

Creating Linkages Among Community-Based Organizations, the University, and Public Housing Entities

Jerome Lieberman
Florida Community Partnership Center
University of South Florida

Jerry Miller
Florida Community Partnership Center
University of South Florida

Virginia Kohl
Florida Community Partnership Center
University of South Florida

Abstract

Recognizing the extent to which public housing authorities (PHAs) affect their tenants and surrounding communities, HUD has developed several initiatives to address the significant social and economic problems associated with PHAs. One such program is the university-based Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC), a modest initiative by HUD standards that is not yet integrated with its larger programs. The University of South Florida's Florida Community Partnership Center is a COPC that has successfully collaborated with community-based organizations to form a multifaceted partnership team. Its collaborative-building approach allows for improved strategies and services that enhance outcomes for public housing and neighboring residents. This process has led to public- and private-sector buy-in and is replicable at other universities.

With more than 3,000 public housing entities throughout the Nation (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1999), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the public housing authorities (PHAs) have an enormous responsibility for the conditions of these properties and the impact these structures and developments have on the surrounding neighborhoods. Residents of public housing experience more extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunity than do others in the same neighborhoods. Similarly, a disproportionate number of welfare recipients reside in public housing. Public housing developments have significant economic and social problems that

extend to the larger community: crime, poor health, high incidence of drug use, domestic abuse, family dysfunction, low educational attainment, and unemployment.

Recognizing the extent to which PHAs' activities affect their tenants and surrounding communities, HUD has developed several initiatives to address the aforementioned issues. Many projects have received long-term funding in a quest to develop workable solutions. One such program involves the university-based Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPCs). A modest initiative by HUD standards, COPCs represent an attempt to cease simply "throwing money at the problem" and to create viable solutions to urban problems. The program recognized the unique resources a university can bring to bear on conditions often deemed intractable, but, more optimistically, are manageable with appropriate planning, implementation, community involvement, and accountability. Universities are a source of knowledge and skills, and they bring additional resources and credibility to multifarious redevelopment activities.

The University of South Florida's (USF's) Florida Community Partnership Center (FCPC) has collaborated with community-based organizations (CBOs) to form a multifaceted partnership that brought PHAs and residents into formal working relationships with USF and non-PHA residents. This collaborative-building approach allows for improved strategies and services that enhance outcomes for public housing and other affected residents. This process has led to public/private sector buy-in for these activities at USF and is replicable elsewhere.

Universities have an important role to play in the life of the communities that house them. Not surprisingly, some support this role with more efficacy than others do. Substantial progress has been achieved in the area of university-community partnerships, but much remains to be discovered and fully implemented. HUD's demonstration program of university-based COPCs represents one systematic endeavor to create and facilitate meaningful university-community partnerships. The selection of the fifth round of COPC awards recently has been announced, signifying that the initiative will have a minimum 5-year baseline in which to review and assess activities, accomplishments, and what has been learned.

When initial awards were made to universities in 1994, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros stated that university recipients would be utilizing agency resources far beyond direct institutional contracted amounts. Cisneros said that these resources were to be more reflective of HUD's multibillion dollar congressional appropriation. However, there has been no mechanism, administrative or regulatory, within HUD to motivate COPC recipients to collaborate with public housing authorities. Nor have there been structures within the agency to orchestrate viable connections and positive outcomes between COPCs and the decentralizing and disparate HUD programs. In a political and administrative environment favoring devolution and decentralization, higher education-community partnerships may offer unique assets and opportunities to facilitate HUD programs and community building.

Although initial funding for COPC was set aside from the Community Development Block Grants program (CDBG), oversight was given to the Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R). This office was separate and distinct from those offices overseeing public housing, community development, and controlling the billions of dollars Cisneros suggested COPCs could access. PD&R, which housed the Office of University Partnerships (OUP), was inadequately staffed and funded compared with other HUD units. Only through voluntary cooperation could PD&R obtain support from HUD's public housing

office for building strong linkages between HUD-funded university programs and local public housing agencies—primarily by interfacing with regional and local HUD offices and their public housing specialists.

Minimizing the likelihood of COPCs collaborating with public housing authorities was the fact that competitive grants available to public housing authorities, such as Homeownership and Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) VI and Economic Development Self-Sufficiency (EDSS), were reviewed by HUD staff members in Washington who were often unfamiliar with the small COPC initiative housed in the PD&R office. It would therefore take extremely positive, lengthy, and informal networking between public housing, CDBG, and Enterprise Community (EC) staffers to ensure effective university-community and public housing partnerships.

During the second year of the COPC program, OUP staffers organized regional workshops to profile the activities of COPC-funded universities. Senior staffers in Washington invited public housing officials, local CDBG administrators, and personnel from regional and local HUD offices to attend these sessions. The local offices play a formidable role in matters affecting PHAs, property, and residents.

Workshops of this kind appeared enlightening, since many in attendance were not familiar with HUD's COPC programs and OUP. However, it is not clear what these workshops yielded with respect to furthering communications and forging specific and sustainable partnerships between universities, PHAs, and the local HUD offices.

Any relationship between the larger HUD programs and the universities were formed on an ad hoc basis. While the original USF COPC application did not refer to a PHA, it did participate in the application by the city of Tampa for a HUD Enterprise Community award that was submitted through the Florida Department of Community Affairs. In this way USF would be involved with larger HUD initiatives. USF's role would be to provide technical assistance and applied research to preidentified, nonprofit, community-based partners. In other words, USF's vision was to bring the assets of the university to work in partnership with community-based partners and, with them, government agencies. This would leverage local-based resources and knowledge with national initiatives, forging a partnership that benefits the community.

The Importance of Developing Partnerships With CBOs To Connect Universities, Public Housing, and the Community

Both the Tampa and the St. Petersburg Housing Authorities are governed by appointed boards that set policy and select an executive director. Sometimes these boards are carryovers from a previously elected administration, and therefore, are not necessarily in accord with the new administration. In addition to the appointed policymaking boards, HUD mandates that residents have an opportunity to participate in shaping policy through resident housing councils (RHCs). RHCs, however, are limited in authority and are reliant on the formal and legal governing boards and their appointed senior salaried officials to voluntarily share power with them.

While Florida Community Partnership Center (FCPC) collaborates very closely with all of these agencies, it also recognizes the importance, if not necessity, of forging primary and initial partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs). This bottom-up approach can be essential to successfully implementing activities in impoverished neighborhoods. Without the active involvement of the residents, the implementation of these activities tends to falter or may even be actively opposed.

But working with CBOs goes beyond implementing successful programmatic initiatives; ideally, it builds an infrastructure in the neighborhood that can create long-term capacity to address empowerment and self-sufficiency issues. CBOs can be more representative of, and sensitive to, residents' priorities and concerns. (Baum, 1997; Chaskin and Brown, 1996). In addition, CBOs have the opportunity to be flexible entities that prefer tangible outcomes to being rule-driven. In order to receive and maintain funding from government or private donors, CBOs frequently are asked to demonstrate the extent to which their boards are representative and reflective of their geographic and service area. There is no such requirement or expectation regarding membership of PHAs. While some authorities have made it local policy to appoint one or more local residents to the PHA governing board, appointees must be sensitive to the elected public official who appointed them, and in whose hands their tenure resides. In addition, the public officials that make the appointments are largely elected citywide and are not just accountable for their actions to the residents of the local neighborhoods, whereas CBOs and Community Development Corporations (CDCs), specialized CBOs that have an economic development mission, focus their activities in a particular area or neighborhood.

Local representation and responsiveness is further hampered by the PHA's need to gain approval for use of HUD dollars from the agency. Here in Florida—specifically Tampa and St. Petersburg—proposal review and approval can necessitate either the local (Tampa), district (Jacksonville), or national HUD office's involvement, depending on what action is being sought and where in the HUD bureaucratic structure the responsible program officer is located. CDCs are not burdened by lengthy bureaucratic delays unless they create them within their own organization. Decisionmaking is in-house, and the quality and effectiveness of a CDC's decisions will determine its availability and relationship with the community.

Initially forging community-based partnerships is preferred to initiating preliminary collaboration with public or quasi-public agencies. Once the CBO partnership is established, reaching out to and working with supportive agencies results in a more effective collaborative structure.

Collaboration with CBOs ameliorates the recurrent dilemma faced by COPCs such as FCPC at USF: How can the university be involved in improving the quality of life for the most impoverished residents of inner-city neighborhoods—who are, more often than not, residents of public housing—without becoming ensnared in conflicts arising between residents and boards of public housing? CBOs offer the best opportunity to avoid such conflicts because they tend to be grassroots organizations that are an integral part of the community.

FCPC, at its inception, recognized that the CBOs' potential for neighborhood revitalization was contingent upon their capacity to effectively undertake community economic development. The core mission of FCPC evolved to building the capacity of CBOs through the provision of technical assistance, applied research, facilitation, and fundraising.

The Process of Developing Partnerships With Community-Based Organizations: Cases in Point

The Corporation to Develop Communities (CDC) of Tampa grew from the embryo of an advisory group of College Hill residents and other interested parties. This group had been meeting at the Lee Davis Neighborhood Service Center (a governmental health and social services center) located between the College Hill and Ponce de Leon public

housing complexes, which had a population of 1100 families (Washington, 1999) before HOPE VI relocation and demolition began.

The appointed director of the Lee Davis Neighborhood Service Center, which was built with State dollars but operated with local government funding, sought input from the community to provide a means for nongovernment site workers and external facility decisionmakers to become involved with the center and provide further guidance. The advisory group identified strengths and weaknesses in services being provided and significant gaps that needed to be addressed. The paucity of community economic development activities in the College Hill/East Tampa area was paramount to the group and the Center's director. Eventually, the group incorporated as a 501(c)(3), CDC of Tampa, with the express purpose of engaging primarily in community economic development functions. CDC of Tampa maintains a close relationship with Lee Davis Neighborhood Services Center, the Tampa Housing Authority (THA), and the RHCs. FCPC, which had provided technical assistance since CDC of Tampa's inception, has continued to be a partner. Each organization has included the other in funding proposals, and both have jointly undertaken activities. For example, FCPC brought CDC of Tampa into THA's EDSS grant application that FCPC took a leadership role in developing.

The purpose of providing assistance was to build economic development and organizational capacity. This enabled CDC of Tampa to develop resources to provide job placement and training, business development, and microlending services for neighborhood residents, including those in public housing.

It was the partnership FCPC developed with the CDC of Tampa that attracted the attention of a national intermediary funded by HUD, the Ford Foundation, and others. Through a grant from HUD, the Structured Employment and Economic Development Corporation (SEEDCO) conducted a national assessment that included 16 communities identified as having effective partnerships with anchor institutions such as universities and hospitals. After a lengthy analysis, including site visits from its national offices, SEEDCO chose FCPC's partnership with CDC of Tampa as one of just four to provide technical assistance and funding for commercial development. SEEDCO, CDC of Tampa, and FCPC staff collaborated on the revitalization of a commercial strip adjacent to the largest public housing complex in Tampa. This resulted in the development and opening of the first new commercial business construction in the neighborhood in almost 40 years. It also yielded a business incubator that had not previously existed.

It was through CDC of Tampa that FCPC was introduced to Churches United to Transform Tampa (CUTT). This consortium of African-American churches has membership that is largely based in East Tampa, where the College Hill and Ponce de Leon projects are located. CUTT, like FCPC and CDC of Tampa, is closely linked to residents of public housing because many residents are parishioners of CUTT churches and have high regard for the pastors.

Initially, the programmatic relationship between CUTT and FCPC was focused on educational rather than community economic development, because CUTT membership believed local public education inadequately addressed the needs of its congregates. Through a vast outpouring of sweat equity, the churches renovated a portion of their facilities to accommodate preschool and afterschool programs. FCPC provided, at no charge, the services of USF Federal Work-Study Program students, some of whom were matriculating in educational program development. FCPC also assisted in securing computers, programs, and playground equipment. More recently, FCPC has linked CUTT members with the Florida charter school coordinator in its application process for charter

school status. All of these activities have significantly advanced FCPC community-based relationships and credibility. The return to FCPC is that these CBOs have become advocates for university involvement in the neighborhood. They have informed residents and parishioners that USF is sincere and helpful in meaningful ways—a true resource to use and with whom to partner. This support strengthens FCPC's institutionalization process within USF and leads to the commitment of greater resources to its efforts.

One concrete example of USF's commitment to the institutionalization of its community involvement is the executive vice-president and provost's establishment of a Community and Urban Initiative Task Force, on which FCPC's director served in the fall 1998 semester. This task force was one of eight created to develop USF's strategic plan. The plan was completed during summer 1999 and shapes the University's direction for the next decade.

FCPC's ability to remain a strong and trusted partner with diverse, but respected community-based partners has proven especially beneficial in addressing factional and fragmentation issues that historically have contributed to the failure to develop coherent, sustainable, and broadly supported neighborhood improvement strategies. There are profound policy implications for local government and housing authorities if policymakers are disinclined to take decisive action when there are significant divisions within the community, especially in the potentially volatile inner-city neighborhoods where the needs are greatest.

Equally important, in our experience, policymakers are less likely to respond favorably to the wishes of the local residents without clear and convincing manifestation of broad-based support. In some respects, this is a defensible posture. But in the absence of a broadly supported strategy for neighborhood improvement, no one benefits. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance that FCPC employs a competent and successful outreach approach that achieves organizational capacity building and consensus among important community organizations and neighborhood residents.

In Florence Villa, one of the initial targeted neighborhoods, FCPC was determined to take an active role in the formation of a CDC. Over a period of several years, a CDC was formed that included existing nonprofit neighborhood organizations in its core membership. Located largely in the city limits of Winter Haven but overlapping into an unincorporated portion of Polk County, Florence Villa is smaller than East Tampa but similar in its demographics. The significant difference, however, is the great degree of cohesion and unity displayed by CBOs in Florence Villa and the subsequent recognition of the CDC by municipal, county, and PHA officials and partners. The result has been considerable collaboration and the infusion of substantial resources into the community to promote economic development. The Florence Villa CDC is now involved in job placement, affordable housing, microlending, adult education, and vocational training activities. Because there is no single umbrella organization in East Tampa that coordinates the many diverse and often competing factions, orchestrated collaboration remains a major challenge to providing best services for the community.

In order to achieve and maintain credibility, FCPC has consistently provided deliverables to its community-based partners. These deliverables included funding for a resident to function as a community organizer and facilitator, funding a portion of the CDC staff costs, securing grants and loans for CDCs to implement strategic plans, supplying gap financing when necessary, providing computer hardware and software as well as the expertise to make use of it, placing work-study students to perform locally determined functions, and creating linkages with intermediaries and developers as well as providing other services mutually agreed upon as necessary and appropriate to achieve desired results.

Establishing credibility was particularly important in south St. Petersburg. FCPC created a partnership with the Phoenix Enterprise Group, a CDC originally established to produce and sell single-family homes in the Bartlett Park neighborhood. The president of this organization, as at CDC of Tampa, had grown up in the neighborhood; was acutely aware of the changes that had occurred since the urban renewal efforts of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; and had excellent rapport with many of the residents, local businesspeople, and officials. His cooperation was critical to FCPC gaining the audience of other neighborhood organizations and leaders, including members of the Jordan Park Public Housing Resident Council and management personnel. As a result, both residents and management welcomed FCPC to establish a one-stop career/jobs center onsite. As bureaucratic problems emerged in locating and operating out of the public housing complex, which conceivably could have strained and undermined FCPC's relationship with public housing residents and management, Phoenix's involvement proved constructive and helpful. These events validated FCPC's position that a strong partnership with CBOs was invaluable.

Verbalizing the importance of public-private partnerships, collaborative, holistic strategies, and university outreach initiatives has become fashionable (Boyer, 1990; Harkavy, 1997; Lynton and Elman, 1987; and Weinberg, 1999). How to create, design, and sustain these initiatives successfully, however, is not well understood. It is always important to think carefully and plan strategically in creating these partnerships. But FCPC's experience also has shown that seizing opportunities when they present themselves is as important as the quality of written proposals and plans. For example, there was no formal relationship between FCPC and THA when the original COPC application was submitted to HUD. Yet the most critical needs for improvement in all of USF's service delivery areas are manifested in areas under THA's jurisdiction. The opportunity to commence a relationship came in the form of THA's request for assistance with its Resident Enterprise Assistance Program. FCPC recognized the potential significance of this development and acted accordingly, although this activity was not part of the original workplan submitted to HUD. Eventually, THA staff began to see the value and advantages of a linkage to university resources and assistance. As a result, USF was invited to assist, on a pro bono basis, in THA's EDSS application to HUD.

The EDSS proposal, largely organized and drafted by USF, incorporated CDC of Tampa and other community resources to increase collaboration and maximize use of existing resources. The proposal was funded as a result of the quality of the State collaborative and the leveraging of resources within HUD to further partnership between HUD and other organizations. The memorandum of agreement that followed expanded the established partnership between FCPC and CDC of Tampa to include THA, the Tampa-Hillsborough Urban League, and the local community college. Crucial collaboration that had not been mandated by HUD or other organizations began to occur anyway, a chain of events set in motion when THA originally sought FCPC's help to strengthen its small business training program for residents.

The Role of Local HUD Offices in University-Community Partnerships

FCPC recognized the importance of attempting to engage, if not simply familiarize, local and regional HUD offices in its community-based activities. USF received its COPC award from the national office, and the relationship was between that office and USF. The local HUD office in Tampa and the regional office in Jacksonville had not participated in the process, did not seem privy to the decision or how it was made, and were reluctant to become involved. In effect, the local offices were left out of the decisionmaking loop and did not understand the intent of COPC nor how universities funded directly out of

headquarters could help or hinder their efforts in working with local PHAs, RHCs, CDBG programs, and local governments.

In 1995, exemplifying the increasing devolution of power and authority within HUD from the national to the regional level, the responsibility of administering contractors for technical assistance in affordable housing for this region was given to the Jacksonville HUD office. However, the contractors—national consulting companies—were selected by the national HUD office. HUD's regional office would then finalize a contract and workplan with the national vendor chosen by HUD's national office, but only for the portion of the plan that included Florida. FCPC learned this information when arrangements were made to meet with regional HUD personnel at the Jacksonville office. FCPC's position was that, although Jacksonville was unfamiliar with what universities could provide in terms of technical assistance to local governments and CBOs, information should be provided to the local HUD office in order to ascertain how expertise and resources could be shared and benefits maximized. FCPC wanted very much to develop a relationship with the local HUD office and asked the national HUD office administering COPC to support this effort. To accommodate this request, the Office of University Partnerships communicated directly with the regional HUD office in Jacksonville.

The process that USF's COPC went through in contacting the Jacksonville HUD office was informal. Its motive was to familiarize the Jacksonville office with what USF had been funded by HUD to do and to seek ways in which all stakeholders in neighborhood improvements could benefit. One tangible outcome from the meeting in Jacksonville was a jointly sponsored affordable housing workshop held at USF's campus. There was one technical assistance provider selected by the national HUD office to offer assistance to established Florida Community Housing Development Organizations and to those organizations across the State seeking such a designation. FCPC worked with the national vendor to identify prospective invitees from the central Florida area and arranged the logistical aspects, including space, equipment, parking, refreshments, and communications at no cost to the vendor.

This workshop was attended by 43 organizations, far exceeding the number of participants anticipated. Based upon postsession attendee evaluations, the workshop was both informative and helpful. The workshop was intended to be a precursor to more extensive ongoing technical assistance services. Meaningful followup required applicants to commit to several extended weekends. Most FCPC-sponsored attendees were unable to invest the time and resources necessary to benefit from the existing out-of-state services for technical support. Tampa Bay-area CBOs involved with or interested in affordable housing needed local training.

Since FCPC's experience with the Jacksonville HUD office and the resulting affordable housing workshop, significant policy directive changes have been issued by HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo. In many respects, these directives are logical extensions of statements published during the previous HUD Secretary's term of office. Local HUD offices are being asked to assume more on-the-ground responsibility for community building. In the central Florida HUD office (serving Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Orlando), either key agency personnel or the responsibilities of key personnel have changed. New positions have been established according to the 2020 Plan, while some existing positions have been eliminated. Staff, performing in new community-building roles, are expected to develop partnerships that result in significant improvements in communities where HUD is heavily invested.

Secretary Cuomo's plans for HUD appear to be quite consistent with Congress' desire for Federal resource allocation to be determined with greater flexibility and, to the extent possible, locally. This expectation is based on the notion that where there are local Federal offices—as is often the case with HUD—such offices are better positioned to be helpful as partners. The implications of the new directives from HUD are being felt in the Tampa area. Local HUD officials have contacted FCPC to discuss how it can be of assistance in providing space for a statewide training session, administered by the Atlanta office, in public housing procurement practices. This request, while not profound in initiating closer programmatic initiatives between FCPC and the local HUD office, provided an excellent opening for more ambitious collaboration to be placed on the agenda. FCPC requested, and the local HUD office agreed, that the training session would be cohosted by both organizations. HUD also concurred with FCPC that the session would provide a good opportunity for PHA officials and HUD staff from around Florida to learn firsthand about FCPC neighborhood revitalization activities: working with local PHAs and CBOs in capacity building and partnership development. The collaboration between FCPC and HUD in making arrangements for the training session culminated in the development of a formal and more profound program agenda of mutual assistance between USF and HUD. This agenda, as stated by staff of the local HUD office in Tampa, included the following:

- Technical assistance that is potentially available to communities and PHAs.
- Localized training the university could offer to the local HUD staff.
- Data and information on local conditions that are available through the university.
- Identifying and sharing information on ways in which the local HUD office and FCPC could assist the local communities (such as, potential Neighborhood Network centers, current HOPE VI initiatives, and workshops for small business).

Policy Implications of Decentralization and Impact on Roles

HUD's decision to decentralize will inevitably affect other policies. As more of the decisionmaking processes are devolved to the local level, it is advantageous that providers for monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance be local. HUD-contracted services for technical assistance are often given to out-of-state consultants. While this approach can be effective in some situations, it may unduly limit the quality of information and the programmatic and strategic services available to local PHAs and other HUD initiatives.

Frequently, there is a lack of knowledge of local conditions, including acquaintance with PHA staff and directors, awareness of agencies that can provide effective resources, and understanding of the political landscape and history of the area. This missing contextual element inevitably limits the relevance and applicability of any assistance (Joseph and Ogletree, 1998). If theory and practice were one and the same, the problems of self-sufficiency and empowerment would have been solved long ago.

Universities can play a central role in some of these activities. They offer both contextual understanding and expertise. They also must live with the consequences of their services, good and bad. Like the PHA, the university does not disappear when funding expires. Both are long-term residents of the community. If the university performs poorly, it is unable to throw up its hands and leave town. It will either need to withdraw from the partnership or redesign its efforts.

Assuming the relationship works well once established, it is likely to remain intact independently of specific funding streams. Our experience has demonstrated long-term benefits for residents. The financial aspect of any technical assistance contract should be viewed as a method to facilitate and maintain an effective partnership. Beyond the specific funding, benefits include joint inclusion on projects and programs. For example, PHAs can be included in funding opportunities available only to universities, such as FCPC has done with its community partners. Faculty can be utilized as an informal advisory board. FCPC has used on-campus transportation and urban design experts to address critical neighborhood issues. Federal Work-Study Program students have been stationed by FCPC at various community sites.

As HUD moves into community-building activity, it is attempting to retrain its staff with backgrounds in administration and procurement to become community facilitators. Myriad difficulties are inescapable in such an undertaking. The original COPCs have been involved in this type of partnership building for nearly 5 years. It would be a regrettably missed opportunity if COPCs were not enlisted to assist HUD in this transition.

Consequently, for HUD to ignore willing university partners disallows its opportunity to utilize local expertise, additional resources, and a knowledge and skill base that is unparalleled in most communities. As the decentralization process continues, local HUD officials will need local information and more access to technical assistance. There will also be increased accountability for outcomes, and a university's ability to undertake evaluation is an added enhancement.

University-community partnerships need to be managed properly, however, and be accountable for outcomes. Therefore, it is incumbent on all partners to define expectations and outcomes. The most successful contracts between FCPC and PHAs had clearly identified outcomes and milestones. Projects under these conditions were not micromanaged but instead were given a clear series of desired measures and outcomes. Accountability is the key to effective programmatic initiatives.

FCPC provides a good example not only of how COPCs may relieve themselves of their reliance on Federal grants and maintain sustenance after grant funding has expired, but also of how COPCs may contribute to service integration during a period of devolution and decentralization. By leveraging COPC dollars with funding it received from the State of Florida to establish and operate one-stop community-based employment centers in the Tampa Bay region, FCPC established the kind of collaborative network that promises local funding for its initiatives.

COPC funds were used in conjunction with EDSS funding from both THA and the St. Petersburg Housing Authority (SPHA) through subcontracting arrangements. Funding from the State allowed FCPC to address the concerns of THA and SPHA residents as well as those in the surrounding non-PHA communities. By combining these funding streams, there was a large enough population to bring vocational training and job fairs onsite. FCPC was also able to work with other agencies onsite to create a more comprehensive system of services (for example, a resource center for jobseekers, complete with tutorials, training, and computer skills enhancement) that EDSS alone would not be able to provide.

FCPC estimates the value of its contribution to the EDSS program in Tampa at more than \$30,000. Its activities have included provision of career assessment software and customized case management software, development of reporting forms, program planning, postage, and many other necessary items.

The ability of the university to facilitate the inclusion of additional partnerships and funding sources goes beyond the leveraging of existing funds. One proposal FCPC submitted included the public school system, the community college system, two CBOs, USF, and others in order to bring an unprecedented level of resources to assist the PHA. These resources were designed to address health, education, employment, and social service needs comprehensively. FCPC's initiative helped make such a coalition possible.

Conclusion: Encouraging and Sustaining Linkages Among Community-Based Organizations, the University, and Public Housing Entities

HUD has recognized that the strength and abilities of universities make them meaningful partners in community revitalization. It has contracted with Tulane and Xavier Universities to monitor the local PHA in New Orleans (Kreutziger, Ager, Harrell, and Wright, 1999). It will be a significant oversight if this initiative does not expand to integrate universities with larger HUD initiatives. With nearly 5 years of baseline information to reflect on, a reasonable analysis of the value of these partnerships should make this case very strongly.

Universities can also be helpful in matters other than some of the community revitalization activities discussed in this paper. After HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo took office, one of his first undertakings was reorganization. From that process the "Urban Peace Corps," a program dedicated to the revitalization of America's cities, was formulated. The position of *community builder* was created as a single point of contact within HUD. The role of a community builder, as envisioned by Cuomo, was to provide information for HUD programs and funding on a local basis. Community building was to be done on a neighborhood basis, to enable communities to tailor strategies and programs to address local needs, and to solve problems. COPCs can be especially useful in working with HUD community builders to expedite their learning curve, and simultaneously—through evaluative monitoring and the reported role of COPCs as prescribed in this article—to strengthen local linkages through measures of accountability for results.

Existing COPCs can also assist HUD district offices that either have no local COPC or have one not sufficiently geared up to be of utmost assistance. The more experienced and accomplished COPCs could mentor those that are less developed through a mentoring and technical assistance process. The HUD secretary is in the best position to see that this occurs and to ensure that it is done professionally and systematically.

From the experience of FCPC at USF, it is clear that a COPC can function effectively as an intermediary. USF is facilitating linkages between the city of St. Petersburg, the administration and residents of the Jordan Park Public Housing Facility, the local HUD office and its community builders assigned to St. Petersburg, and CBOs. The CBOs are responsible for most of the neighborhood revitalization efforts, including affordable housing construction, jobs, and contracts for residents and local minority vendors, through massive public-works dollars from HOPE VI. USF has played a vital role in facilitation, coordination, and technical assistance throughout the process. For example, USF was asked to take responsibility for facilitating the development of a construction training project that will benefit unemployed and underemployed residents, including those residing in the PHA developments. This is a joint activity with another COPC, at the University of Florida, that has national stature in construction and affordable housing. This collaboration resulted in a commitment by the Fannie Mae Foundation to provide both institutions with a grant to strengthen the local linkages.

As a self-sustaining COPC, FCPC recommends that HUD's secretary designate universities, selected through HUD's highly competitive peer review process for COPCs, as local intermediaries. The secretary should mandate that local HUD offices make full and effective use of university COPC resources. Community builders, delegated by the secretary, should be the vital link between local HUD offices and university COPCs.

A monitoring and evaluation plan conducted quarterly by the university should be based upon clear and previously stated outcomes and benchmarks. The report would include how well the linkages between the local HUD office, the university, PHA, and CBOs are working. It would be disseminated to the local HUD office and to the secretary of HUD, as well as to local partners and the media. Such reporting would substantially further accountability on the part of local partners and more fully achieve HUD's stated objectives, both specified and intended, in the 2020 plan that created the community builder position.

Authors

Jerome Lieberman founded and presently directs the Florida Community Partnership Center at the University of South Florida. HUD awarded the center a first-round grant to establish a Community Outreach Partnership Center. It was one of only six centers last year to receive the highly coveted first-round New Directions grant. Lieberman has more than three decades of experience in higher education and community outreach. Much of his work has been in developing partnerships among universities, community-based organizations, and local agencies. He earned his Ph.D. in political science at New York University.

Jerry Miller directs the one-stop employment and self-sufficiency programs at the Florida Community Partnership Center at the University of South Florida. He is also responsible for community-based business development. He owned a business for many years before coming to the center. He is currently working on his Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology.

Virginia Kohl, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication, works at the Florida Community Partnership Center as a writer. She is also the educational enrichment coordinator for GEAR-UP, a Federal initiative that makes postsecondary education an option and a goal for impoverished middle school students.

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