy to do. There is tremendous learning from having candid conversations in the Learning Community Meetings...

I place high value on meeting people who know things I don't know – I've got this from Learning Community Meetings. Making connections with people we wouldn't have otherwise [made connections with].

I've learned a tremendous amount from the Learning Community Meetings. I have been able to call people in the Bridges Initiative. An instantaneous network. REALLY valuable.

(From Camino and Heidrich, 2000, *Voices of Wisdom: Knowledge and experiences from practitioner-academic teams in the Building Bridges Initiative*, hereafter abbreviated *Voices of Wisdom*).

practitioners, and that academic programs should contain both theoretical and practical components.

- **Cultural differences exist between practitioners and academics.** For example, practitioners questioned the utility of the academic style of knowing, suggesting it is out of date in the rapidly changing nonprofit context. Academic respondents said the slow pace of academic institutions presents many barriers to change and curricular innovation. They also suggested that practitioners should place greater value on theory and research.
- **Knowledge in academe and professional practice can be discrete.** Respondents emphasized that knowledge, in the form of theory and research developed in nonprofit academic centers, often seems disconnected from practical application, and findings are not well disseminated to practice. On the other hand, knowledge developed through trial and error in nonprofit organizations often is not connected to theory or research findings.

New Initiative — Purpose

Based on the findings of the inquiries described above and Kellogg's mission-driven interest in the practical application of knowledge, in 1997 WKKF launched a new initiative named *Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education*. The initiative intended to help bridge the gap between academic study of nonprofit management and actual practice in organizations. Its purpose was to:

...help develop more comprehensive educational programs that respond to the wide range of management and leadership needs of Third Sector leaders...[and to] support efforts that create active two-way partnerships to improve practice and build knowledge for nonprofit management into the future (WKKF Program Initiative Overview, 1997).

Overview of the Building Bridges Initiative

Scope

At the beginning of the initiative, WKKF made grants to 18 U.S. institutions of higher education and other educational collaborations or organizations. Twelve of these were new grants; six were existing grants that received supplemental funds to join the initiative and participate in networking meetings, called Learning Community Meetings. Eight months later, two more grants were made, bringing the total to 20 U.S. grantees. Within a year, eight educational programs in Latin American countries were added to the initiative, resulting in a unique cross-regional program. Later, one U.S. project withdrew from the initiative, leaving 27 projects in the initiative.

Initiative Infrastructure

Leadership Team — Rationale and Composition

An initiative stretching over five years, composed of approximately 90 individuals organized in 27 teams, from eight programs in Latin American countries and from 19 programs across the United States, required coordination of leadership, management, evaluation, and communication functions. The Initiative Leadership Team, assembled by Dr. Robert Long, Program Director in the P&V program area, fulfilled these purposes.

The team included WKKF staff and members of two intermediary organizations. WKKF staff participants were from the Philanthropy and Volunteerism program area, and the Meeting Services, and Communication units. CenterPoint Institute staff provided management support and communication services to the team and the initiative. Applied Research evaluated the initiative. The Initiative Team worked collegially in a “loose-tight” configuration that afforded members the freedom to carry out their specific responsibilities, while also cooperating to support and enhance each other’s efforts.

Project Teams – Rationale and Composition

In 1997 when the Bridges Initiative was launched, a core goal was to create active two-way partnerships between the practicing nonprofits and higher education. To achieve these partnerships on the local level, the Foundation required grantees to identify and construct a project leadership team including both academics and practitioners. Project teams were conceptualized as a way to encourage the two-way flow of learning and teaching about nonprofit management and leadership within projects. It was expected that the practitioner perspective would help academic programs become more responsive to the concerns of practice. At the same time, it was expected that the academic perspective would help nonprofit managers make connections to theory and research.

Networking Meetings – Rationale and Purpose

On an *initiative* level, there was also a need for practitioners and academics to come together on a routine basis. WKKF experience across all program areas has shown that grant projects are informed and enriched by opportunities for participants to talk with others engaged in similar work. Relationships are built and strengthened, solutions to problems are shared, successes celebrated, ideas generated, and the old adage that “one plus one equals three” holds true.

Schon (1987) has written on the need for university-based professional programs, such as counseling, social work, and architecture, to emphasize what he terms a “reflective practicum” — a space for faculty, students, and practitioners to reflect, dialogue, and learn together. It is a space that connects practitioners’ experience to academic theory and research.

One of the purposes of the annual networking meetings of the Building Bridges Initiative was to serve as a reflective practicum. There are few spaces and opportunities for faculty and practitioners to come together on a sustained basis. The networking meetings were more than places for people to network; they were conceptualized as a place to create a *learning community*. The core concept of learning community made the annual networking meetings places for everyone who had a stake in the success of the Bridges Initiative to *learn*. The Learning Community Meetings became places where team members could build networks, share information, question and challenge one another, problem solve, and attempt to apply new knowledge.

The relationships built at the meetings were expected to strengthen both the individual projects and the initiative as a whole. Working in isolation, most projects would probably achieve, to some degree, the goals outlined in their proposals. Working together in a learning community, most projects would probably exceed their initial goals. New curricular models would be shared, strategic alliances could form, projects might collaborate on an educational product, and knowledge would be transmitted beyond the limits of a single project site.

Learning Community Meetings

Overview

Four times during the five-year initiative, key leadership teams representing the 27 Building Bridges projects assembled for Learning Community Meetings. The meetings were planned and implemented by CenterPoint Institute. The dates and places of the four meetings were:

- January 18-21, 1998, Houston, Texas.
- September 23-26, 1998, Battle Creek, Michigan.
- October 3-7, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- October 18-21, 2000, Washington, D.C.

The purposes of the meetings were to 1) promote communication among projects, 2) provide learning opportunities for participants, and 3) increase participants' leadership capacity by increasing their understanding of the Third Sector and its relationship to higher education.

The design of the meetings evolved over the course of the initiative. During the first meeting, the Leadership Team learned lessons, based on participant feedback, which influenced the design of the other three meetings.

The First Learning Community Meeting and Turning Points

Evaluation of the first Learning Community Meeting in Houston indicated that participants desired a voice in planning future meetings. Participants wanted more time to learn from one another. Responding to evaluations, CenterPoint re-considered the projected design for upcoming meetings. One of the most important changes was to constitute an advisory panel for each of the subsequent meetings. These advisory panels, composed of a subset of participants, helped plan each meeting. Advisory panel membership was carefully constructed to represent different constituencies, perspectives, and geographic locale.

CenterPoint also drafted values, in addition to goals, to guide the planning and structuring of the meetings: 1) listen and respond to the participants' voices in Learning Community program development, 2) engage participants as leaders, 3) employ a variety of methods to include different learning and interaction styles, 4) encourage participants to value diversity of perspectives and viewpoints, and 5) construct activities that would promote the development of relationships built on common interests and shared experiences.

Subsequent Learning Community Meetings and This Paper

The remainder of this paper highlights the primary functions of learning communities, the ways in which those functions were stimulated and formed through the years of the Building Bridges Initiative, the particularly effective methods used throughout the series of meetings held in Houston, Battle Creek, Buenos Aires, and Washington, D.C., and the outcomes achieved. For a complete listing of methods used at all the Learning Community Meetings, see Appendix B.

Rather than chronicling each Learning Community Meeting, this paper reports data through a grounded framework, based on themes in current literature as well as what occurred in the meetings. The framework is: (1) building relationships, (2) sharing information, (3) engaging in participatory learning, and (4) identifying and addressing issues of power. For more detailed information about the Learning Community Meetings held in Battle Creek, Buenos Aires, and Washington, D.C., see Camino and Zeldin (1999;

2000; 2001). In order to capture and analyze meeting processes and outcomes, Camino and Zeldin used rapid appraisal procedures (RAPs). These procedures included participant observation, interviews with participants, and document review. Documents included fact sheets, program materials, workshop handouts, flip chart notes, and reflection and action plans drafted by project teams.

Other sources of data for this monograph include literature on adult learning and learning communities, several studies conducted about the initiative, and the authors' personal involvement with planning and implementing the Learning Community Meetings.

Building Relationships

No network or learning community can be created without first building relationships. Building relationships involves attention to three levels: individual, organizational, and professional (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Preskill & Torres, 1999; Senge, 1990). All are important, but the individual/personal level often receives the least amount of attention. Yet, knowing one another personally makes it easier for people to interact professionally. People begin to let their guard down. Personal connections build trust, a fundamental underpinning of networks and collaborations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), and provide the foundation for difficult problem-solving tasks (Brookfield, 1987; Wolff, 2001). Building relationships strong enough to accomplish these tasks requires adequate time and attention (Ostrom, 1990; Senge, 1990).

Over the life of the initiative, between 78 and 110 individuals attended the Learning Community Meetings. At the outset, the types of relationships and the extent of acquaintances and relationships varied. Many of the academic members of Bridges were, to some degree, previously acquainted with one other. In academe, it is common for faculty to publish articles in journals read by peers, and to attend the same annual conferences, where there are many networking opportunities. Moreover, many of the faculty involved in the Bridges Initiative were developing nonprofit management education programs prior to the Bridges Initiative. In contrast, practitioners in the initiative were less likely to be acquainted with one another, even by virtue of reputation. They came from a variety of organizations in different fields. Few had published widely, and few attended the same annual conferences. In addition, practitioners generally were not acquainted with academics beyond those on their own project teams.

Methods that Fostered Relationship Building

Given participants' limited knowledge of one another, CenterPoint created a photo gallery early in the initiative to facilitate participants' rapid and early identification of project teams' composition. Professional portrait-quality photographs were taken of the entire range of people affiliated with Bridges: project team members, initiative leadership team members, cluster evaluation team members, and intermediary support team members. These photographs were mounted on large display panels that were set up during each Learning Community Meeting. The photographs were also posted on the initiative website. As new team members came into the initiative, their photographs were added to the displays. Participants often strolled through the photo gallery at the meetings. Participants frequently noted that the gallery was invaluable in helping them to attach names to faces, and to map individuals to various teams.

A second method to stimulate relationship building was to hold group dinners, where participants could choose their seats and interact freely with different people. The intent of the dinners was to enable individuals to form, renew, and deepen their connections in a relaxed atmosphere. For example, at the second Learning Community Meeting, held in Battle Creek, a casual dinner was convened at W.K. Kellogg's summer home. In Buenos Aires, the site of the third meeting, a dinner was held at a restaurant where dinner was

The broadening of my network [around nonprofit management] has been astounding.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000. *Voices of Wisdom*).

The learning community provided the opportunity to really get to know some of these other folks more deeply, which leads to more opportunity. I certainly feel we're more a part of a network of academics and not just out there on our own.

(Martinez, 2002.

Feedback to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation on its roles in the Building Bridges Initiative).

followed by a tango show, forming a backdrop of local cuisine and culture for continued relationship building. At the final dinner in Washington D.C., the menu included Argentine beef and wine, to pay homage to the impact of the Buenos Aires meeting and to foster reflection and story telling.

During these meals we observed a great deal of interaction among individuals from different project teams. Many individuals switched tables during the course of dinner to engage in conversations, which included professionally oriented topics, as well as humorous bantering. With each successive Learning Community Meeting, the level of camaraderie appeared to increase. By the fourth meeting, it was clear that a true community had developed, and the dinner group behaved as though classifications and boundaries had vanished.

A third method to encourage relationship building was a mini-grant program, developed to bolster interaction across projects. At the end of the second Learning Community Meeting in Battle Creek, the Initiative Team concluded that, even though the Bridges projects shared a unifying purpose, there were clearly sub-groups within the overall community. CenterPoint developed a method for fostering connections within clusters of projects – the plan was called *connecting strategies*. The idea was to link small groups of projects with common interests, and support their connection through mini grants. Between 1998 and 2000, every team in the initiative had at least one member participate in a connecting strategy, and some teams had every member participating. Connecting strategy meeting topics included, “Practitioners’ Workshop: Connecting Communities, Practitioners and Programs,” “Nonprofit Management Education: An Exploration into Multi-Faceted Approaches to Curricula, Student Markets, and Delivery Systems,” and “Faith-Based Connecting Strategies.”

The success of the connecting strategies in building relationships led to a second round of mini-grants late in the initiative. These grants supported an effort to *build ON bridges* – extending the opportunities for grantees to develop additional connections. Topics included, for example, “Bridging Academic/Practitioner Gaps in Nonprofit Management Education: Exploring Solutions to Reduce Barriers to Effective Partnerships,” “Nonprofit Collaboration among Academic Programs,” and “Crossing the Bridge to New Communities: Developing a Portable Model for Strengthening Leadership in Culturally Diverse Nonprofit Organizations.”

Relationship Building — Outcomes

In observing Learning Community Meetings over the life of the initiative, Camino and Zeldin (1998; 1999; 2000) consistently noted that, on the whole, both the extent and quality of relationships increased. During the initiative, several other studies were conducted that included relationship building as an area of inquiry. Larson, Frank, and Fahrback (2002) examined the formation of communication networks within the initiative from 1998-2000. They found:

- The general density of interactions among all individuals in the initiative nearly tripled from the first Learning Community Meeting to the last.
- Prior to the official launching of the initiative, 12 of the 20 U.S. grantee sites already had a link in place with at least one other grantee site. By October 1999, a network had formed where all U.S. sites were connected to at least one other.

Two other studies found consensus among participants regarding the value of the Learning Community Meetings in fostering relationship building (Camino & Heidrich, 2000; Martinez, 2002).

- In these two studies, people commented on the “outstanding quality of the relationships,” the “wonderful connections,” the “exposure to many talented people,” and the “opportunity to get to know...other folks more deeply which leads to more opportunity.”

- Participants also reported that the relationships led to tangible benefits. For example, one participant stated, “We hosted a Connecting Strategy [meeting], and I serve on several advisory boards as a result” (Martinez, 2002). Another stated, “The quality of the people is outstanding. The benefits [of attending the Learning Community Meetings] have far outweighed the costs. We have made some wonderful connections due to the Building Bridges Initiative that will outlast the BBI” (Camino & Heidrich, 2000).

The LCMs keep me on top of the important issues that projects face. The project updates bring us together around certain themes.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom).

Sharing Information

Sharing information is crucial to creating and maintaining a community, and is a vital component of learning processes. However, sharing information is not always easy, especially when attempting to share information across organizational and disciplinary boundaries. Challenges include different reward systems, different incentives, different vocabularies, and competition (Preskill & Torres 1999, p. 170-171). Additionally, academics and practitioners do not usually have access to the same sources of information. Even if they do, each realm has its preferred sources, which typically remain discrete.

I think we've all learned about the other programs, which contributes to us having a broader array of knowledge. That type of awareness and knowledge will help us build the nonprofit management education field.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom).

There are several specific functions of information sharing. First, information sharing can result in a shared vision. A shared vision is critical to success in bringing people together to create a new field, such as nonprofit management education. People will be more likely to share a vision if they feel that it is authentic, and is drawn from the diverse projects and people that they represent.

Second, information sharing helps create new images of possibilities. Senge (1990) asserts that innovation cannot occur by thinking or doing the same things repetitively, and unquestioningly. Accordingly, new images need to replace old ones, a process facilitated by sharing information, lessons, stories, and experiences.

Third, information sharing helps consolidate networks of people. Information is a primary commodity that flows through the networks, and it is something that people reciprocally trade (Amherst Wilder Foundation, 1997). Information sharing thus helps people become resources to one another. As people develop insight about what talents and assets others bring, they can uncover new ideas about how to design new approaches, products, and services.

Methods that Fostered Information Sharing at Learning Community Meetings

In the Bridges Learning Community Meetings, project update sessions were popular for sharing information across the 27 projects. In advance of each meeting, project teams prepared short briefs about their projects' progress. These briefs were collected, bound, and distributed to participants prior to the meeting. At each meeting, teams presented the updated information and fielded questions from audience members.

Project update sessions always generated lively dialogue. Participants discussed each project's progress, as well as challenges and solutions to problems. In effect, participants served as consultants to one another. Addressing difficulties, audience members often offered suggestions for responsive action.

Project updates also contributed to project teams sparking connections with one another and engaging in collective action outside of the meetings. For example, after a project update session at one of the meetings, one team recruited a member of another team to serve on its board.

Another method for sharing information was to map the collective accomplishments of the initiative in an activity called *So What Happened?* At the final Learning Community Meeting in Washington, D.C., participants created a picture of their collective output in order to share information across all projects. Each team listed their accomplishments according to established categories, including activities related to diversity, curricula, partnerships, applied research, instructional delivery modes (e.g., seminars, workshops, and/or conferences), student scholarships and recruitment, technical assistance, and technology to increase access to educational programs.

This mapping of accomplishments allowed all Bridges team members to see their achievements aggregated, and provided the opportunity to reflect on and discuss them. As participants told of their own team's achievements and listened to those of other teams, a tone of excitement and pride prevailed in the room.

A third successful method for sharing information which took place at the final meeting in Washington, D.C. was a public showcase, where teams displayed and presented information about their projects to an invited audience of nonprofit sector practitioners from outside the Bridges initiative. The displays used various media to tell the projects' stories including information briefs, brochures, fact sheets, video tapes, reports, and photographs.

A sample of individuals who attended the showcase had positive reactions (Camino, 2001). For example, two attendees described their experience as:

I was delighted to be on the [guest] list. The project profile booklet was a good overview, and I could talk to the people [project teams]. I liked that.

Generally, the meeting was well done. It was a great introduction to the projects, and to the Kellogg Initiative.

Sharing Information — Outcomes

The outcomes of sharing information are evident in participant comments collected from Learning Community Meeting evaluations, list server messages, the Voices of Wisdom study, and the Feedback study. The following quotations are representative examples. They are organized (as much as possible given the overlapping nature of the quotes) to demonstrate the specific functions of information sharing: shared vision, new images of possibilities, and consolidated networks.

Shared vision

If we would all go back and read the Invitation for Proposals that brought all of us in to the Bridges Initiative, that is what the initiative was all about – diminishing the distance between learning and practice in that part of higher education dedicated to nonprofit management and general third sector studies. I think we have done that, and I believe that through the network of friends, associates, and contacts we have established, we will continue to improve on those successes to date. For the good of not only the sector but for all of society, we must do exactly that.

This was a unique initiative. The goodwill created among grantees is something the Foundation should be proud of. As an individual, I felt I learned so much; had I not been part of the initiative or had it not been crafted the way it was, I would not have had the opportunity to develop the unique perspective or relationships that resulted... I can't begin to imagine what we would be doing or looking like now without the relationship we've had with the Kellogg Foundation; it changed the face of (our organization). I can't imagine another project having been so transformed.

New Images of Possibilities

We now have very well established and ongoing relationships with both individual people in the profession and, more important, with actual institutions like our own all over the country; really all over the hemisphere. Because of the initiative... (new) opportunities presented themselves and would not have (existed) otherwise.

As I reflect on the work that we do with our students, our efforts to create learning communities in our classrooms, at some point we hope that they will carry on and continue to work as collaborators and learners. There is no reason that because WKKF and CenterPoint are not assembling us – as they do so very well – that we cannot, as professionals with a mission to create and sustain bridges between practice and knowledge, continue this mission outside the venue of the Learning Community Meetings.

Consolidated Networks

The learning community provided the opportunity to really get to know some of these other folks more deeply, which leads to more opportunity. I certainly feel we're more a part of a network of academics and not just out there on our own.

There are folks we hang out with now that we didn't know before... The relationships informed our practice and helped us see ourselves as part of a broader group rather than isolated.

Most initiative partners are struggling in the same ways we are with inventing the wheel on a variety of issues. We're behind on some and ahead on others. Networking helps situate our program and plans with other projects, giving us a better idea where to ask for assistance and where we might offer to help.

The following quotation summarizes the functions of sharing information through Learning Community Meetings.

The Learning Community Meetings [LCMs] have been extremely helpful on several fronts. First, the LCMs have provided a unique opportunity to identify other teams and institutions which are doing similar work to ours; second, the meetings have provided an extended period of time to explore and investigate other Bridges projects and to have formal as well as informal time with team members to exchange information, frustrations, and accomplishments; third, we have been able to develop enough comfort and trust in new relationships to carry the relationships on after the conclusion of the LCMs. The Learning Community Meetings thus have been important for information and knowledge exchange; for establishing new networks; and for building relationships over time which facilitate cooperation and partnership with other institutions. Finally, the LCMs have provided an opportunity to relieve an all-too-familiar propensity to develop myopia and tunnel vision concerning institutional projects. By that I mean the LCMs remind us in very helpful ways to contextualize what we do on a much larger canvas and to understand that what it is we are about is not institution building so much as creating interactive systems of exchange for broader community and societal needs.

Engaging in Participatory Learning

I thought I was good at this. I've been running our Center for years. But the discussions raised at the LCMs let me know how much farther I need to reach, and how much more voice and participation practitioners need to have.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom)

I've been led to a greater appreciation for the total picture. You really do have to bridge theory and practice in this field.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom).

The direct purpose of participatory learning is to create a background to effect change. Key elements include the discovery of unconsciously held assumptions, raising awareness about how such assumptions affect behavior, and developing skills and competence for influencing behavior change. Participatory learning facilitates re-definition and re-interpretation of the past in order to move forward with a new vision by creating new “meaning systems” (Brookfield, 1986). Senge (1990) and Freire (1983) note that in order for such transformations to occur, group members need to have the trust, support, space, and skills to disagree and challenge one another.

Methods that Fostered Participatory Learning

Two primary methods used in the Bridges Learning Community Meetings to encourage participatory learning were (1) deep discussion surrounding particular topics and (2) site visits.

At each meeting, techniques were employed to foster deep discussion about concepts, approaches, issues, and activities that project teams were using to develop their programs. Techniques included, for example, breakout sessions led by Bridges participants and external presenters; connecting theme breakouts, in which projects with similar purposes came together to discuss themes and issues; and networking discussion clusters, in which participants identified topics on-the-spot at a meeting.

The ability to engage in honest debate and critical inquiry that leads to collective understanding is crucial to participatory learning. Throughout the series of Learning Community Meetings, Camino and Zeldin (1998; 1999; 2000) observed progress in this area. At the culminating meeting in Washington, D.C. there was much evidence of this type of interchange. For example, there was debate among several participants regarding standards of success for nonprofit organizations. One view was that nonprofits should follow a business model, with growth and development measured by an increasing number of operating centers or programs produced. Another view held that the measure should be the overall value that the nonprofit adds to services or quality of life in a given locale. The point was not whether either view was correct. All members in the dialogue quickly realized that they were not going to convert others to their view. Instead, the group reached awareness that developing nonprofit management as a field requires diverse efforts rather than unilateral approaches.

In addition to discussions, we used site visits to promote participatory learning. In the site visit method, especially visits involving cross-cultural exchanges, individuals are urged to examine the cultural basis, context, and contingency of beliefs, values, and behaviors. The very familiarity of fundamental assumptions perceived as “second nature” or “common sense” makes them difficult to examine. Placing oneself in an unfamiliar environment, therefore, creates the disequilibrium needed to challenge such assumptions. Learning Community Meeting site visits, and critical reflection about them, were designed to promote active examination of belief and value structures (Brookfield, 1986; Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

An entire day of the Buenos Aires Learning Community Meeting was devoted to site visits. Bridges participants could select from 12 sites including nonprofit organizations or programs and university nonprofit education programs in the Buenos Aires area. During the visits, participants talked with organizational representatives, toured facilities, and/or observed activities. Groups were provided with several guiding questions to focus discussion and observations. Afterward, Bridges participants came together, with representatives of the sites, to reflect collectively on the experience.

The keynote speaker at the opening event of the Buenos Aires Learning Community Meeting had set the stage for the visits in his address. He emphasized the different assumptions driving the development of nonprofit educational programs in North and Latin America. North American discourse tends to emulate business and for-profit models by emphasizing improvement of nonprofit “effectiveness” and “efficiency.” Latin American discourse, in contrast, emphasizes the salvation and support of civil society. Different social and historical backgrounds contribute to the different emphases, he noted. For example, the speaker estimated that in Latin America, two thirds of the population lives in poverty, without access to basic human services or even indispensable resources, such as clean water. Because of a progressive weakening of the state apparatus and repressive regimes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are being called on more than ever to fill the void.

Participatory Learning — Outcomes

In the reflection session held after the site visits, it was clear that Bridges participants had been moved, both intellectually and emotionally, by the experiences. Comments centered on several themes. On the one hand, participants, especially those from the North American teams, seemed overwhelmed by seeing the poverty, pollution, recent history of Argentina’s military dictatorship, and the effects these conditions have had on citizens and institutions. But participants were also deeply impressed with the creativity, passion, and commitment of the people they met during site visits. The words of one group of Bridges participants who visited Universidad Nacional de Lanus describe how the site visit raised their awareness:

Visits to such places...built in the brown field remains of an old British rail car repair yard opened eyes to what employing one’s assets really means. We also witnessed how the university can truly be part of community and the lives of citizens, regardless of status.

In the reflection session, participants also addressed nonprofit discourse, picking up the theme of differences that the keynote speaker had introduced earlier. Many perspectives were put forth, but the group reached consensus that a critical perspective is missing from North American discourse and education programs. Participants agreed that in order to build bridges between universities and communities and strengthen the nonprofit sector, it was important to critique the political, social, and economic forces that create dire and widespread human needs in the first place. Many individuals attested to their new awareness that even if the nonprofit sector becomes more efficient by virtue of nonprofit management education programs, unless social and political issues are confronted, the effort will be for naught.

Among the Latin American teams, the site visits stimulated desire to further critique their endeavors. One team, for example, wrote about the results of their experience:

The discussion about the Third Sector in Latin America — comparing our realities — helped to enrich the debate among the Latin American participants. It made my team think about the great need we have to reach common perspectives and views of ourselves — to continue to emphasize the fact that management is not enough for us, that we must face issues such as equity, productivity, etc.

Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power

The Bridges Initiative sought to create new models of nonprofit management education by building bridges between many entities: administrators and faculty in higher education; public, private, and nonprofit sectors; academic and nonprofit leadership; and

The opportunity to work with academics has been really extraordinary. It hasn't been easy, and we've had our difficult conversations and conflicts. But it has helped each of us grow tremendously.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom).

What is really important is that having practitioners and academics in this initiative, and having people—really the practitioners—say the hard stuff to academics is that it's helping contribute to a democratic field. It's interesting—we're here to help build civil society, and we experienced that type of civil society ourselves in the learning community meetings.

(Camino and Heidrich, 2000.
Voices of Wisdom).

universities and communities. Given that learning communities are devoted to identifying and challenging deeply entrenched assumptions, and formulating alternatives, confronting issues of power is all but inevitable (Brookfield, 1987; Ostram, 1990).

Power differentials influence individuals and their interpersonal, social, and professional relationships. Surrounding these themes of power, a central challenge lies in developing shared norms and values, and a common language. It is equally challenging to create a climate respectful of differences, and tolerant of disagreement and dissent (Senge, 1990).

Methods that Addressed Issues of Power

Although we did not employ specific methods to explicitly address power issues at Learning Community Meetings, these issues surfaced at every meeting. Discussions and reflections about power emanated from discussions of other topics, or were generated through caucuses that sprang up spontaneously.

A prevalent theme was the power differential existing between institutions of higher education and faculty, on the one hand, and nonprofit organizations, coalitions of organizations, and practitioners, on the other hand. A second theme was differences in status and prestige operating within the realm of higher education. Certain colleges and universities enjoy higher status and command more resources than others. Finally, themes of racial/ethnic oppression and multiculturalism were embedded in each of the other themes of power. In fact, observations about such issues in the Learning Community Meetings led us, in part, to conduct a study of project teams. This study examined how academics and practitioners respected and valued each other's voice and experience, and what this meant to the project teams.¹

Although we did not fashion deliberate modalities to address power, we were flexible in order to accommodate related debate. This flexibility was consistent with the Learning Community Meeting guiding principles of valuing diversity of perspectives and viewpoints, and engaging participants as leaders.

At the Battle Creek Learning Community Meeting in 1998, participants engaged in a breakout discussion activity according to affinity group. The intent of the activity was to examine differences between academics and practitioners, and to discuss appropriate strategies for bridge building. Participants were divided into academic, practitioner, and "bridger" sub-groups, and asked to address two questions: What changes need to occur in (a) academe and (b) nonprofit practice, to support effective partnerships between academe and practice?

In the large group report-out, participants emphasized that partnerships need to take power and contexts into consideration. According to participants, a lack of full contact between practitioners and academics in day-to-day life has deeper implications than

1. In the study, titled *Voices of Wisdom: Knowledge and Experience from Practitioner-Academic Teams in the building Bridges Initiative*, we found, counter to our observations at Learning Community Meetings, that nearly all team members reported that their voices were valued and respected on their teams. However, many spoke to power differentials at the meetings - displays of power and contested discussions. These included:

- Academic members of the initiative tended to have relationships with one another outside of the Bridges Initiative that practitioners did not have. These included direct acquaintance and familiarity with one another's writing and articles.
- Many practitioners in the initiative seemed to be at a less-developed point in their careers, or at a different level of responsibility in their organizations than the academics participating in the initiative.
- Academics tend to have a distinct style of public discourse, developed through years of learning and practice, very common in academic circles, but less so in practice ones. The style was characterized as appropriate for debate and argument, with a purpose of "winning."

simply an insufficient exchange of information or social capital. A stronger barrier to bridge building, they noted, is the lack of full understanding of the contexts, especially institutional structures, in which the two groups work. For example, nonprofit professionals stated that many scholars possess incomplete understanding of management and decision-making in the nonprofit sector, particularly as it relates to historical circumstances, political realities, and economic constraints. Academics noted that many nonprofit leaders do not fully appreciate the institutional disincentives in higher education for conducting applied research or engaging in service with the nonprofit sector.

A year later at the Buenos Aires Learning Community Meeting, practitioners held a caucus in which they expressed feelings of being marginalized by academic colleagues, both within their projects and initiative-wide. Discussion was impassioned. Because the caucus was an impromptu one, there was not a set agenda. At a minimum, practitioners seemed to want to put words to their feelings. It was a collective effort to wrestle with feelings that many thought they alone experienced. Such wrestling and voicing of feelings appeared to be a necessary first step for practitioner participants to find a collective voice.

A day later, in another session, the theme of power and differences surfaced again. This session, a public meeting, held in Recoleta Park in Buenos Aires, was attended by Bridges participants and representatives from the media, higher education, and government. An academic Bridges member had been invited to speak about the development of nonprofit management education in institutions of higher education in the United States. During the question and answer period, a practitioner asserted that the academy was not the only important locus of formal training and education. The practitioner stated that training and professional development programs have been long used in nonprofit management organizations and other nonprofit arenas, but that the nature and extent of such programs had remained invisible to policy makers and academics.

Issues of Power — Awareness and Learning Outcomes

At the end of the Buenos Aires Learning Community Meeting, several teams wrote about gaining awareness of the importance of building practitioner-academic bridges and some factors that are barriers to bridge construction, such as different languages, different constraints, and different orientations. Examples included:

We finally have learned the importance of 'shared leadership' among [practitioner and academic members of] our team. We are interdependent on each other.

[We] have learned that there are really two bodies of knowledge that are developing parallel to each other— knowledge developed by practitioners and knowledge developed from academics. These need to be merged and serve to create one body of knowledge, each informing the other.

As a result of the debates in Buenos Aires, subgroups convened two Connecting Strategy Meetings during the next year. Both meetings focused on practitioner-academic collaboration. Participants further discussed struggles and issues, and also identified practical solutions to forge effective collaborations with academics.

At the final Learning Community Meeting in Washington, D.C., the theme of higher education, practice, and power surfaced yet again. Unlike previous years, practitioners did not caucus. The mood was less impassioned and more reflective than at previous meetings. The breakout discussions contained strong themes of academic-practitioner collaboration, higher education-nonprofit partnership, shared learning and two-way flow of information. In these sessions, participants devoted most of their attention to identifying effective strategies to overcome difficulties. There was general agreement that nonprofit management education requires strong connections with practice. Among the

strategies noted were 1) identifying the most salient issues and problems, 2) mobilizing the necessary resources and expertise, and 3) coalescing the complementary skills and knowledge of community partners, faculty, and students to produce desired results.

Issues of Power — Network Outcomes

The network study by Larson, Frank, and Fahrbach, (2002), which examined the development of networks among the U.S. grantees in the Bridges Initiative found several outcomes relevant to themes of power:

- *At the site (grant) level, universities designated as Research 1 Universities were more likely to establish links with one another than with institutions different from themselves.*
- *The study also monitored the extent to which faculty/academics interacted with other faculty/academics, practitioners with other practitioners, and faculty/academics with practitioners. The data revealed that density of connections among academic participants was higher at all time points measured than that among practitioners, or between academics and practitioners.*
- *Finally, while faculty/academic-practitioner connections increased overall, the increase was moderate and occurred at a slower rate than did either faculty-faculty or practitioner-practitioner connections.*

In general, these results indicate that people and institutions are inclined to interact with those they perceive as similar to themselves. These data are also consistent with observations made over time at the Learning Community Meetings (Camino & Zeldin, 1998; 2000; 2001) and the results of an interview study conducted among Bridges participants (Camino & Heidrich, 2000).

The major lesson about issues of power learned from experiences in the Learning Community Meetings was that such issues are likely to surface, so it is important to deliberately bring together people who work in different contexts, and are likely to sense power differentials. To address the inevitable power issues that will come up, it is important to foster the trust among participants, and to foster a group climate in which inquiry and challenge are the norm.

Conclusion

In their documentation of the Building Bridges Initiative Learning Community Meetings, Camino and Zeldin (1998; 2000; 2001) conceptualized the Bridges Initiative and each meeting as a journey. The journey metaphor captures the notion of travel and change from one place and state of affairs to another. More important, journeys remove people from their normal routines, and give them the opportunity to be changed by their experiences.

As previously noted, the Initiative Team guiding the Bridges Initiative operated in a “loose-tight” configuration. The Learning Community Meetings themselves also operated in this manner. Although meetings were planned with deliberation, in operation they were flexible enough to accommodate shifts of intent and flow. Meetings also drew upon the leadership of participants, outside speakers when warranted, and presentations by WKKF program officers and staff.

The Learning Community Meetings provided the space and time for participants to think, plan, connect with others, and reflect. Although the initiative community also was supported by a list server and website, scholars theorize that there is no substitute for the opportunity to engage in face-to-face interaction, like that provided by the Learning Community Meetings. Interpersonal interaction holds great potential to lead to transformational learning (Brookfield, 1987; Etzioni, 1998).

The Learning Community Meetings used multiple and diverse methods, to create a place for Bridges participants to connect. Time will tell how the network of participants will ultimately operate. However, according to social capital theory, the formation of a link between individuals or organizations carries the potential to be drawn upon in the future (Coleman, 1986).

The Learning Community Meetings were also designed to be a place for participants to “practice” - in the sense that members were able to tussle with challenges in a relatively safe environment, without punitive consequences. The hope was that as members were exposed to and tested various perspectives and strategies in the safe environment of the meetings, they would become better prepared to deal with similar dynamics in their own projects, communities, organizations and institutions of higher education.

Finally, the Learning Community Meetings provided a place for participants to grow. Participants had many opportunities to examine and re-evaluate their project strategies for fashioning new and expanded forms of nonprofit management education programs. Reflective dialogue and debate helped individuals and teams push one another. The Project Showcase at the final meeting illustrated the plethora of approaches and programs produced by the Bridges Initiative. The collective action of Bridges projects enriched the field of nonprofit management education by bringing ideas, resources, and disciplines together in new combinations and configurations. No single program, or small group of programs operating discretely, could hope to have such innovative impact.

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Glossary

Applied Research

The organization which conducted the initiative-level evaluation.

ARNOVA

Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action.

Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education

A five-year initiative, begun in 1997 by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Philanthropy and Volunteerism program unit. The initiative involved 27 U.S. and Latin American grantees intended to create and strengthen nonprofit management education programs.

Building Bridges Initiative; Bridges Initiative; BBI

Shortened terms for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation initiative, *Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education*.

CenterPoint Institute

An intermediary organization that provided ongoing leadership and management to the initiative.

Initiative Team

Team assembled by Robert Long to support and guide the initiative. The team included CenterPoint Institute, Applied Research, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation staff from Philanthropy and Volunteerism, Meeting Services, and Communication.

Intermediary

An organization through which the W. K. Kellogg Foundation achieves various programmatic functions such as initiative evaluation, communication, and management. The two intermediary organizations in the Bridges Initiative were Applied Research and CenterPoint Institute.

LAC

WKKF acronym: Latin America and Caribbean region.

Learning Community

All individuals who served on Project Teams and the Initiative Team. These individuals attended Learning Community Meetings and participated in the initiative list servers and other communication efforts.

Learning Community Meetings

Annual meetings of Building Bridges Initiative participants, intended to foster a network of grantees, create a community of participants with trust and the ability to challenge one another, and create a climate of learning; sometimes acronym “LCM.”

Program Director

W. K. Kellogg Foundation job title designating leading program staff positions. Dr. Robert Long was Program Director for the Bridges Initiative.

Project Team; Project Leadership Team

Each U.S. Bridges project was led by a team of key stakeholders. These teams included nonprofit leaders and university staff – faculty, administrators, and program support personnel. Members of these teams were expected to represent diversity on a number of variables including race, gender, and age.

Methods to Foster and Support a Learning Community and The Formation of a Network among Grantees

Here we present an inventory of methods used to foster and support the development of a learning community among participants in the Building Bridges Initiative. The methods are organized chronologically by meeting, followed by a list of other methods that were implemented outside the Learning Community Meetings. The initiative is abbreviated *BBi*; the meetings are abbreviated *LCM*. *LAC* stands for the Kellogg Foundation Latin America and Caribbean region. It should be noted that the entries in the *Results* column are based on Initiative Team observations, not on participant evaluations.

The functions of learning communities discussed in the paper are 1) Building Relationships, 2) Sharing Information, 3) Engaging in Participatory Learning, and 4) Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power. The function of each method is listed in the chart that follows

Functions of Learning Community Meetings:

- 1) Building Relationships: personal and professional relationships, individual-to-individual across the initiative, within teams, among teams/organizations.
- 2) Sharing Information: across organizational boundaries; across practitioner-academic cultures. As participants received information they sometimes used it in their own programs.
- 3) Engaging in Participatory Learning: engaging in in-depth discussions; participants taking responsibility for content and process of sessions; focus is not on individual projects as much as it is on the initiative as a whole, the sector, higher education, etc.
- 4) Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power: developing shared norms, values, and common language; identifying power imbalances; exploring differences. Although, as noted in the text above, we did not employ methods to specifically address issues of power, we categorize interventions and activities in this area, based on occurrences of participants' identification and discussion of power in these sessions.

**Learning Community Meeting
January 18-11, 1998 - Houston, TX**

**Appendix B
Houston (Page 1 of 1)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
"Mixer" activity as participants arrived	We constructed activity groups that cut across the initiative. We color-coded the name badges so participants could identify others in their group. The task was to identify famous bridges pictured on display boards. We awarded "bridge mix" candy as a participation prize to all groups.	Encourage participants to talk with others they didn't know. Interaction in a shared task. (Building Relationships)	Most participants engaged one another in the activity.
Organized recreation volunteers.	Invited participants to volunteer to lead free time activities.	Ensure that a few participants would invite others to join them for exercise, playing cards, etc. (Building Relationships)	Five individuals responded to our call for volunteers. One convened a group in the lounge, setting the stage for after-hours conversation.
Poster Session.	Each team prepared a poster describing its project. Display and presentations.	Begin learning about other projects. (Sharing Information)	Preparing the poster was the first time projects had to publicly state what their grant was about, so it was a useful exercise in that regard.
Keynote speaker on "Networking."	Sally Helgesen, author of <i>The Web of Inclusion: A New Architecture for Building Great Organizations</i> .	Lay a foundation for subsequent discussions of networking. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Some participants were highly critical of the speaker and engaged her in debate. They introduced a negative tone that influenced the rest of the LCM.
Celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday.	Invited a participant to address the community; followed by individual comments and stories; candle lighting; cake and coffee.	Acknowledge the role of diversity in the initiative and the sector. (Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	Participants were genuinely moved by speakers and the opportunity to honor Dr. King.
General Session: WKKF Messages.	WKKF Program Directors speak.	Share the WKKF plan so participants could see their role. Also to inspire and to state the goals of the initiative, LCM purposes, Project Leadership Team purpose. (Sharing Information and Engaging in Participatory Learning)	In a feedback study conducted in the last year of the initiative we learned that WKKF leaders cannot be too clear or repeat their key messages too often. N grantees have difficulty seeing the WKKF vision and their own role in it.
Grantee Support System: A Tour.	We divided participants into 4 groups and rotated them to 4 breakout rooms for presentations about the initiative support system.	Give information and answer questions about: a) initiative evaluation; b) WKKF reporting requirements; c) web site and list servers; d) Learning Community Meetings, consulting services, and intermediary role. (Sharing Information)	The activity was useful: key messages need to be stated clearly and often. In the feedback study, we learned that grantees did not understand the role of Applied Research and CenterPoint Institute until the middle of the initiative.
Bridge Building and Team Planning Activity. (Team Time) Town Meeting.	Working separately, each team discussed its project, and constructed a "bridge" to represent the project. Bridge construction materials included paper clips, string, drinking straws, and colored construction paper. A Town Meeting (plenary session) was held to display and discuss project models.	Increase team members' understanding of their project; to share displays so participants could learn about other projects. (Building Relationships and Sharing Information)	Fun and funny. Brought teams together. Revealed lighter side of the WKKF Program Director. Allowed for more sharing about project goals. The session was very memorable and became part of the story of the initiative.
Planning the Next Learning Community Meeting.	We formed breakout groups, and assigned each group one of the initiative goals to discuss. Participants facilitated and reported.	Foster participant involvement with determining the focus/content of the next LCM. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The output was shared with the planning team for the Battle Creek LCM. Along with the written evaluation, output from this activity demonstrated that participants wanted more time to address a range of relationship building issues on all levels. Due to this feedback, the theme for the Battle Creek LCM was "Stronger Relationships = Stronger Bridges between Practice and Knowledge."
Closing Session: Bridge poem. Energy orb.	Poem about bridges and reflective remarks. Small gift at the close of the LCM. Demonstrated network by forming continuous connection.	Inspire big picture thinking. Illustrate the network metaphor. Provide a take-home memory of the LCM. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Several participants asked for a copy of the poem and PowerPoint. The bridge building metaphor was a powerful and effective way to convey the intent of the initiative. The Energy Orb was corny, but fostered stories about airport security and so contributed to the formation of the community.

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
LCM Planning Committee.	Conference calls to plan LCM program.	Assure participant voice in planning the agenda. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The Battle Creek meeting better met the interests of the participants and had much more participant involvement.
Orientation for LAC participants. Closing meeting of LAC participants.	WKKF LAC Program Director met with the LAC participants.	Orient LAC participants to the BBI and discuss follow-up. (Building Relationships and Sharing Information)	The LAC participants became a team, and fully engaged in all the LCM activities.
Photo Gallery.	Individual portraits of team members.	Facilitate participants learning names and making connections. (Building Relationships)	Throughout the series of LCMs, participants studied the pictures to learn names. Many individuals liked their own photos so well, they ordered copies.
Display Tables.	We invited participants to bring materials to share: books, curricula, articles, brochures, etc.	Foster learning about each other's programs. (Sharing Information)	Many teams brought items to display. During breaks, participants browsed the display tables and picked up literature.
Pre-conference activities.	Time to meet with P&V Program Director, tour WKKF, and navigate the new BBI website.	Increase understanding of WKKF and BBI. Activity for early arrivals. (Building Relationships and Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Set a tone of hospitality for early arrivals. Informality helped participants connect with each other.
Opening Session.	Welcome. Introductions. BBI goals. LCM goals. Re-cap of the Houston LCM. Program overview.	Orientation. There were a number of new participants who had not attended the Houston meeting. (Sharing Information)	Added to participant understanding. Key messages about vision and goals need to be stated often.
Evening at the Kellogg Foundation. Reception and dinner.	Reception, speech by WKKF President/CEO, dinner at WKKF.	Enable participants to have a connection to WKKF as a place and meet the President/CEO. (Building Relationships and Engaging in Participatory Learning)	WKKF leaders hosting the event at the Foundation elevated the work of the grantees and added to the discourse.
Project Updates, printed and oral.	Booklet of 2-page project updates; updates followed a prescribed format. Presentations were made in concurrent sessions. Participants selected which presentations they wanted to hear.	Help participants learn more about the other BBI projects and about the achievements and challenges of other projects. (Sharing Information)	Writing the annual project update proved to be a good discipline for projects. It also became an important reference tool for everyone in the initiative.
Networking Discussion Clusters.	Topics were generated and led by participants: distance learning, case study development, etc.	Opportunity for participants to talk about topics of shared interest. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Participants in this initiative were very interested in learning from each other on topics generated from the group.
Dinner off-site	Informal barbecue picnic at the Kellogg Biological Station.	Provide variety, change of scenery, casual setting. (Building Relationships)	Enjoyable, informal atmosphere. The outdoor venue was refreshing.

**Learning Community Meeting
September 23-26, 1998, Battle Creek, MI (cont.)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
Speaker.	P&V Vice-president.	Introduce participants to WKKF leadership. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	There was much lively discussion.
Affinity Groups.	Divided participants into 3 groups: practitioners, academicians, bridgers to address questions in facilitated sessions: "What changes need to occur in [the academy/nonprofit organizations] to improve relationships with [the academy/nonprofit organizations]?"	Raise issues about building the bridge between the worlds of practice and teaching. (Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	This activity surfaced "hot" issues and brought conflicting views into the open. The activity demonstrated the very different cultures of practitioners and academics.
Interest Group Presentations.	Eight breakout presentations were offered in two concurrent sessions. Prior to the LCM, participants were invited to submit presentation topics. Four agreed to lead sessions. The other four sessions were led by outside resource people. Several sessions addressed power issues: secular and religious, common ground between researchers and practitioners, building relationships with communities of color, subversion in the university.	Opportunity for BBI participants to lead a session; provide content-specific learning sessions. (Engaging in Participatory Learning and Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	This activity was another opportunity for participants to lead and to learn. Several sessions fostered intense discussion.
Team Time and Action Steps.	The last evening of the LCM was set aside for teams to discuss their projects: implementation tasks, team roles, and expectations. We gave each Project Director an "Action Steps" form to complete and return to the WKKF Program Director before the end of the LCM. The form had two questions: What did you learn at this LCM? What are you going to do about it?	Build relationships within teams and offer time away from home to plan/discuss and require teams to reflect on what they had learned and how they would use their learning. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Offering a special time in the program for teams to meet was very effective. Even more effective, however, was the Action Steps assessment - we gained a much more meaningful understanding of the outcome of the LCM than was produced by the conventional meeting evaluation instrument.
Closing Session. Activity. Evaluation. Closing Remarks.	In a facilitated small group activity, members were asked to state a problem or a need for information; others in the group offered solutions, ideas, and information. WKKF Program Director gave closing remarks. Participants challenged him to share the "vision" for the BBI.	Foster sharing and connecting after the LCM. (Building Relationships) Close the meeting and inspire continuation of the work. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Several connections were made and business cards were exchanged. By the end of the second conference, participants continued to need information about the WKKF vision for the BBI. Again: consistent key messages, repeated often.

Appendix B*Buenos Aires (Page 1 of 3)***Learning Community Meeting
October 3-7, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
LCM Planning Committee.	Conference calls to plan LCM program; strong focus on LAC concerns.	Assure participant and host voice in planning the agenda. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Result was an LCM that was well focused on LAC concerns and participant suggestions.
Pre- and post-LCM travel opportunities, including a meeting sponsored by Getulio Vargas Foundation.	We established a "travel options" section on the BBI website to facilitate coordination of pre- and post-LCM travel, both professional and recreational.	Enable participants to make connections across the initiative. (Building Relationships)	Those who participated had very positive experiences. The meeting hosted by Getulio Vargas Foundation was especially beneficial to those attending.
Facilitated companions attending.	We encouraged spouses' and significant others' attendance at social functions; offered tours during the work days; and welcomed companions to most meals.	Enable participants to share this international experience with their spouse/companion; foster family members' understanding of "this work." (Building Relationships)	Being able to share this international experience with a companion - mostly spouses and relatives - was extremely meaningful to participants. Several participants expressed profound gratitude.
Document distribution a) Journey Report. b) Report on the Western States pilot Connecting Strategy meeting. c) LAC Concept Paper regarding nonprofit management education in the Latin American context.	Documents were distributed to participants prior to the LCM.	Contribute to a shared body of knowledge about the BBI. To increase understanding of dynamics within the initiative. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	These printed documents helped participants prepare for the LCM. They also added to the continuing development of the community.
Reception; dinner; gift.	Opening event.	Set tone for the LCM; re-unite the community; meet new colleagues. (Building Relationships)	There was clearly a tone of excitement and enthusiasm expressed at reuniting with other participants. People hugged one another and greeted each other as friends - new behavior compared to the previous two LCMs. The gift of yerba mate, mate cup, and bombilla symbolized the community drinking cup.
Keynote speaker.	Addressed the social issues prevalent in Argentina.	Establish a context for the Buenos Aires LCM. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Inspiration and passion for the work of NGOs.
Simultaneous translation.	This was the first LCM at which we provided simultaneous translation in Spanish and English.	Enable presenters to speak in their native language and listeners to hear in their native language. (Sharing Information)	Leveled the playing field for LAC participants; increased awareness for U.S. participants.
Photo Gallery.	Individual portraits of team members.	Facilitate participants learning names and making connections. Updated with pictures of new team members. (Building Relationships)	Continued being very useful.
Display Tables	Due to cost of shipping, and tax restrictions, we invited participants to bring one display copy of materials to share: books, curricula, articles, brochures, etc. Participants could then request items they wanted and the items would be mailed following the LCM	Foster learning about each other's programs. (Sharing Information)	Most teams brought items to display - an increase over the Battle Creek LCM

**Learning Community Meeting
October 3-7, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina (cont.)**

**Appendix B
Buenos Aires (Page 2 of 3)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
Overview of the LCM program.	Presentation to summarize the journey from Houston, to Battle Creek, to Buenos Aires.	Foster collective memory of "where we've been and how we got here." Provide program overview. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Participants enjoyed re-living the previous LCMs and seeing pictures of themselves in activities. Also was helpful in the orientation of new participants.
Vision for the BBI; Vision for the Buenos Aires LCM.	Presentation by WKKF P&V Program Director to review goals and guiding principles and vision for the initiative. Presentation by WKKF P&V LAC Program Director about the Latin American context and explain "Why here?" "Why now?"	Address participants' request at end of the Battle Creek LCM. Help participants understand how holding the LCM in Argentina would advance civil society discussions in Latin American programs. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The use of PowerPoint slides seemed to increase participant understanding.
Project Updates, printed and oral.	Booklet of 2-page project updates following a prescribed format. Presentations in concurrent sessions, each session lasting one hour. We increased the time this year, based on requests from last LCM. Participants selected which presentations they wanted to hear.	Help participants learn more about the other BBI projects and about the achievements and challenges of each other's projects. (Sharing Information)	The Project Updates continued having great utility, both for the participants during the conference and as reference tools in the initiative.
Group dinner.	Off site dinner; social evening.	Foster relationship development. (Building Relationships)	A great deal of laughter, story telling, and socializing. Relationship building continued.
Introduction to Connecting Themes.	We created clusters of projects based on shared themes. The WKKF Program Director linked themes to the BBI vision. We reported the results of a survey (Connect! Connectar!). A participant reported on the Western States Pilot Connecting Strategy.	Set the stage for the "Connecting Theme" breakouts. (Sharing Information)	Participants seemed to understand the concept, but still had difficulty seeing the specific relationship of their own work to that of other projects.
Connecting Theme Breakouts.	Six breakouts on themes that connected projects in the initiative.	Facilitate projects talking with each other about a shared theme. (Sharing Information and Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The projects in the clusters we created did not see themselves as necessarily related. These breakout sessions did not work very well - partially because of timing in the program, but also because the clusters were "imposed" rather than self-selected.
Team Time and Action Steps	Time for teams to discuss their projects: implementation tasks, team roles, and expectations. Also discuss actions they would take resulting from this LCM.	Build relationships within teams and offer time away from home to plan/discuss. Ask teams to reflect on what they had learned and how they would use their learning. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Similar to the Battle Creek LCM: very useful as a conference evaluation tool and useful to teams as they returned to their settings.
Site visit orientation.	Overview of sites and why they were selected. What to expect. How to prepare for the debriefing.	Help participants prepare for and anticipate the experience. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	This session heightened the site visit experience by setting the stage and helping participants know what to expect.

Appendix B

Buenos Aires (Page 3 of 3)

**Learning Community Meeting
October 3-7, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina (cont.)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
Site visits.	Groups of 8-10 traveled to various nonprofit organization or higher education sites in the greater Buenos Aires area.	Learn about the Argentine context for NGO work and education. Conversation and shared experience. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	This program element had lasting impact both on the LCM participants and on the sites visited. For most LCM participants, the site visit was the highlight of the program. Getting out of the hotel, into the various NGO and university settings, and talking with peers increased learning exponentially. Conversations within the vans reached a new level of intensity - the trip itself was a bonding experience. For the sites that were visited, there was also a feeling that something important was happening. They later formed the nucleus of a group that met regularly during the following year. Eventually other NGOs and universities joined the group. They planned and implemented a conference.
Site visit debriefing.	Everyone assembled after the site visits to share experiences. Representatives of the sites were invited; several attended.	Reflection. (Engaging in Participatory Learning and Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	Clearly, participants had been moved by what they learned. Discussion was rich and passionate.
Practitioner Caucus.	Spontaneous meeting.	Give voice to practitioner concerns. (Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	Practitioners discovered their voice in the initiative. They agreed to organize a Practitioner Connecting Strategy meeting.
Group dinner.	Off site group dinner and cultural dance performance.	Contribute to shared experiences. Sample local culture. (Building Relationships)	The impact of unstructured, social events is difficult to measure with conventional surveys, but the contribution to community formation became more evident with each event.
Public Meeting.	Off site meeting in a public venue. Members of the press, higher education, and government were invited. Speaker and panelists.	Bring attention to the development of Third Sector studies in Latin America and the U.S. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	This event, along with site visits, promoted awareness of Third Sector studies in Latin America.
Shadow box.	Designed as a recognition item for each project's participation in the initiative. Shadow box contained the Bridges logo, a quotation, and 2 pieces of steel held together with a bolt.	Enhance a sense of being part of "something bigger"; promote recognition at home institution. (Building Relationships)	These shadow boxes are prominently displayed at grantee offices.
Closing session: interpretive dance performance, reflections, and farewell.	Interpretive dance commissioned for the BBI LCM. Closing remarks and farewells.	An affective experience to balance the cognitive work of the LCM. Memorable closing of the LCM. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Participants enjoyed this artistic closing of the conference - many expressed appreciation.

**Learning Community Meeting
October 18-21, 2000, Washington, D.C.**

**Appendix B
Washington D.C. (Page 1 of 2)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
LCM Planning Committee.	1.5 day face-to-face session in the LCM hotel to plan program.	Assure participant voice in planning the agenda. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The participant ownership of this LCM increased dramatically. They were more involved because we held the committee meeting at the conference hotel rather than by telephone. They expressed more opinions than other committees and it was more difficult to reach consensus.
Journey Report.	Sent 1999 Journey report prior to the LCM. Report in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.	Continue deepening the participants' understanding of the BBI and enhancing the collective memory of the story. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	The Journey Reports were interesting to participants - they liked to read about their shared experiences. To increase learning, we probably should have devoted some program time to a discussion of the Journey Reports.
Voices of Wisdom study.	Report mailed to participants prior to the LCM.	Share results of study. (Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	Participants expressed appreciation for this study and the opportunity it gave for them to express their views of the initiative. As with the Journey Reports, we should have devoted some program time to discussion.
Photo Gallery.	Individual portraits of team members.	Facilitate participants learning names and making connections. To keep the photo gallery updated, we took pictures of new team members at each meeting. (Building Relationships)	The Photo Gallery continued to be useful right up to the end of the LCM. We expanded it with casual photos taken throughout the initiative. At the end of the conference, we invited participants to take whatever photos they wanted.
Project Profiles.	The Project Profiles book replaced previous years' Project Updates books. Each project had two pages to highlight its work under the BBI grant.	Give media and guests an overview of each project. Give BBI participants an opportunity to share information. (Sharing Information)	The profiles were a slightly different spin on the previous updates, but continued to have high utility.
Welcome.	Brief statements from initiative leaders.	Set tone, renew relationships, and welcome new participants. (Building Relationships)	Participants have become familiar with leaders' roles.
Opening session: speeches by WKKF staff and CenterPoint. Video addresses by WKKF president and senior vice president.	WKKF President and Senior Vice-President were invited, but unable to attend in person. Video conveyed their messages to the BBI Learning Community.	Demonstrate the value WKKF places on the work being done in projects. To commend participants and inspire further achievements. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Continuing effort to help grantees see their role in the WKKF initiative.
Connecting Strategy report.	Overview of the Connecting Strategies that had been implemented over the last year. Report on the LAC connecting strategy.	Recognize accomplishments of the Connecting Strategies; inform participants. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	At least one member from each team had participated in a Connecting Strategy. Interest was high.
Newcomers' Breakfast.	Breakfast for individuals new to the initiative.	Provide orientation and introductions. (Building Relationships and Sharing Information)	New participants were more easily integrated into the LCM. If we could repeat the LCM series we would have an orientation program for new participants at each LCM, devoted more time to orientation, and had a more structured agenda for orientation. We mistakenly thought Project Directors were orienting their new team members.

Appendix B*Washington D.C. (Page 2 of 2)***Learning Community Meeting
October 18-21, 2000 - Washington, D.C. (cont.)**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
So What Happened?	Activity: each project wrote accomplishments on 4x6 cards, and posted the cards in categories on large panels.	Aggregate activities and achievements of individual projects. Contribute to knowing the collective results. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	This activity was very successful in summarizing the results of the initiative. Participants were excited about sharing their achievements and marveled at the collective story that emerged.
So What's Next?	In breakout groups participants discussed: Durability (of academic program), Contagion Effect (practitioner voice), Contagion Effect (higher education), and Continuing Relationships (after the BBI). Report out in general session.	Surface participants' concerns about what will happen when the initiative ends. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Good discussion in the groups, but no action items were developed.
Participants as small group facilitators.	Intentional selection of participants to serve as facilitators for the "So What's Next?" session. We carefully paired practitioners and academics and provided discussion guidelines.	Involve participants in the leadership of the session. (Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	Results were varied. Facilitators did not stay in their role. Participants apparently just wanted to talk.
Group dinner.	We reserved a small restaurant near the hotel and worked with the owner to select the menu, including Argentine beef, and Chilean wine.	Offer an intimate social opportunity; to celebrate. (Building Relationships)	This event was hugely successful. By occupying the entire restaurant, the event was a private party. There was a great deal of laughter and story telling. People lingered as long as possible.
Showcase for Nonprofit Management Education.	Addresses in general session to give views of nonprofit practice and nonprofit education. "Exhibit Hall" for projects. Tool belt lunch and themed décor. Media Kit.	Gain public attention for the BBI; provide project marketing opportunity; provide participants an opportunity to learn more about each project in BBI. (Sharing Information and Engaging in Participatory Learning)	While we were somewhat disappointed at the number of guests by comparison with the effort it took to invite them, the event was still successful. The guest speakers were very good; project displays attracted attention; there was a follow-up op-ed article in the Nonprofit Times; the evaluation indicated that connections had been made and information was being shared within the organizations that attended. While some teams had exhibit-hall type displays, others (especially the LAC programs) had very limited resources and minimal displays. However, the overall tone was excitement and success.
Capstone planning and So What's Next. Team Time.	Introduction to the Capstone concept, followed by Team Time to brainstorm possible Capstone activities and discuss "So what's next for our project?" We closed with projects sharing their capstone ideas.	Promote the Capstone and allow time for planning; glean ideas from other projects; invite teams to talk about the future of their work after the grant ends. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Teams used the structured time to develop Capstone ideas; they appreciated hearing the ideas of other teams.
Closing General Session.	WKKF Program Director speech about the BBI and WKKF future plans for funding in this arena Participants' reflections.	Give overview of the influence of the initiative on WKKF future funding strategies. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Participants were genuinely sad that this was the last LCM. Reflections were personal and meaningful.
Photo Mosaic.	11" x 17" poster with individual photos of all participants, and casual LCM photos.	Memorabilia. (Building Relationships)	Participants liked this item and enjoyed searching for their own pictures and those of new friends.

**Other Methods that Contributed to the
Formation of a Grantee Network**

Intervention	Description	Intended Purpose	Results
Project Matrix.	First attempt to categorize projects based on Guiding Principles.	Enable projects to find other projects doing similar work. (Sharing Information)	Unknown impact on participants; useful exercise for the initiative Team.
Western States - Pilot Connecting Strategy.	Portland State Univ., California State Univ., Arizona State Univ., University of Texas San Antonio, and American Humanics teams met in the summer of 1999 to discuss shared concerns.	Respond to expressed interest of group at the end of the Battle Creek LCM. Test the idea that smaller, self-defined clusters of projects within the BBI would benefit from opportunity to collaborate. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Very beneficial for developing deeper relationships. Two of the universities continued collaborating throughout the rest of the initiative.
Connecting Strategies.	Designed a "mini-grant" program, solicited proposals and granted approximately \$57,000 to clusters of projects that wanted to work together.	Deepen the degree of project-to-project networking. (Engaging in Participatory Learning)	Very beneficial for projects to have more intense interaction than was possible in the LCMs.
BBI Hospitality at ARNOVA meetings.	We hosted a hospitality suite at each annual ARNOVA meeting during the life of the BBI.	Provide opportunity for further networking. (Building Relationships)	Added to the developing sense of community.
Name and logo. Banners with logo - Spanish and English.	Developed the "building bridges" name and designed a logo. Made banners for the LCMs.	Create an identity for the initiative. (Building Relationships)	The logo was used extensively by projects, as well as by the initiative Team.
Rivets.	We developed and published a quarterly newsletter for the BBI.	Provide a printed piece that projects could use to promote their work and enhance communication within the BBI community. (Sharing Information)	Projects requested multiple copies to distribute within their settings.
6 list servers.	1) All BBI, 2) Project Directors; 3) Initiative Team; 4) LAC; 5) Practitioners; 6) ASU Connecting Strategy.	Enable fast, easy communication across the BBI. (Sharing Information, Engaging in Participatory Learning and Identifying and Addressing Issues of Power)	The lists were very useful to the Initiative Team for disseminating information or making announcements. Participants originated fewer messages than expected.
Web site.	Participant directory; capacity to send email directly from site; photos; project summaries; LCM information and photos; archives; calendar; and more.	Promote both internal and external communication. (Sharing Information)	The web site provided a convenient way to disseminate and archive information. Many other features were useful as well. The calendar was the least useful feature.
Project site visits.	We conducted individual visits to all projects during the course of the initiative.	Learn about individual projects; build relationships; share information. (Building Relationships and Sharing Information)	Visiting the grantees in person had great value in building relationships between grants and CenterPoint Institute. We learned these lessons: we should not have used the term site visit - it was too intimidating for the projects; we should have made all the visits within the first year of the initiative

Building Bridges Grants and All Team Members Serving on Project Teams during the Initiative

American Humanics

- . Kirk Alliman
- . Tonja Conour
- . Barbara Keener
- . Kala Stroup
- . Phyllis Wallace

Arizona State University

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- . Lucia Causey
- . Princess Crump
- . Kathryn Forbes

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- . Erica Hagen
- . James Kallusky
- . Rudy Salinas
- . Marcel Soriano
- . George Umezawa

Case Western University

- . Michael FitzGibbon
- . David Hammack
- . John Palmer Smith
- . Sheryl Sereda
- . Carol Willen
- . John Yankey

City University of New York

- . M. Starita Boyce
- . Geoffrey Marshall
- . Kathleen McCarthy
- . Eugene Miller
- . Peter Swords

George Mason University

- . Russell Cargo
- . Patricia Lewis
- . John Sacco
- . David Stevenson
- . Daniele Struppa

Georgetown University

- . John Crapo
- . Pablo Eisenberg
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- . Sue Marshall
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- . Neil Porta
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- . Atilio Baratta
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- . Alejandro Lotti
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- . Shawn Bohem
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- . Milano Harden
- . Angela Johnston
- . Frances Kunreuther
- . Christine Letts
- . Mark Moore
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- . John Hatch
- . W. Patrick Haun
- . Carter Holbrook
- . Beverly Jones
- . William Thurston

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- . John McClusky
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- . Sue Richards

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- . Liz Livingston Howard
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143 individuals participated on Building Bridges project teams throughout the initiative.

Portland State University

- Maria Elena Campisteguy
- Lawrence Dark
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- Suzanne Feeney
- G. McFadden
- Dennis Morrow

State University of New York

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- Motier Haskins
- Nadya Lawson
- Judith Saidel
- Margery Saunders

The Learning Institute

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- Terry Gibson
- Andy Lewis
- Ronnie Stricklin

Universidad Bolivariana de Chile

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- Antonio Elizalde
- Soledad Teixidó

Universidad De Los Andes

- Maria C. Burgos
- Roberto Gutierrez
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- Ivani Tristan

University of Texas at San Antonio

- Dwight Henderson
- Richard Lewis
- Carol Petri
- Heywood Sanders
- Linda Schott
- Dennis M. Tynan

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- Tracey Mabrey
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**22 individuals participated on
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