2009

Foundation Readiness for Community Transformation: Learning in Real Time

Prudence Brown
Independent Consultant

Marie Colombo
The Skillman Foundation

Della M. Hughes
Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University

Recommended Citation

Foundation Readiness for Community Transformation: Learning in Real Time

Prudence Brown, Ph.D., Independent Consultant;
Marie Colombo, M.A., The Skillman Foundation;
Della M. Hughes, M.S.S.W., Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University

Introduction

Foundations sponsoring community change initiatives typically devote considerable time to assessing community readiness as they consider how to select communities that are most ready to take advantage of the resources and opportunities that the initiative will afford. What are the existing assets and momentum on which to build? Is there sufficient nonprofit capacity and community leadership? Are markets, politics, and regional forces sufficiently aligned to suggest a promising fit with the foundation's approach to community change?

Once they select the target communities, foundations then turn to strategies to enhance readiness and lay the groundwork for full-scale implementation. Reflecting an appreciation for the time it takes to build the collective will and capacity to execute an ambitious community change agenda, many multiyear, foundation-supported initiatives begin with a one- to three-year planning, early implementation, or "readiness" phase during which organizational capacity is built, stakeholders and partners are engaged, and early investments are made.

Increasingly over the last decade, foundations investing in community change initiatives have recognized their own critical role in determining the outcomes of this work and have become more intentional about their own readiness for effective implementation. Thus, a foundation as-

Key Points

· This article describes the internal structures and processes adopted by The Skillman Foundation to support the iterative practice of "learning and doing" in the first phase of a rapidly evolving, ambitious community change enterprise in six Detroit neighborhoods.

· The foundation invested in its own and its partners' capacity to learn in real time so that together they could adjust and readjust their strategies in response to initial results and, in doing so, deepen their working relationships and build further capacity for effective implementation.

· Challenges to supporting this learning culture included increased visibility and pressures to produce results and measurable outcomes, significant workload and time constraints for the staff, and difficulties in keeping communications consistent among the foundation staff, board, intermediaries, and grantees.

· To align its internal structure with its external goals, the foundation changed program officer job descriptions and policies and procedures to allow more flexibility in work hours; created the new positions of Knowledge Management Officer and Special Projects Officer; and used a consent agenda with the board to streamline grantmaking.

· The foundation created a "learning team" that used a program logic model and other evaluation and learning mechanisms to foster ongoing candid discussion and build capacity to work in new ways. Although it is still a work in progress, logic model thinking is leading to greater clarity about the activities and intended results.

sessing community readiness might also consider whether its own structure, leadership, staff roles, internal systems, and culture make it ready for the role it has envisioned for itself as sponsor. This article represents the first report in an ongoing case study about one foundation's efforts to change the way it works internally to support successful implementation of its community change agenda. More specifically, it is about developing foundation readiness to learn in real time — to stay focused on results while continually refining and adjusting its operation to respond to a rapidly evolving community change enterprise.

> *Our goal is to promote real-time learning within the foundation and encourage candid exchange and problem solving about the many challenges inherent in mounting an ambitious community change effort. We view the opportunity to share some of our observations with the broader field as an indication of the foundation's genuine commitment to continuous improvement and knowledge development.*

We use the Skillman Foundation's multifaceted change effort in six neighborhoods in Detroit, Mich., referred to in this article as Detroit Works for Kids, as a vehicle for exploring the dynamics of foundation readiness. The article can only convey a snapshot of a complex undertaking very much in development. But we think there is value in examining and sharing it now because many of the readiness issues facing this foundation are ones with which others have struggled, not always successfully. Although any philanthropic endeavor must attend to aligning internal structures and

operations with external goals (Connolly, 2008), the hands-on, experimental nature of community change work and the large number of partners with whom the foundation needs to work over many years create special internal challenges for foundations mounting community change efforts.

We begin by providing some background on Detroit Works for Kids and on the foundation's early decisions and readiness activities that set the stage for our analysis. Then we focus on one of the fundamental tensions in the initial phase of multisite, complex community change work: building the capacity to do the work while actually launching it and producing results (referred to by some at the foundation as "building the bike while riding it"). This is followed by a discussion of how the development of an evaluation framework for the Readiness Phase of Detroit Works for Kids was used to support foundation learning. The framework has been a useful tool for the foundation as it works to become a high-performance learning operation with a disciplined focus on the strategies most likely to achieve long-term impact on children and youth. The article ends with some reflections on the learning team's approach.

We, the authors of the article, play three different roles in the Skillman Foundation's community change work: one is the foundation's knowledge management officer, the second is the university-based evaluator of the work, and the third is an outside evaluation consultant. Together, we constitute a learning team that has met at least monthly and communicated much more frequently for more than a year. Our stance as a team is decidedly engaged and focused on advancing success, using evaluation as a learning and management tool. Our goal is to promote real-time learning within the foundation and encourage candid exchange and problem solving about the many challenges inherent in mounting an ambitious community change effort. We view the opportunity to share some of our observations with the broader field as an indication of the foundation's genuine commitment to continuous improvement and knowledge development. The challenges that will be evident in the discus-

sion that follows are not unique to the Skillman Foundation but are rarely subjected to public scrutiny and learning in real time. We hope that doing so will stimulate useful dialogue because we are convinced that the thoughtful, intentional way that the foundation has approached these issues has contributed to the success of its work in the community.

Background on Detroit Works for Kids

Children growing up in Detroit confront harsh social, economic, and educational realities. Though the city's child poverty rate dropped significantly in the 1990s, it rose from 34.8% in 2000 to 48.2% in 2007 (US Census Bureau, 2007). As the largest city in Michigan, Detroit disproportionately bears the burdens of the state's job losses and the declining manufacturing sector, as reflected in its low rate of labor force participation, high rate of unemployment, and skyrocketing foreclosure rates. These structural problems exacerbate the challenges faced by the city's schools, service systems, and programs to provide the supports and opportunities children need to thrive and succeed.

The Skillman Foundation has spent almost fifty years working to improve the lives of children in Detroit, investing in worthwhile programs and strategies that created positive outcomes for many children. The limited scale of these programs and the persistence of poor indicators of child well-being, however, led the foundation's leadership to restructure its work and target its resources in six neighborhoods where, collectively, more than 65,000 (about 30%) of Detroit's children live. The new direction, Detroit Works for Kids, constitutes a 10-year, $100 million commitment that aims to ensure that children living in the six targeted neighborhoods are safe, healthy, well-educated, and prepared for adulthood. Launched in 2006, Detroit Works for Kids involves a range of development, school- and system-change strategies, in concert with various public and private partners as well as with residents and other stakeholders. The foundation envisioned a one- to two-year community planning process and a two- to three-year Readiness Phase, followed by a longer-term Implementation period.

Like other foundations sponsoring multisite community change efforts, the Skillman Foundation had to decide whether to manage Detroit Works for Kids itself or delegate primary responsibility and oversight to an intermediary or managing partner (Brown, 2005). At the outset, the foundation chose to adopt a hybrid approach whereby it retained a significant role in the design and implementation of the work but contracted with two intermediaries to facilitate the community engagement and planning process and to provide ongoing technical assistance in each neighborhood. Foundation leadership viewed this approach as one that would take advantage of its "embeddedness" in the community (Karlstrom et al., 2007) without requiring a significant addition of new staff. It could draw upon the foundation's deep knowledge about Detroit, its skilled staff, and their relationships with a wide range of public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders and organizations, while still outsourcing much of the intensive organizing and capacity-building work in each of the six neighborhoods.

Though this article focuses on growing foundation capacity during the initial phase of an ambitious community change agenda, foundation staff and trustees began getting ready for Detroit Works for Kids as it was being developed. Indeed, they devoted substantial effort to extensive readiness-building activities, such as:

- Examining lessons and best practices from past and current community change initiatives and their evaluations.
- Making site visits to communities engaged in successful change activities.
- Gathering and analyzing neighborhood and regional data.
- Creating an initial theory of change.
- Testing and then building support for the work with key constituencies.
- Restructuring staff roles to reduce program silos.
- Developing enhanced communications capacity.
- Changing internal policies to support the community change work by instituting, for example, flexible work schedules to accommodate the

increasing evening and weekend work required for community engagement.

- Developing a consent agenda process to allow for funding decisions of $250,000 or less between trustee meetings in order to be more nimble and responsive to emerging opportunities.
- Creating two new staff positions: a Knowledge Management Officer to oversee learning and evaluation and a Special Projects Officer to focus on "change making" activities involving influence, scale, and leverage.

These and other readiness activities positioned the foundation to launch Detroit Works for Kids and set the context for our snapshot almost three years into the work. Although many readiness activities are underway in the neighborhoods, where much exciting development has taken place, the focus of this article is exclusively on the iterative process of learning and doing through which the foundation became increasingly ready internally to improve the lives of children and youth in six neighborhoods in Detroit.

Building the Bike While Riding It

Foundation staff involved in launching community change efforts like Detroit Works for Kids take on a host of new, often untested, roles and responsibilities. By becoming a central actor in the change process, the foundation defined Detroit Works for Kids not as an isolated initiative, but as a new way of working that involved its entire staff and resources. At the neighborhood level — in collaboration with residents, stakeholders, and other partners — program officers for the first time worked in teams charged with planning and carrying out strategies to make these neighborhoods places where children and youth could thrive. At the policy and systems level, the foundation's CEO and trustees, along with staff, worked in a more explicitly political way to change policies and practices and leverage public and private funding to better support positive child and youth outcomes.

These new roles made *learning on the job* a central feature of the entire initiative. The hope was that an iterative process of learning and doing would

allow the sponsoring foundation and its partners to adjust and readjust their strategies in response to initial results and lessons and, in doing so, deepen their working relationships and build further capacity for effective implementation (Bailey & Jordan, 2006; Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2008). Such a process requires organizational supports and systems for learning within the foundation (across staff, management, and trustees) and with community stakeholders and partners, as well as methods for translating that learning into new practice and knowledge (Hamilton et al., 2006).

However, a learning system also requires time — a scarce commodity when everyone is working hard to get the enterprise off the ground. As in other community change initiatives, some program staff at the foundation reported feeling overwhelmed by the sheer increase in the number of relationships they needed to develop and manage — with intermediary partners, neighborhood leaders and stakeholders, nonprofits, city officials, and others. They were taking on new roles but could not immediately drop old ones, leading one staff person to refer to "having a foot in two different worlds." Many experienced community needs and expectations as urgent, while compelling opportunities to add value appeared unlimited. At the same time, talk among the foundation's leadership and trustees about scorecards and new accountabilities created further anxiety for staff trying to learn how to operate in fundamentally new ways in the community. Stepping into new territory challenged everyone to stay focused on intended outcomes while maintaining realistic expectations for measurable results.

The unwritten ethic at the foundation, and a natural response to such pressures, is to try to work harder and do more. But an overly taxing level of activity can leave little room for "experimentation and reflection vital to sustainable success" (Edmondson, 2008). Although very intentional about building communication and learning structures, such as weekly partner and leadership conference calls and quarterly partner and staff learning sessions, the pace and complexity of the work oftentimes resulted in using these opportunities

to discuss pressing operational issues rather than strategic decisions or lessons. Foundation staff worked at high pitch, with a belief in the soundness of the work, but worried that their efforts were not sufficiently coordinated to build the momentum to which they aspired.

The foundation was not merely developing a new set of strategies, but fundamentally transforming itself to become a change maker as well as a grantmaker. Developing a collective understanding by staff and partners of the new way of working was critical. A broad theory of change undergirding the initiative was developed early in the process and has since been refined (and will continue to evolve to reflect new learning). It was shared widely with trustees, grantees, and others. However, depicting the complexity and assumptions guiding the work and the maturation of strategies as they are developed, implemented, assessed, and refined is very difficult. The challenge of establishing and maintaining shared clarity was illustrated in the results from the Center for Effective Philanthropy's (CEP) 2007–2008 surveys of the foundation's trustees, grantees, stakeholders, and staff, which underscored the need for "clarity and understanding of Foundation strategy" and the challenge of keeping everyone in the evolving loop. As reported by CEP to the foundation in an internal memorandum:

> While grantees, stakeholders, trustees and staff demonstrate awareness of and enthusiasm for the Foundation's goals, *all four groups express a lack of clarity about the strategy for accomplishing these goals.* Although the Foundation has a formal Logic Model and Theory of Change, staff and trustees agree that Skillman's strategy development is an iterative process that evolves over time. This approach makes it difficult for all groups—internal and external—to understand how their work fits into, and ultimately contributes to, Skillman's larger plans. It also requires diligence from the Foundation to ensure that the changes to the strategy are being regularly and consistently communicated to its diverse constituencies.

Such was a central dynamic facing the foundation one year into the Readiness Phase. Recognizing the ongoing internal challenges of shifting

roles, pace, and shared clarity, among others, the foundation sought to address them through new practices, although not always successfully. Not surprisingly, the foundation's CEO used the bike-riding metaphor to illustrate the inevitable tension between "getting people ready to act and acting." A tremendous amount of good work was underway: an intensive planning process in each of the six neighborhoods had engaged large numbers of diverse groups of residents and stakeholders who developed broad community goals and action plans to initiate activities, learning grants supported opportunities for the community to become more knowledgeable about the goals it wanted to pursue, and excitement about the new direction was evident both inside and outside the foundation. But, as will be discussed below, as community planning was completed, the hard work of building the foundation for a sustained effort in a challenging local economic and political climate required a new stage of internal readiness within the foundation.

> *The foundation was not merely developing a new set of strategies, but fundamentally transforming itself to become a change maker as well as a grantmaker. Developing a collective understanding by staff and partners of the new way of working was critical.*

An Evaluation Framework for the Readiness Phase

Implementing multisite community change work with so many moving parts in so many different arenas creates "thinking, doing, and learning" challenges for all involved (Brown & Fiester, 2007). Foundation management understood these challenges and worked hard to find ways to support staff and to discipline the foundation's efforts. Early in 2007, the Theory of Change was

Abbreviated Example of DWK Readiness Phase Evaluation Framework

	READINESS PHASE STRATEGIES	2009–10 READINESS PHASE OUTCOMES	ILLUSTRATIVE READINESS PHASE INDICATORS	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS	Build organizational capacity & leadership among residents, stakeholders & youth	Neighborhood infrastructure & systems **with capacity & resources to implement a resident-owned change agenda**	· Clear change agenda directly connected to long-term goals; owned by residents, key neighborhood organizations & other stakeholders, & adopted by outside organizations working in the neighborhoods. · Organizational & nonprofit capacity & resident leadership to support implementation of the change agenda. · The capacity to connect with & make the case for the change agenda with institutions & resources both within & outside of the neighborhoods	**SAFE** **HEALTHY** **WELL EDUCATED** **PREPARED FOR ADULTHOOD**
GOOD SCHOOLS	Build capacity of schools to be receptive to & engage in reform	**2 of 6 neighborhoods have** comprehensive high school reform plans **connected to feeder schools**	· Assessment of Making the Grade qualifications as appropriate for DWK · Active participation of union in school reform agenda · District & MI Dept of Education fully engaged in DWK school reform agenda	
CHANGE MAKING	Exert foundation influence to attract others, inspire ideas, sway decisions & promote opinions to advance agenda for children	Policies and practices **changed or advanced**	· A formal policy agenda & plan for intended changes · Vehicles for influencing policy decisions activated (e.g., Council of MI Foundations) · Supporting communication strategy for change making, grantmaking, leverage & scaling efforts · Publish a state of the children indicators report annually	
EVALUATION & LEARNING	Study & learn from the implementation of Readiness Phase	Implementation evaluation	· Determine feasibility of indicators to track neighborhood context & outcomes · Feasible data management system secured & initial baseline established · Multiple funders helped to build capacity of a data intermediary to secure, manage & make accessible relevant administrative data · Evaluation framework that provides real-time data & learning	

refined to reflect the broader thinking that encompassed and aligned all the foundation's work. In June 2007, the foundation selected an evaluator whose role included traditional evaluation activities as well as an orientation to building capacity for learning and evaluation among all the players — the foundation, the community, the technical assistance intermediaries, and other partners. Two main objectives for the first year were to develop an evaluation framework for the Readiness Phase and to support a culture of reflection, learning, and data-based decision making at the foundation. As described below, the year-long process of developing and continually refining the evaluation framework provided a critical vehicle for enhancing clarity, strategic focus, and action learning. Although it addressed many of the assumptions embedded in the theory of change, the process engaged staff in a different way by focusing on concrete goals, strategies, and outcomes for the Readiness Phase.

What Is the Evaluation Framework?

The framework translates the foundation's broad theory into concrete strategies to achieve Readiness Phase outcomes and specifies indicators of progress toward these outcomes. Each row describes a key strategy, specifies the outcomes staff hope the strategy will achieve by the end of the Readiness Phase, and provides sample indicators that will be used to measure those outcomes as well as illustrative data sources for those indicators. At the far right-hand side of the framework is a column labeled "Long-Term Outcomes" (i.e., Safe, Healthy, Well Educated, and Prepared for Adulthood). Although these child and youth outcomes are unlikely to be achieved by the end of the Readiness Phase, keeping them in the framework serves as a constant reminder of what will define the long-term success of the work.

The framework is too long — and ever-evolving — to include here. It cannot illustrate relationships and possible synergies across strategies, nor should it be interpreted as static and rigid. But the graphic presents some sample row entries to illustrate basic framework parameters (minus the column that specifies actual data sources and measures for each phase indicator).

How Was It Developed?

The learning team met, often several times, with each program staff person and the Vice President for Program, clarifying goals and strategies and specifying the outcomes for which the staff person would be held accountable. The team played the role of friendly critic, challenging staff to be concrete and draw upon existing knowledge, and surfacing differences in perspective about what strategies should receive priority for staff time, what ones were valuable but not central, and what ones might best be done by others. Staff was encouraged to put all their activities (not just grantmaking) on the table so they could be subjected to this vetting process and be included in the framework. After each of these many meetings, the evaluator would revise and share the framework to make sure it was consistent with everyone's understanding. As the individual rows developed, she put them all together in one document so that each person could see how his or her work fit into the whole. Then the framework was vetted with the foundation's president, the two intermediary partners (first alone and then together), and the foundation's trustees. Each time the framework was refined.

What About Community Input?

The evaluation framework includes all of the work of the foundation and the outcomes for which it expects to hold itself accountable. Each of the six neighborhoods has engaged in its own planning process and has received support in the form of small grants, learning grants, and various forms of technical assistance. As each neighborhood decides how it will move forward, the foundation and the technical assistance intermediary will work to build its self-evaluation capacity so that, like the foundation, the neighborhood can be guided by clear goals and strategies and will be able to measure its progress toward intended outcomes. What the neighborhood-driven evaluations and the foundation's evaluation will share is a set of clear long-term outcomes, that is, children and youth who are safe, healthy, educated, and prepared for adulthood.

What Are the Dynamics of the Process?

Developing the evaluation framework is not simply an intellectual task, the product of which

could be handed to staff at the outset of the work. Rather, the framework becomes useful when it reflects staff ownership and drives decision making and action by all at the foundation. This process of investment takes time to cultivate: at first some staff experienced the meetings with the learning team as a distraction from the "real" work. Over time, however, many began to appreciate the opportunity to clarify their thinking based on what they were learning in the field and to see how their work fit into the foundation's larger approach and their colleagues' and partners' efforts. It also took some time for the learning team to get a sufficient grasp of the work and people involved in order to put an intelligent draft together to start the process.

The evaluation framework becomes useful when it reflects staff ownership and drives decision making and action by all at the foundation. This process of investment takes time to cultivate: at first some staff experienced the meetings with the learning team as a distraction from the "real" work.

Further, the framework relies on the knowledge generated through action. At the outset, few within the foundation knew enough about each neighborhood's leadership, politics, and assets to be clear about strategic choices. More importantly, foundation staff had not yet developed the relationships both inside and outside the communities through which such strategies would be created and carried out. In other words, *much of this kind of work is accomplished through multiple relationships and activities operating over time, not primarily within foundation offices before the action begins*. Thus, readiness involves, in part, ongoing learning from a process that takes place

over time as relationships are established and action evolves.

Other dynamics involved in developing the evaluation framework include the following:

- As the process began, foundation management decided to expand the scope of the evaluation from the neighborhood work to all the foundation's program work and all of its own roles as grantmaker and change maker. In essence, all grants and program strategies were considered part of the Readiness Phase and needed to be included in the evaluation framework. While capturing all of the staffs' activities complicated the task, it led to deeper thinking and greater internal alignment. The process also provided the vehicle for new staff to be involved in shaping and owning the strategies.
- The framework specifies staff accountabilities: who is responsible for what and how that will be evaluated. Although it was an adjustment for staff to work in this new way, linking staff work plans and performance appraisals to the framework reinforced the framework's potential to help staff focus on the highest priority activities.
- Deep commitment to the transformative potential of community work sometimes obscures a realistic view of what can be accomplished within a particular time frame. As one staff person said, "the gaping need in Detroit makes you never want to say 'no.'" Further, bold and ambitious goals can mobilize partners and generate the energy that is needed for significant change. The challenge is to maintain the transformative vision and sense of urgency, while setting concrete goals and making strategic choices about the use of limited resources. The framework helped the foundation and its partners resist the temptation to overestimate what philanthropy can do.
- When the specifics are left vague, staff can develop fairly fundamental differences in their conceptions of the work, the language they use to define it, and their own assumptions about what will bring about change. Staff in previously unrelated programs — in Skillman's case, neighborhoods and schools — can develop

their own ways of thinking and operating. It took time to surface these differences and develop a shared understanding to guide the work going forward.

- Like individual staff or groups of staff, intermediaries can have their own models of change that need to be incorporated and adapted to the shared enterprise; without specific direction, they tend to develop strategies and tactics based on their own modus operandi. Although careful attention was given to establishing common language among partners from the beginning, during the evolution of the community work, descriptive language for processes became the springboard for uncovering substantive differences in approaches. For example, the term "resident engagement" was understood differently by some, which meant the on-the-ground activities did not always reflect shared focus and clarity.

Reflections on Learning in Real Time

In getting ready for complex multisite, multipartner work like Detroit Works for Kids, foundations can draw from what the field already knows to inform their planning. But once the work begins, the practice of learning by doing seems equally essential. The challenge of keeping everyone moving forward together with discipline requires an adaptive stance that incorporates new knowledge generated by ongoing action while staying focused on intended results.

The learning team used the development of the evaluation framework to deepen its understanding of what challenges the foundation faced as it developed its own readiness for Detroit Works for Kids. Ongoing conversations with staff provided an opportunity for the team to identify concerns and threats to effectiveness and share these in real time with foundation leadership informally and in various meetings, as well as through a series of Interim Assessment Memos. Our observations and feedback addressed a wide range of evaluation and management issues, such as:

- The alignment among front-line staff, management, and the planning and technical assistance intermediaries around the role of residents

- The possibility of outsourcing additional work to creative arrangements with partners, intermediaries, consultants, or other entities
- Strategies for conducting results-oriented meetings as a routine way of doing business
- Using logic model thinking to enable more evaluative reflection on staff roles, team roles, and their relationship to the foundation's mission and strategy

The evaluator also facilitated a senior management retreat that included attention to two key challenges: developing management systems that support existing staff strengths and shore up weaknesses, and reinforcing a culture of disciplined thinking and action that helps staff balance entrepreneurial risk taking with the ability to say "no" when appropriate.

As noted earlier, it was critical that the learning team's orientation was to advance the success of the work, not to judge it. We drew on elements of Schon's (1983) concept of reflective practice (whereby knowledge informs practice, which when subjected to systematic and disciplined reflection, creates new knowledge that in turn leads to better and wiser practice) and Revans' (1998) model of action learning (whereby collaborative inquiry helps groups tackle real problems in real time by sharing questions and ideas, which are tested in action). We also made use of organizational development concepts from such texts as *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 2006) and *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). The process of developing and updating the framework underscored the need for ongoing attention to collecting and analyzing data and monitoring activities and their consequences. It also laid the foundation for the implementation evaluation design currently being prepared by the evaluator.

Building a culture of discipline that values learning and reflection along with action is a struggle in any institution. The need to act frequently trumps time for thinking and assessment. The field of community change, however, has suffered significantly from disconnection between theory and implementation. Poten-

tially important theories are never really tested, hampering learning and further theory development. The Skillman Foundation has launched an ambitious and cutting edge enterprise that has already accomplished much — thousands of residents have been involved with action planning and implementation in their neighborhoods and have benefitted from complementary services and opportunities supported through foundation grants to nonprofits and other public and private investments that have been directed to the neighborhoods as a result of the foundation's change-making efforts. As important, the foundation has taken its own readiness seriously and has committed itself to an intensive process of learning, doing, and transforming itself along with the work. The field can only benefit from this example.

References

Bailey, T., & Jordan, A. (2006). *A framework for learning and results in community change initiatives: Imagine, act, believe.* Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Brown, P. (2005). *The experience of an intermediary in a complex initiative.* Seattle: Urban Health Initiative Lessons Learned Project.

Brown, P., & Fiester, L. (2007). *Hard lessons about philanthropy and community change from the Neighborhood Improvement Initiative.* Menlo Park, CA: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great.* New York: Harper-Collins.

Connolly, P. (2008). *Maximizing foundation effectiveness: Aligning program strategy, organizational capacity, strategic planning, and performance assessment to achieve success.* Philadelphia: TCC Group.

Edmondson, A. (2008, July-August). The competitive imperative of learning. *Harvard Business Review,* 60–67.

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. (2008). *Imagine, involve, implement: Transforming grantmaker practices for improved nonprofit results.* Washington, DC: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

Hamilton, R., Brown, P., Chaskin, R.J., Feister, L., Richman, H., Soujourner, A., & Weber, J. (2006). *Learning for community change: Core components of foundations that learn.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

Karlstrom, M., et al. (2007). *Embedded philanthropy and community change* (issue brief). Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

Revans, R. (1998). *ABC of action learning* (3rd ed.). London: Lemos and Crane.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* New York: Basic Books.

Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.

US Census Bureau. (2007). *American community survey.* Washington, DC: Author.

Prudence Brown, Ph.D., has studied and provided assistance to efforts to promote community change as deputy director of the Urban Poverty Program at the Ford Foundation, as a research fellow at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and currently as an independent consultant.

Marie Colombo, knowledge management officer at the Skillman Foundation, is responsible for aligning the foundation's grantmaking practices and evaluation policy with an organizational culture focused on real-time learning and accountability. Prior to working at the foundation she directed the Evaluation Research Unit at Wayne State University's Center for Urban Studies.

Della M. Hughes, M.S.S.W., a senior fellow at the Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, focuses on helping organizations, communities, and institutions manage change to create and sustain quality programs, systems, and policies for youth and families. In doing so, she focuses on leadership, management and governance, and evaluation methods that prove impact, improve programs, influence policy, and increase resources.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Della M. Hughes, Center for Youth and Communities, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, MS035 Brandeis University, PO Box 549110, 415 South Street, Waltham, MA 02454-9110 (e-mail: dhughes@brandeis.edu).