



Trusted Advocates: A Multicultural Approach to Building and Sustaining Resident Involvement

A MAKING CONNECTIONS PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATCH BETWEEN
WHITE CENTER, WASHINGTON AND OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LEADS TO ACTION

*Part of a Series from the
Technical Assistance Resource
Center of the Annie E. Casey
Foundation and the Center
for the Study of Social Policy*

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BACKGROUND

Through its *Making Connections* initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with communities across the country to improve outcomes for children and families living in tough neighborhoods. One of the principal aims of *Making Connections* is to link residents to economic opportunities, social networks, and effective services that will improve the lives and well-being of children and their families. The initiative emphasizes the need for residents themselves to be deeply involved in the transformation process.

As part of this initiative, the Foundation offers *Making Connections* sites access to technical assistance to help them achieve their goals for strengthening families and neighborhoods. Peer technical assistance is a valuable resource that *Making Connections* communities use to address issues and solve problems to advance their work. It allows sites to learn from innovators in other communities across the country who have successfully achieved similar goals and to capitalize on the practical knowledge they have gained from their experiences.

On January 18–19, 2006, a group of residents and community partners from the *Making Connections* site in Oakland, California, traveled to Seattle to learn more about White Center *Making Connections* efforts to build resident involvement. In particular, Oakland wanted to learn about the Trusted Advocates program, a strategy that ensures that the voices and concerns of the limited English speaking and ethnic minority residents are heard and increases resident involvement in community planning and change efforts. Trusted Advocates are resident leaders and/or line staff with extensive experience working within their own ethnic communities in the White Center/Boulevard Park neighborhood. The Oakland team wanted this peer match to inform its ongoing efforts to more deeply and coherently engage residents as leaders and decision-makers within *Making Connections* Oakland.

This report is intended to capture information from the match so it can be referenced by those who participated and shared with others who might be struggling with similar questions and issues. It does not represent a straight capture of the text

of the conversation that took place during the two-day meeting. Rather, information has been organized and synthesized so the reader, whether present at the peer match or not, can best find the answers to the questions posed in the original learning objectives.

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE MATCH

Making Connections Oakland (MCO) is located in a neighborhood called Lower San Antonio, a multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic neighborhood made up of Asians (36%), Latinos (35%), Whites (20%), and African Americans (19%). While the MCO collaborative recognizes that the diversity of the neighborhood is one of its key strengths, it is also finding it challenging to reach out and engage residents across multiple ethnic and cultural communities.

Making Connections Oakland has been governed by a group called the Lower San Antonio Collaborative (LSAC). This group was originally formed from existing community-based organizations, including representatives from the San Antonio Community Development Corporation, La Clinica, the East Bay Asian Youth Center and others. Many of these organizations have long histories in the neighborhood and significant connections to families and other residents. As such, the LSAC represents a very strong connection between the initiative and the neighborhood, its residents, and its leaders.

The collaborative formed several work groups that have focused on early childhood education, family economic success, health, the 23rd Avenue Corridor, housing, and a local newspaper. These work groups engaged in a self-assessment process and developed work plans that recognized the importance of engaging residents in their efforts. There are a number of places where resident engagement and resident leadership in the initiative are already strong:

“When I started as a Trusted Advocate I was really quiet and intimidated. I have learned that you need to push yourself to climb out of your comfort zone because this isn’t about you, this is about people who are oppressed. Don’t they deserve to succeed? I’m trying to get information that is needed out to my community.

Loretta DeLora,
Trusted Advocate

- A neighborhood grants program provides funding and opportunities for local residents to receive small grants to implement change in the neighborhood. This program is guided by a resident board.
- A community newspaper called *San Antonio Unity* is resident run and operated.
- A Health Promotoras Project trains and utilizes community residents as preventative health educators.
- A merchant’s group created by *Making Connections* includes a number of individuals who not only work but also live in the community.

Though there are several innovative resident engagement strategies at play in the neighborhood, the LSAC recognized the need to confront several important challenges in this area. Typically, residents were engaged through particular organizations—some call them clients and some call them members—but there was not a larger mechanism for combining and building a broader constituency for community organizing and mobilization purposes.

In February 2005, collaborative members participated in a peer match with Lawrence CommunityWorks in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The LSAC wanted to learn from other communities about effective resident engagement strategies and, in particular, about strategies that can help weave together these resident engagement strategies more powerfully. Several themes arose from that peer match consultation, including the importance of networking between different organizations and among diverse groups of residents, and the need to look deeper into the identity, values, and structure of LSAC. The Oakland team brought back new ideas to move forward in these two areas and identified some specific steps it committed to undertake. (See the report from the peer match with Lawrence Community-Works for more information on the main lessons Oakland learned.)

At a retreat in June 2005, LSAC members agreed that though progress had been made in engaging residents in the activities undertaken by members of the collaborative and the six *Making Connections* results workgroups, this progress was still happening on an activity-by-activity basis. Few residents understood or could describe the big picture or felt a sense of ownership of the work. LSAC decided that resident engagement on a larger and deeper scale was needed so that residents would sustain the work over the long haul.

For the rest of 2005, an ad-hoc workgroup of LSAC members and community residents who had been involved in the small grants program began to craft a plan for enhancing resident engagement. The recommendations from this group included:

- Employing residents for community outreach;
- Making sure that residents are communicating with the Casey Foundation;
and
- Making the current structure friendlier to resident involvement.

As part of their work they wanted to learn from strategies that other *Making Connections* communities have employed toward this end. In the fall of 2005, the group gathered information about successful strategies in other *Making Connections* sites and requested a peer match with the Trusted Advocates in White Center as a means to inform the design and roll out of their own approach in the Oakland context.

THE CONSULTATION

Peer matches are a rather intensive form of technical assistance that the Casey Foundation Technical Resource Assistance Center (TARC) makes available to *Making Connections* sites. They consist of structured opportunities for teams of people from two or more jurisdictions who are working on a similar issue to come together to exchange their expertise and practical knowledge in order to address a particular challenge that has been identified in advance. Careful preparation of a peer match greatly increases the likelihood of success. Before traveling to White Center, a series of facilitated conversations helped the Oakland team to clarify its learning objectives and finalize the team's composition. Although the focus was primarily on what Oakland wanted to get out of the match, both teams acknowledged that their intention was to learn from each other in an atmosphere of true peer exchange.

Learning Objectives

The match was intended to build greater knowledge and understanding about successful strategies for assuring that residents are engaged in all aspects of the community change work under way in *Making Connections* neighborhoods. In particular, Oakland wanted to learn more about White Center's Trusted Advocates model to inform the design of its own strategy and roll-out its approach.

The main learning objectives for the match were to acquire greater knowledge and understanding about:

- The purpose and evolution of the Trusted Advocates program, including roadblocks and accomplishments along the journey;
- The role of the Trusted Advocates: who they are, the "hats" they wear, the type of work they do, and the supports they need to do their work;

- Best practices used by Trusted Advocates for expanding and deepening resident involvement;
- Structures, funding, and other supports for managing and sustaining the Trusted Advocates model; and
- Relationships and links between the Trusted Advocates Program, community-based organizations, and other strategies to achieve *Making Connections* results.

Structure of the Match

The peer match between Oakland and Seattle was designed to provide an in-depth look at the work of the Trusted Advocates in White Center. Most of the match took place within the White Center neighborhood with use of meals and break times as opportunities to see the neighborhood, eat in local restaurants, and just walk and look around.

The Oakland team members included staff and consultants from *Making Connections* Oakland, resident leaders from within the neighborhood (including a youth leader), and representatives from partner organizations. From White Center, the majority of participants were Trusted Advocates, but White Center *Making Connections* staff and community partners were also included.

The first day of the match was structured to help both sides develop a better understanding of each other and their work and challenges. The Oakland team provided important contextual information about where it was in the process of developing resident leadership and the issues with which it was struggling and seeking support. White Center presented a brief history of the Trusted Advocates Program, including sharing a timeline, testimonies by four active Trusted Advocates, and a description of the Trusted Advocate's role.

Other questions the Oakland

Team brought to the match:

• How can we broaden the
number of residents
involved?

• How can we move from
discreet efforts to engage
residents to building a cadre
of resident leaders who can
really drive change?

• What about diversity
training or other ways to
deal with cross-cultural
misunderstandings without
making things too political?

• How can we get more youth
involved?

The second day built on the knowledge of each of the participating communities, their models, contexts, and challenges providing ample time for an open dialogue between the two sites. The morning included a discussion of the various forms of resident engagement that can help advance the work at different levels—from groundwork to the policymaking level. An informal lunch at a local restaurant allowed participants to break up into tables based on issue areas of interest. The issue areas identified by the group included:

- Schools and school readiness;
- Youth engagement;
- Civic engagement, resident involvement, and outreach;
- Housing, safety, and community development; and
- Role of community-based organizations, including faith-based, in the partnership.

Community partners joined the group for lunch, and a post-lunch neighborhood tour provided an opportunity for the group to visit some key partner organizations. This laid the groundwork for an afternoon discussion of the role of community-based organizations and key linkages. The two days ended with an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they had learned and what future actions they could take in their communities.

A Demographic Profile of White Center *Making Connections*

White Center is an unincorporated area between Burien and Seattle in Southwest King County, Washington. It houses a growing population with a rich and diverse cultural heritage. The 2000 U.S. Census counted almost 22,000 residents, a new high, with the growth in the 1990s coming almost entirely from increases in the Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and African-American communities. The largest groups in White Center/Boulevard Park are white (57%), Asian (17%), and Hispanic/Latino (13%). Immigrants and refugees make up a significant and rapidly growing percentage of the population, hailing from countries including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, the former Soviet Union and other parts of Eastern Europe, former Yugoslavia, and the Near and Middle East. Although the cultures, backgrounds, and traditions of these communities vary significantly, they face similar issues when they arrive in America. While they often face issues common to other disadvantaged communities—poverty, lack of employment, need for services—these tend to be compounded by other issues that are very specific to immigrant and refugee communities, including cultural isolation, language barriers, perceptions of lack of transferable skills, lack of access to information, lack of mobility, and confusion over the “system” and how to access services.

LESSONS LEARNED

Learning Objective 1:

The purpose and evolution of the Trusted Advocates Program, including roadblocks and accomplishments along the journey.

The Trusted Advocates approach engages residents by finding leaders from the various ethnic communities within the neighborhood that already have the confidence of and advocate for their people. The White Center built a [timeline \(see p. 46\)](#) on the wall, as they did their presentation, showing how the Trusted Advocates Program has evolved over time.

One of the premises that shaped the Trusted Advocates model early on was — “people working together on projects build strong relationships.”

One of the premises that shaped the Trusted Advocates model early on was— “people working together on projects build strong relationships.” Specifically, there were three projects in the early phase of this initiative that brought people together and helped to build the relationships, gather data, and increase resident involvement in the neighborhood planning process. These projects, described below, and the people who worked on them developed into the Trusted Advocates Program.

- “White Center is My Second Homeland” was a 2001 survey and data gathering effort within the refugee communities in White Center. This project was led by the Khmer Community of Seattle and King County, a mutual assistance association located in White Center. Support, training, data analysis, and staffing came from Refugee Federation Service Center, Nonprofit Assistance Center, and Public Health Seattle–King County. Nine bilingual, bicultural interviewers worked as a team to design the survey and interview 120 families. The purposes were to learn firsthand the families’ concerns, hopes, dreams, and visions of White Center; to use this information to inform the planning process for *Making Connections*; and to increase the involvement of refugee and immigrant families in the community planning process. Many Trusted Advocates started as paid interviewers or

participants in this survey. Four current Trusted Advocates participated in this project.

- A parallel effort was a Filipino/Samoan organizing project run by the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center. Focus groups met in the Samoan and Filipino communities over a period of several months to build supportive networks, foster leadership, and gather information for the planning process for *Making Connections*. Some Trusted Advocates started as paid facilitators or participants in these focus groups, which included groups of elders, faith-based groups, and parent and family groups. Two current Trusted Advocates were part of this effort.
- At the same time, a 50-member Resident Leadership Council was established to engage residents in setting priorities for the White Center Community Development Investment Plan that was published in September 2001. White Center residents, *Making Connections*, and the King County Office of Regional Policy and Planning collaborated on this plan. Four of the current Trusted Advocates were part of the Resident Leadership Council.

Early in the *Making Connections* initiative, participants from all three of these projects came together to plan and conduct a community meeting in November 2001 where data on White Center were presented and community priorities identified. This meeting was attended by 130 residents from 15 ethnic groups. Each of the groups were facilitated by bilingual and bicultural residents who had participated in the three community projects mentioned above. These resident leaders had gained experience in community engagement through these projects and also received training in facilitation, note-taking, and reporting. At the time, some institutional and funding partners had reservations about residents acting as facilitators and note-takers for the community meeting. They planned to hire professional facilitators and note-takers and use residents to translate. The Nonprofit Assistance Center staff provided training for bilingual and bicultural residents and supported them in developing these skills. It was apparent that the meeting ran smoothly thanks to the

role that these bilingual and bicultural residents had played as facilitators and note-takers in their own language groups. Residents acting in these roles not only could communicate with families in their native language but also had their trust. More information was gathered, diverse communities were able to give input about community priorities, and grassroots leadership was promoted. It was clear that the high levels of attendance by diverse groups as well as their level of participation in the dialogue were the product of a trusting relationship with the bilingual and bicultural community workers. Six of the current Trusted Advocates facilitated discussion groups at this meeting.

“Values” Are the Framework for the Work of Trusted Advocates

- *Learning from historical perspective brought through various cultures/heritage—* We are building upon those who have come before us and paving the road for our children and others.
- *Respecting peoples’ struggles that we all have experienced as part of our existence.*
- *Understanding that resident leadership is key to sustaining our work.*
- *Valuing relationships—*Most communities respond through relational experiences. We must apply this to the systems that impact our lives.
- *Acknowledging the role that “racism” has on our work and how it is present in our lives daily.* Don’t let it be a barrier but use it to become more focused on the work that needs to be done.
- *Having folks at the table who need to be there, being mindful of being inclusive and getting back to accountability.*

—Loretta DeLora and Sili Savusa, *Trusted Advocates*

From these early efforts Trusted Advocates have evolved from interviewers to facilitators and have become an integral part of the design and implementation of programs in *Making Connections*. Peer consultants in the match highlighted several mechanisms that have helped in this process:

- *Holding large community meetings are one key to moving the work forward.*
The initial community meeting in November 2001 described earlier helped to set priorities grounded in what people in the neighborhood felt was important. Subsequent meetings have helped to reconnect with community priorities, ensure that community members continue to have opportunities to shape and inform the work, reinforce the accountability between the Trusted Advocates and the community, and engage more residents. While each Trusted Advocate reports back individually to his/her own community using existing events and vehicles, these larger meetings also provide an opportunity for the advocates to report back to the larger community. Trusted Advocates provide information on changes and developments related to the original priorities, and this process helps to update priorities in relationship to new issues that may have come up.
- *Another mechanism that has worked well is to form workgroups with shared leadership between Trusted Advocates and community partners.* Out of the Resident Leadership Council and the community priorities identified in the November 2001 meeting, strategy groups were developed to create results in the following areas: work and earnings; school success; safe streets and neighborhoods; and strong families. Each of these strategy groups is now co-chaired by a Trusted Advocate and a community partner. This helps to ensure that community priorities and values are reflected in all of the strategies developed.
- *Participation of Trusted Advocates in the Partners Group.* In 2005, Trusted Advocates joined the Partners Group. This is a group that meets monthly and brings together major stakeholders—including representatives from the Boeing Company, the Highline School District, Puget Sound

Educational Service District, State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services, King County Housing Authority, Paul G. Allen Family Foundations, and, since 2005, Trusted Advocates. Having Trusted Advocates at this table has been crucial for ensuring that the work of this group is grounded in the interests and needs of the community.

- *Core beliefs and values that provide the framework for doing the work.* Trusted Advocates advised the Oakland team to consider the following values that in their experience have been a critical ingredient for their success:
 - Be accountable to communities and families;
 - Hold the needs and realities of families and communities at the center of the work;
 - Focus on community strengthening, building on assets and tapping residents' skills and knowledge;
 - Act with cultural competence by respecting the values, history, and cultures of diverse communities;
 - Seek racial equity and justice;
 - Build relationships and remind institutions of the realities of their customers; and
 - Be open to learning from diverse perspectives and from past experiences.

What roadblocks have Trusted Advocates experienced along the journey?

- *The amount of time spent in meetings.* Part of what Trusted Advocates are trying to do is change the bureaucracy. Thus, there is a lot of time spent in meetings with bureaucrats and others who speak a different language and have different approaches to community change work. This can be challenging. Many Trusted Advocates come from an organizing or direct community service background. For those who have been part of community organizing, the questions “Why are we doing this? Why are we here?” often arise when dealing with bureaucratic systems.

- *Translating for the community involves more than translating the words accurately.* It involves helping people understand how the work being done by the initiative is connected to or responsive to the results they want. For example, the community said what they wanted was jobs, but the initiative is working on a jobs pipeline. Explaining how the two things fit together can be hard. Trusted Advocates shared that “Caseyspeak,” or the Foundation’s jargon, is particularly challenging to translate for the residents in their communities.
- *Not being driven by the Foundation’s needs but by the community’s needs.* Early on, a lot of the work locally was driven by the Foundation’s needs and interests. During the 2005 retreat, Trusted Advocates defined their own values and vision for where they were headed and decided to begin working on a structure that reflected their own needs. This has created a subtle but very important shift. There is an appreciation for the Foundation’s investment—and a recognition that that investment comes with certain needs and expectations—but also clarity that the community and its needs come first.
- *Reaching men.* While a few key Trusted Advocates are men, most are women. The challenge of creating a model that more fully engages men and boys within the community was discussed. One advocate described how in her culture there was a matriarchal model—but that there was a need to think beyond that to “engage those on both sides of the sphere.”

What have been the main accomplishments along the journey?

- *Creating an inclusive multicultural environment.* Trusted Advocates have been good at creating a multicultural environment that is sensitive about how facility in speaking English can privilege certain individuals. This helps to ensure that all voices are heard and create a sense of solidarity across the advocates themselves.

“The Trusted Advocates come from those who are already working in their communities doing organizing and helping people meet their needs. I was involved with the community schools effort and later on ended up running for the School Board.”

Mengstab Tzegaii,
Trusted Advocate

“One roadblock we’re experiencing is that we don’t have a resident network formed. We’ve made a lot of headway but haven’t figured out what structure would meet the needs of all in our community. A lesson learned is that we are so much stronger when we work across ethnic lines.”

Mabel Fatialofa-Magelei,
Trusted Advocate

- *Addressing turf and cultural clashes.* While some clashes between different cultural groups occur, they don’t paralyze the group or stop the work. For example, in one of the large community meetings, one of the Trusted Advocates suggested that they lead with a prayer because that is what is natural in her community. Other Trusted Advocates were uncomfortable with the idea. The trust in the group allowed individuals to speak up and express their discomfort and for the group to work through the situation without a breakdown. The ability of Trusted Advocates to discuss turf issues and call each other on things has helped to lessen divisions. Peer consultants mentioned that the support they receive from *Making Connections* in terms of being compensated for some of the time they spend meeting with each other to discuss issues has been very helpful.
- *Bringing Making Connections down to the ground and making it relevant to the community.* As much as they can, Trusted Advocates try to take the Foundation’s work and tailor it to meet the reality on the ground. The goal is not only to make the work fit the community, but also to change how the foundation talks about systems change. For example, the Trusted Advocates have taken key Foundation documents and adapted them so they contain language and concepts that are meaningful to the community. The hope is that the Foundation will embrace the changes—and shift the way it works with communities. Similarly, Trusted Advocates are articulating as a group what they want to see in place once the initiative is gone to help shape the conversation on sustainability.
- *Developing a clear relationship with staff that is supportive but has boundaries.* Several times the comment was made that meetings are different when *Making Connections* staff are not around. There is enough trust at the table now that Trusted Advocates are comfortable being clear about when they want *Making Connections* staff there and when they don’t. Similarly, they feel they have reached a place where they can challenge things in a way that is honest and not antagonistic.

Learning Objective 2:

The role of the Trusted Advocates: who they are, the “hats” they wear, the types of work they do, and the supports they need to do their work.

Who are the Trusted Advocates?

The Trusted Advocates are leaders in their various ethnic communities represented in the neighborhoods who have the confidence of their people and already are doing a lot of advocacy for them, and who can serve as an effective bridge and broker to the community.

Trusted Advocates include teachers, students, case managers, mothers, pastors, advocates, and organizers. Whoever they are, they have a history or connection to the community and can show that they are connected to a larger group of people that is helping to inform the work. Many communities have “talking heads” in leadership roles—these are not the Trusted Advocates. In most communities, there are factions. Trusted Advocates are those leaders who have been able to negotiate across factions and are trusted across their community. They are Trusted Advocates because they are:

- Able to reach a specific racial or ethnic community;
- Credible and respected leaders and advocates for their respective communities;
- Committed to community strengthening; and
- People who hold the needs of the community and their families at the core of what they do—“They are into the ‘we,’ not the ‘me.’”

What “hats” do Trusted Advocates wear, and what types of work do they do?

The role of the Trusted Advocates has expanded greatly overtime. In the beginning, the Trusted Advocates focused on doing outreach to their communities, interpreting and facilitating community meetings. As time has gone on, the role of Trusted Advocates has expanded to include a broad array of activities, such as:

- Serving as interpreters in many contexts, including community meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and for social services, employment, housing, etc.;
- Facilitating meetings, and many of them are now trained as resident leader facilitators;
- Connecting with parents in schools;
- Connecting families to resources and assistance on a wide range of issues connected to *Making Connections* results areas (jobs, assets, school success) as well as issues such as immigration and domestic violence;
- Doing outreach, recruitment, and organizing—this can cover issues as diverse as bringing parents to parent-teacher conferences, to getting people involved in issues affecting the community, one of them being the issue of annexation;
- Promoting political engagement—getting out the vote, supporting residents to run for local elected positions, and providing support for residents who are elected;
- Sharing information about the community with partners;
- Providing training and education about the different cultural communities to nonprofit organizations, institutions, schools, and community groups;
- Representing/advocating for the community with institutions and organizations;
- Attending weekly *Making Connections* team meetings;
- Participating in and/or co-chairing workgroups;
- Attending monthly meetings to coordinate efforts across workgroups;
- Participating in governance meetings of the initiative.

In most recent presentations about their approach, Trusted Advocates articulate and group their roles into the following four categories:

- Facilitating and Organizing
 - Trusted Advocate meetings
 - Community forums
 - Strategy group participation
- Outreach and Interpretation
 - Group facilitators
 - Resident leadership trainers
 - Members of boards and committees
 - Workgroup members
- Service Provision, Advocacy, and Planning
 - Co-chair of workgroups
 - Deputies group/implementation
 - Leading program development and design
- Systems and Policy Advocacy and Change
 - Political office
 - Trusted Advocates Steering Committee
 - Governance subcommittee
 - Partners group/decision-making

“Provided there is planning,
we can pull 200 to 300
people to a community
meeting— that’s why we’re
leaders. We can call people
up and they will come
because we asked them.”

Sili Savusa
Trusted Advocate

What kinds of supports do Trusted Advocates need to do their work?

Trusted Advocates are intentionally building their own capacity and skills. As the role of Trusted Advocates has evolved to include more prominent decision-making and implementation responsibilities at all levels of *Making Connections*, their work demands a lot of risk-taking and creates challenges as well as opportunities for personal and professional growth. They noted that families expect the Trusted Advocates to have answers and be able to respond when things come up. Without training and adequate supports, this is not possible.

During the peer match, Trusted Advocates highlighted that training has been important and described some of the ways in which training for Trusted Advocates has been done in White Center. Initially, they received training to act as translators and facilitators during the 2001 community meeting that presented the results of the “White Center is my Second Homeland” survey. This training was provided by Judy de Barros, a staff member with the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) who has worked closely with the Trusted Advocates from the beginning.

Currently Trusted Advocates receive regular training through NAC and other community partners. Additional training opportunities are provided through the Technical Resource Assistance Center of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Because Judy de Barros also serves as a liaison to the Foundation’s Technical Assistance Resource Center, she can play a role in helping Trusted Advocates access training, technical assistance, and support from the Foundation’s pool of consultants that fit with the Trusted Advocates Program priorities. Trusted Advocates have completed trainings in Resident Leadership Facilitation (RLF) and Results-Based Accountability (RBA). One of the current priorities is to have the initiative dollars support the use of local trainers. This is part of a larger vision of building local capacity and lifting up the value of local technical assistance providers and expertise.

In 2005, the Trusted Advocates Steering Committee was created (see next section) and one of its responsibilities is to look into training needs. The committee would like to see increasing opportunities for Trusted Advocates to work as consultants and trainers themselves—not only locally but also nationally. Several of the Trusted Advocates are already acting in this capacity at a local level and they are currently working to developing training and materials that will support their ability to work in this way.

Trusted Advocates Talk about Their Experiences

Loretta DeLora

“When I started as a Trusted Advocate I was really quiet and intimidated. I have learned that you need to push yourself to climb out of your comfort zone because this isn’t about you, this is about people who are oppressed. Don’t they deserve to succeed? I’m trying to get information that is needed out to my community. For example, I worked to connect the White Center asset-building coalition with a Native American asset-building coalition in order to link those efforts and increase the opportunities for families. I’m going to a Pow Wow this weekend and will pass out information there about EITC [Earned Income Tax Credits]. We’re trying to get people to wait those extra two weeks [for their return]. The real challenge here is helping people see how tapping into these resources can help them build their work and earnings. Racism does play a role. Like most of us, I tend to sugarcoat things because I get uncomfortable. But you have to call it for what it is. Some things you can’t say in a nice way. There are a lot of white people making decisions that impact families of color. I really do see other people of color as tribal people. I may not be of the same cultural background as them but I know we share a common frame. I have faith that people will grow and develop the belief that we need to work with each other—it’s bigger than us. In the Trusted Advocates Program, we have people from different backgrounds coming together. It won’t get us very far if we fight and are petty. What the other advocates have taught me is to build on the values that are there.”

Mengstab Tzegaii

“I came from Oakland in 1990 as a single father with two daughters. I was working as a freelance interpreter with the courts and was very involved with my [Eritrean] community. My country has been at war for the last 30 years. I got involved in social services because my people need these services. They call me when they have questions—and I answer their questions. I got involved with the Refugee Federation Service Center, which became one of

the first partners in *Making Connections*. In 2001, we had a very successful community gathering where we asked people what their unmet needs were. From that came the four workgroups that the people demanded. Trusted Advocates grew from this effort. The Trusted Advocates come from those who are already working in their communities doing organizing and helping people meet their needs. I was involved with the community schools effort and later on ended up running for the School Board.”

Mabel Fatialofa-Magelei

“I started in the Trusted Advocates way back in 2001. We arrived here in 1999 to pastor a church in White Center. For 1999 and 2000 we were just getting our hands around the church. Even though it was an ethnic church for the Samoan-Pacific Islander community, our vision was larger than that. We realized we needed to find out about this neighborhood. I met a Samoan woman who had been here for a long time and she started taking me to the Resident Leadership Council meetings. She told me they were looking for someone to recruit Samoan participants to come to a large community meeting. I got started by becoming one of the facilitators at the meeting. At that time there was no Trusted Advocates Program. We got some training on facilitation and how to interpret the data that we were going to share at that meeting, but the biggest question was how to go about translating the stuff. One thing I’ve accomplished that I’m proud of is having broader connections with other ethnic and cultural groups in the community. When you go to a new place, like most of the immigrants, you stay in your community because that is where you get your support. One roadblock we’re experiencing is that we don’t have a resident network formed. We’ve made a lot of headway but haven’t figured out what structure would meet the needs of all in our community. A lesson learned is that we are so much stronger when we work across ethnic lines.”

Jesus Rodriguez

“I am one of the ‘old fogey’ Trusted Advocates. The name really reflects who we are and what we do—it fits us. Those of us who became Trusted Advocates—we always considered ourselves advocates for our community. Somebody said ‘trusted’ and we liked it since our communities trust us. At first, we were primarily facilitators and translators. Doing that helped us gain credibility within each community. We all come from different perspectives. The Latino community is one of the biggest in the state. I’ve been an advocate within that community for a long time. I used to run a Latino health organization. One thing I’m proud of is that through the Trusted Advocates Program I have really reached out and learned about all of the other [ethnic and cultural] communities within the neighborhood. I’ve really developed cultural awareness. All of our communities have similar needs but also some basic differences. Our common goal is to serve our community. For us it is the bottom line. If you can support each other despite the bumps on the road—especially when the times get hard—that’s what’s important. We really try to be there for each other. Someone is always around to offer help in babysitting, a pat on the back. That’s what you don’t get from this peer match—a feeling for the warmth and day-to-day support we give each other. One question that is important for me is how to develop positions so people can grow and get paid for this kind of community work. Also, we can’t forget the youth. We need to make space for them.”

Learning Objective 3:

Best practices used by Trusted Advocates for expanding and deepening resident involvement.

This section captures the main points from the presentation by Lan Lee, who coordinates a project around school success, of how the Trusted Advocates Program had

served as the springboard for school readiness work in White Center and what it takes to involve residents in neighborhood transformation efforts.

Trusted Advocates and School Readiness

While some of the initial impetus for the school readiness work came out of the community assessment process and meeting in November 2001, the real work began in 2003 with an effort by the Trusted Advocates to initiate conversations within the community about what it means for children to be ready for school, parents to be ready for school, and for schools to be ready for all kids. Trusted Advocates did one-on-one outreach and convened small discussion groups of six to twelve parents conducted in native languages, ultimately gathering perspectives from more than 90 parents on what “school readiness” might mean and what the barriers to school readiness might be. Parents who participated in these discussion groups were invited to continue their involvement by recruiting other parents, providing training on the issue, or taking direct action in the community. Conversations were also held with local schools, Head Start, and day care programs.

Out of these community conversations, it became apparent that many parents felt that “the school doesn’t care about our kids” and the schools felt that the “parents don’t care about school.” Parents’ perspectives were that as immigrants and refugees they worked hard to create a place to live and ensure there was food on the table—something that was very important for getting a child ready for school. They also felt that they didn’t have the same partnership with the schools that they had with the Trusted Advocates or other community partners.

Out of this feedback, a multipoint school readiness strategy was developed that includes:

- *A multicultural summer preschool program*—This is a four-week summer program for children who have never had the opportunity to attend preschool largely because they do not qualify for Head Start but their parents are too poor to afford paid preschool. Because most participants in the program are immigrant and refugee families, the focus is on creating a

program that is open and welcoming to different cultural norms and perspectives. Trusted Advocates talk to parents of children within the preschool and orient them to the school system in the United States.

- *English as a Second Language (ESL) for parents with pre-K activities for youth*—The ESL program was started at parents’ request because they saw the need for stronger English language skills as one of the key barriers they experience to fully engaging in their child’s education. There is early learning for children while the parents study ESL.
- *A parent support group*—This strategy started as a parent education class for parents in the preschool, but parents didn’t like the name and did not engage fully. It has since been reframed as a support group where parents can come and connect with each other and learn from each other while their children are involved in fun activities. One lesson learned was that just providing child care was not enough to interest parents. The real draw was knowing that their children would be engaged in fun learning activities.
- *School transition activities*—The focus of the Trusted Advocates’ work is not just on school readiness, but on productive transition into the schools. Trusted Advocates have a \$15,000 grant to align their school readiness activities with school success indicators. In the preschool setting, they emphasize the importance of ensuring that parents are welcome and active because if kids don’t see parents from the beginning it is hard for them in the later years to be comfortable with their parents’ involvement in the school. Moreover, it sends the message to parents that their role is important. Once children enter elementary school, Trusted Advocates work with schools to ensure that parents continue to be engaged and feel that their voices are heard in the new setting. Trusted Advocates provide a “bridge” between family and school. For example, they will call parents on behalf of the school to invite them to parent-teacher nights. Additionally, they ensure that there are activities for parents as well as kids at school. Currently, the advocates are working with six schools in the neighborhood.

“The name really reflects who we are and what we do — it fits us. Those of us who became Trusted Advocates— we always considered ourselves advocates for our community. Somebody said ‘trusted’ and we liked it since our communities trust us.”

Jesus Rodriguez,
Trusted Advocate

The school readiness initiative has provided an opportunity for Trusted Advocates to expand and deepen their work in the community. Some are working as teachers in the summer program, and one has become a parent educator. As roles expand, it is important to provide training and adequate support for the Trusted Advocates' work. For example, adding a home-visiting component to the school readiness activities must wait until Trusted Advocates have the training and tools not only on the home-visiting model, but also on the programs and resources available in the community to which they can refer families. This year an evaluation plan is also being developed to monitor the results achieved by the school readiness work.

The school readiness initiative has provided an opportunity for Trusted Advocates to expand and deepen their work in the community.

The Oakland team shared the difficulties it was having in getting people to meetings and wanted to know how the Trusted Advocates go about engaging the broader community. Based on White Center's experience, the following recommendations were highlighted:

- *Know who are the residents you need to engage.* "It is important to acknowledge we have different kinds of residents in the community. In White Center/ Boulevard Park, we are dealing with many low-income immigrant residents. There are different ways of engaging them than the average American resident. In my community, for example, we do things in clans and tribes. When there is a community meeting or an issue that comes up, a lot of times all of us won't go. That's all right if there are trusted leaders there who can speak for us. The way to engage those residents is to engage the leaders. Then those residents won't have to come to all those meetings because they trust that leader. Based on those leaders being engaged, a whole lot of people will participate and mobilize when needed."
- *Start with issues that are important NOW to participants.* "Another way is to meet people's needs where they are. You need to be responsive to what people need and want. Once you engage them by meeting those needs, they are always willing to come."

- *Reach out to people in personal ways.* “If you were going to put a notice in a community newspaper, you would maybe get your average citizen. But you probably wouldn’t get folks from the immigrant and refugee community. If we, the Trusted Advocates, call them, they will come.”
- *Be patient.* “It is important to keep in mind that engaging residents is a process that takes time. It’s not something that is going to happen overnight—but even if five come, that’s a start. If those five come and you build a relationship with them, you can be sure they’ll bring more.”
- *Relationships matter.* “I think the most important piece is the relationship you have with the community. If you can go out and build the relationship—then they have someone to trust. If people trust you, they will come to you and you can then help build relationships with the police or other institutional actors—that will come with time.”
- *Build trust and stay accountable to your community.* “There needs to be that trust between leaders and community. That’s why we struggle with the structure—to ensure that the relationship has been established and there is accountability to the community. You stay accountable because you have to. I’ve been involved in my community for almost 30 years. I would lose the trust of the community if I didn’t deliver on those areas that our community is specifically interested in.”
- *See multiculturalism as an opportunity to learn instead of a barrier.* “Each of us learns so much about other cultures and perspectives by being involved with Trusted Advocates. Being part of this group is, in a way, a diversity training.”

Learning Objective 4:

Structures, funding, and other supports for managing and sustaining the Trusted Advocates model.

Staffing the Program

Currently the Trusted Advocates Program is housed at the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) and funded through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In the first year (2001), all funding for the program was event-based and paid for stipends that were tied to specific activities. It wasn't until 2003 that the program received \$50,000 in dedicated funding. The budget rose to \$100,000 in 2004 and currently is around \$150,000. Each Trusted Advocate is paid \$20/hour for up to 10 hours a week of work. Currently Trusted Advocates submit timesheets to NAC in order to be paid, though they are considering moving to consultant contracts where they are paid not by the hour, but rather for specified pieces of work. NAC employs a staff member to support the Trusted Advocate Program, who also plays a critical role as a bridge between the Trusted Advocates and the Foundation. One of the Trusted Advocates noted that they are doing a lot of risk-taking so their voices can be heard and that they rely on the relationship with the *Making Connections* staff to make their work resound with Casey.

As *Making Connections* looks toward the transition to local sustainability, one question to address is where the Trusted Advocates will be housed and anchored. A number of different options are being considered including:

- Continuing to house the Trusted Advocates at NAC;
- Housing the program at the White Center Community Development Association;
- Creating an independent organization; or
- Continuing to have the Trusted Advocates housed at individual nonprofits within the community.

Commitment to Shared Leadership

The creation of the four workgroups (increased work and earnings; school success; safe streets and neighborhoods; and strong families) together with the co-chairing of each workgroup by a Trusted Advocate and an institutional partner has been a powerful mechanism to increase the Trusted Advocates influence in the change

process. It created a structure that has allowed Trusted Advocates to be involved at all levels of *Making Connections* as decision-makers and implementers.

Creation of a Steering Committee

The structure of the Trusted Advocates Program itself continues to evolve and develop. Trusted Advocates hold meetings twice a month that provide them with an opportunity to share information and learn from each other. In 2005, the advocates held a retreat where the structure of the program was discussed and that resulted in the creation of a steering committee made up of six Trusted Advocates. The steering committee ensures that the work reflects community priorities and creates an accountability structure for the advocates. It provides a more focused environment to work through issues, move workplans along, and come up with proposals for the larger group. Power resides, however, with the larger group. All key decisions are made there. The steering committee meets monthly for two hours. Currently Theresa Fujiwara—who heads the *Making Connections* initiative in White Center/Boulevard Park as site team coordinator—attends the monthly meetings of the steering committee. As a longtime member of the social services and nonprofit community, she is able to use her rich connections to help the steering committee get resources and support its priorities. The steering committee has put in a request to the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center for support from an organizational development consultant who can help provide some guidance on developing the structure and continuing to figure out how to grow.

Development of a Job Description

Another way that the structure is becoming more formalized is in the development of a Trusted Advocates' job description (see Appendix A). In the early days, the advocates were individuals who had often been active in their communities for 10, 20, or sometimes 30 years or more. They were known and trusted by community members—and many of them were already very busy with existing community work. Currently there is an emphasis on recruiting individuals who live within the White Center/Boulevard Park neighborhood and who may have fewer commitments and more time available for the work. There is also a desire to engage more youth as Trusted Advocates. Along with these recruitment goals is a desire to

create a more nurturing and mentoring model for new advocates as they come in. The job description and a more formal application process are designed to support this effort. But for many of the existing advocates, it feels somewhat foreign because it is not the way they came into the program.

Compensation of Trusted Advocates

Most Trusted Advocates work in their communities on a volunteer basis, professional basis, and Trusted Advocate basis, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish. The majority of the Trusted Advocates sit within host organizations that work directly with the cultural group they are serving. Some are full-time employees of these host organizations in addition to their jobs as Trusted Advocates. Others are working on a volunteer or part-time basis. As advocates, they can be paid for work up to ten hours a week. For those with full-time jobs in existing organizations, the Trusted Advocates' stipend is used to pay for the time spent in meetings during evenings and weekends.

Compensation continues to be a difficult issue, as most Trusted Advocates spend far more time than the allotted ten hours a week on community work. Additionally, as the model becomes more structured and more community agencies and partners hear about the Trusted Advocates, the work expands. There are more meetings to attend, more groups looking to incorporate Trusted Advocates into their work and models, and, therefore, increasing demands on Trusted Advocates' time. Another delicate issue that provoked discussion was how to compensate people who might be undocumented. "In Oakland we've got 37% to 38% undocumented. How do we pay them?" While no definitive answer was proposed, specific programs in each community that work with the undocumented were discussed.

The question of how being housed within existing nonprofits impacts the Trusted Advocates Program was raised. Trusted Advocates responded that it depended on the perspective of the executive director and the policies of the organization. In one case, an advocate described working at an organization that was performance-based and where her Trusted Advocate work all had to be done outside of normal working hours. In other cases, the work that the Trusted Advocates do for the agencies and their community roles are so complementary that the two blend together.

"A lot of us, especially people of color, get this position of Trusted Advocate as compensation for work that we're already doing in community. This is the work that is important to us—it's not about the money—but it is an opportunity for us to get support for our community work. We go back and forth about the honoraria the initiative pays—if you're going to honor me for my time, then don't ask me if I was working."

Sili Savusa,
Trusted Advocate

Learning Objective 5:

Relationships and links between the Trusted Advocates Program, community-based organizations, and other strategies to achieve and track *Making Connections* results.

For the discussion of this learning objective, White Center invited the principal of one of the neighborhood community schools who works closely with the school readiness program to talk about his experience with the Trusted Advocates Program. In addition, Vicki Asakura, the Executive Director of the Nonprofit Assistance Center, which houses the Trusted Advocates Program, talked about the Partners Group and its relationship with the Trusted Advocates Program.

Dave Darling, principal of MountView Elementary School, talked about his experience with Trusted Advocates:

“In the school and with the population we serve I couldn’t do it without the Trusted Advocates. They are such a benefit and help. For example, we have been trying to reach our English Language Learner students to get them up to snuff on math and reading but haven’t been getting a strong response from the parents. We partnered with Trusted Advocates to do outreach for a parent meeting and had 75 parents show up. I’ve got involvement now that is skyrocketing. The benefit is the parents now trust the school. More importantly, they are making linkages among themselves. This wouldn’t happen if I was doing this by myself. How do you communicate across eight different languages? I couldn’t do it by myself—it’s only with the help of Trusted Advocates that I can make this happen.

“I’m selfish, I’ll do anything that will benefit my school and my community. When *Making Connections* first came to White Center five years ago, I thought I could make connections for my school. I am surprised when I go to the school readiness meetings and I don’t see a lot of school representatives. I don’t understand why other educators don’t seek this kind of partnership. My advice for you is if you want to connect with your local school, build a relationship with the principal. Principals are people too.

It's true that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Make a ruckus. Demand and advocate. There is not an educator alive who won't respond. Walk into that school and talk to that principal. There is a lot of pressure on schools and administrators to lift test scores. Approach the principals and let them know how you can help them meet these goals."

The White Center team added their experiences and advice on partnering with schools:

- *The relationships grow faster when you are grounded in a strong relationship with the principal.* "Trust is the key, especially when working in the community. When we started to look for schools to work with, Mr. Dave was really humble and easy to work with. Some principals aren't like that. He gave me access to the families and helped me build relationships with other employees at the school. All of my community knows him by name—that's something. When you really want to work with the community, they know it." —*Mengstab Tzegaii, Trusted Advocate*
- *Begin building relationships and working with schools where it seems the easiest.* "I remember when the Trusted Advocates were reaching out and talking with schools and early childhood programs. Not all the principals were like Mr. Dave. Some were not very enthusiastic about our work. We began building relationships where it was the easiest. Start there—get your act together, and then you can figure out the harder places." —*Judy de Barros, NAC*
- *Create alliances and don't begin by being confrontational.* "We need to work together. We have to have more than one person and more than one community to pressure the school. When you ask for something from the school, copy someone who is powerful. Do a little bit of homework to find out who to target. Don't start on a confrontational basis." —*Jesus Rodriguez, Trusted Advocate*

Vicki Asakura—Executive Director of the Nonprofit Assistance Center—explained how the Trusted Advocates, community partners, and the broader

community interact. She explained that the Trusted Advocates Program and the Partners Group serve as the main vehicles for affecting change with other players in the community. The community is at the center. The Trusted Advocates play a crucial role in identifying and meeting community priorities. The Partners Group is a coalition of key representatives of community-based organizations, local government, funders, and institutions working in the White Center/Boulevard Park neighborhood that help to garner resources and organize services to meet those community priorities. The Partners Group was set up to include the “higher ups” who have decision-making authority within their respective organizations or institutions.

Though the Partners Group was set up five years ago when the initiative started, it has only been in the last year that the Trusted Advocates have achieved an equal voice in these meetings. As with the shared leadership of the working groups, the creation of a table where resident leaders and extremely powerful community partners sit together as equals is central to the success of the Trusted Advocates’ model. It has provided an opportunity for the Trusted Advocates to have real access to those with the resources, relationships, and authority to make community priorities a reality. As one of the Trusted Advocates put it, “if you want to be the squeaky wheel that is the place to have the access. You don’t have this kind of opportunity in a lot of other circles to see that change and justice happen.”

Trusted Advocates highlighted the following lessons they have learned in the process of interacting and working more closely with Partners Group:

- *Focus on what you want.* Make clear what the Trusted Advocates need from these types of partnerships to strengthen their work in the community.
- *Emphasize the importance of establishing trust.* “Make the point that if we cannot trust them, then we cannot trust them with our families.”
- *Have frank and honest conversations.* “Don’t sugarcoat the issues.”
- *Focus on developing solutions together.* “Do not make this a venting process.”
- *Make room for others.* Support other residents to increase their comfort level in working with and within mainstream institutions.

Relationships between Trusted Advocates and community partners have been evolving over time. As Trusted Advocates have built a track record with their work in the community, the interest of community partners in bringing Trusted Advocates into their work has grown. A few key examples were brought up during the course of the two days:

- In partnership with the White Center Community Development Association, Trusted Advocates have hosted a series of community meetings to get perspectives about whether or not the White Center/Boulevard Park neighborhood should be annexed to the city of Seattle or a nearby town (the area is currently unincorporated). These meetings have really helped Trusted Advocates to make a name for themselves in terms of accountability to the community. It even attracted the attention of one of the big gurus on the issue of annexation who came to one of the Trusted Advocates' meetings to ask them to partner on the issue.
- In the first year of the multicultural preschool program, there was a struggle to gain the trust of the Head Start programs and schools. Both were reluctant to give access to the names and information of students on waiting lists for early childhood programs. This hampered outreach efforts. In the current year, this is no longer an issue.
- The City of Seattle is currently looking at replicating the Trusted Advocates Program for an initiative that is seeking to engage immigrant and refugee communities.
- Local nonprofits have stepped up their requests for Trusted Advocates to do outreach, facilitate meetings, or provide community education.

The growing interest from community partners means that there are not enough Trusted Advocates for the requests received from agencies, bureaucracies, and other partners. This reinforces the need to recruit and train more advocates.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Participants found the match to be a highly informative, inspiring, and energizing experience. By the conclusion of the exchange, the Oakland team agreed to continue working together toward the development of a resident engagement model responsive to the challenges and opportunities that exist in the Lower San Antonio neighborhood.

Below are several participants' reflections regarding match highlights and next steps they want to take:

- “What you’re doing here is quite amazing. I’m impressed with the multiculturalism and way in which you are intentionally crossing cultural bridges.”
- “It is so wonderful for you to share what you’ve learned and how you got to where you are. When we go back, we need to do asset mapping so that we have a better understanding of what we actually have as resources in our community. Now that we have a better understanding of what Trusted Advocates are, we need to learn what it could look like and mean for our community.”
- “Learning about the Trusted Advocates recaps on the work I’ve been doing and the connection with the neighbors. You can’t put a timeline on how long it takes you to get trust.”
- “There is a lot here for us to take away. What was interesting was hearing the history and evolution. Here, the initial approach was to survey and mobilize residents. In Oakland, we started with work led by the community-based organizations. We developed a structure early on, and we can build on that. That structure is being modified to make space for resident leadership. There have been a whole set of recommendations by the resident ad hoc group that very much resonates with what we’ve learned here.”

“What you’re doing here is quite amazing. I’m impressed with the multiculturalism and way in which you are intentionally crossing cultural bridges.”

- “What I got from this is that we really need to step back a little and assess things in Oakland. We need to review our strategy plan, set timelines, and do an assets inventory”
- “You are just like Oakland in terms of your diversity. But in Oakland, residents are feeling like they are left out of the process. Now it will change as we see that the residents have a voice. We also need to start coming up with a program so we can pay our residents so they can get their needs met while they’re helping us out.”
- “This helped me to form a beautiful picture in my mind of the landscape of Oakland covered with Trusted Advocates. I know that they’re there—but just not able to touch each other yet.”
- “Setting the agenda for this peer match was an interesting exercise, but living it has been amazing. One thing this has really made me think about is separating the difference between wants and needs. In Oakland, we’ve had a lot of conversations about wants. It is time for us to stop talking. We need to get moving and we also need to get out of the middle of the road and let the residents lead.”
- “After looking at what you’ve done over the last few years in White Center, I found myself thinking that our team had better step up. It is time for us to make definite statements and definite moves. I have been a resident in the neighborhood for a long time and done relatively little. I also need to step up.”

In the short term, Oakland participants committed to the following next steps:

- Review the Oakland team calendar of activities and identify opportunities for Oakland residents to be present in the workgroups the way Trusted Advocates are in White Center.

- Convene follow-up meetings with *Making Connections* staff, partner organizations, and other residents to move to action, with the hope that residents and other community-based organizations will drive the process.
- Representatives from community-based organizations will be more attentive when they hold meetings so residents can get more involved in the process as well as work at building new and expanded relationships with residents.
- Explore how they can customize the Trusted Advocates model, drawing from people already acting in this capacity in their own context, and how to build a resident network.

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WHAT IS *MAKING CONNECTIONS*?

Making Connections is the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s initiative to improve outcomes for some of the nation’s most vulnerable children and families. The initiative is conducted through deep and durable partnerships with selected cities and neighborhoods across the United States (for more information, visit www.aecf.org). Several core ideas underlie *Making Connections*:

- *Making Connections* is based on the recognition that the greatest number of American children who suffer from “rotten outcomes” live in city neighborhoods that are in many ways cut off—disconnected—from the mainstream opportunities of American life. Thus, *Making Connections* is “place-based”—it focuses on specific neighborhoods in specific cities.
- *Making Connections* has a simple theory: children do better when they grow up in strong families, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Thus, *Making Connections* strategies are aimed at helping families obtain what they need to be strong and helping neighborhoods gain the resources they need in order to support families well.
- *Making Connections* focuses on three major types of “connections” that help families grow stronger and achieve what they want for their children. The first of these is helping families connect to economic opportunities and to jobs that provide income, assets, and an economic future. Research and experience suggest that this type of connection is unlikely without two others: strong connections to the social networks of kin, neighborhood groups, and other informal ties that sustain families when times get tough and connections to high-quality, effective services and supports that help families reach their goals.

Making Connections focuses on improving results for children and families in tough neighborhoods. The initiative aims for the following core results:

- Families have increased earnings and income;

- Families have increased levels of assets;
- Families, youth, and neighborhoods increase their participation in civic life;
- Families and neighborhoods have strong informal supports and networks;
- Families have access to quality services and supports; and
- Children are healthy and ready to succeed in school.

A key task in ensuring the success of *Making Connections* is making available learning and technical assistance that the participating sites need to move forward with their work. One of the ways that the Foundation provides this kind of support is by making peer matches available to the sites.

WHAT ARE PEER MATCHES?

Since 1995, as part of a broader effort to rely more intentionally on the experience of people working in the field, the Center for the Study of Social Policy began working with several partners and funders to develop and offer a rather intensive form of peer technical assistance known as peer matches. Peer matches are structured opportunities for teams of people from two or more jurisdictions who are working on a similar issue to exchange experiences and practical knowledge toward resolving a particular challenge that has been identified in advance.

The rationale behind peer matches is straightforward. Often, the people best able to provide hands-on help are the “doers” themselves—people from states and communities who have successfully addressed a problem or created an effective new policy or strategy. These are the people who have an acute sense of what has and hasn’t worked and why or why not. They have developed good tools and strategies they can share. And they are usually eager to help others because of a strong sense of shared mission. But while good peer matches are informal, they are never casual—they use a carefully designed process and structure to focus the common interests, roles, and goodwill that exist between peers on producing meaningful change for a community.

Peer matches are a resource- and time-intensive strategy. Careful consideration of when, where, and how to use this approach is therefore always warranted. Experience has shown that careful preparation and execution of the matches are critical factors for their success. This approach tends to work best when the following conditions are in place:

- A specific problem or issue has been identified, and the people looking for help are at a key decision point with respect to the design or implementation of a state or community strategy;
- Stakeholders are invested in and have a high degree of ownership in solving a problem;
- The timing is right—e.g., a decision or action that will affect the community’s family strengthening agenda is going to be taken, and/or someone needs to be convinced to take action; and
- A reasonably small number of people have the authority and ability to act on what they learn in the match.

To date, the Center has brokered over 60 peer matches on topics ranging from creating resident-led community development corporations and governance structures to establishing multilingual homeownership assistance centers to building integrated services models. As illustrated in the case summaries that are part of this series, peer matches help spread good policies and practice, build relationships among different stakeholders who may not always have a chance to work together, and enable people to put changes in place that improve results for children, families, and neighborhoods.

Appendix A

TRUSTED ADVOCATE JOB DESCRIPTION

Background

The Trusted Advocate Program began in 2001 as a group of bilingual and bicultural community workers who initiated a community needs assessment called “White Center is My Second Homeland.” They identified and interviewed 120 refugee and immigrant residents in White Center and Boulevard Park and summarized findings into a report. The Trusted Advocates have evolved to become the foundation for all of the work in the White Center/Boulevard Park *Making Connections* Initiative. White Center and Boulevard Park are communities in unincorporated King County bordering the City of Seattle in Washington State. “White Center is My Second Homeland” was sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation *Making Connections* Initiative and conducted by the Refugee Federation Service Center in conjunction with the Khmer Association of Seattle and King County. The purposes were to: 1) learn what the hopes, concerns, and perceptions were from the refugee and immigrant White Center community residents; 2) inform the Annie E. Casey Foundation *Making Connections* Initiative and local policymakers of what was happening in this community to plan for the future; and 3) increase the resident involvement of refugees and immigrants from planning to involvement.

Following this report, *Making Connections* engaged these same bilingual and bicultural community workers to facilitate community-wide discussions to identify common needs and priorities. At the first community meeting, 130 residents from 15 ethnic and interest groups came together to identify community priorities. It was clear that participation from such diverse community members was a result of a trust relationship with the bilingual and bicultural community workers. Hence the name Trusted Advocates.

The purposes of the Trusted Advocate Program are to ensure that the voices and concerns of the limited English speaking and ethnic minority residents are heard and to increase their involvement in the community planning process. The Trusted Advocates are residents of White Center. They are leaders in their respective ethnic communities and have a collective wealth of experience in working with multi-ethnic communities.

Core Values

- Accountable
- Respect for culture
- Genuine voice is from residents
- Youth
- Sensitivity to peers and community
- Multicultural
- Community experience
- Mutual support
- Building history, heritage, and traditions
- Social justice
- Transparent communications
- Ability to work with conflict and difference
- Trust building

Advocates will work to:

- Ensure that community members' needs are represented at all levels of policymaking, program planning, design, and implementation in White Center.
- Work with community members and other partnering agencies to implement *Making Connections* strategies identified through a community process.
- Create opportunities for leadership for a diverse group of community members.
- Develop a model for implementing strategies that is based in leadership from representative ethnic communities.
- Provide leadership, training, and support as needed to emerging and existing leaders.
- Coordinate with other existing projects and agencies such as Community Schools, School Readiness, Multi Service Center, and Hope VI.

Qualifications

- Resident of White Center and/or familiarity with White Center preferred.
- Must represent a community or organization serving residents of White Center.
- Good oral and written communication skills in English and in native language if applicable.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Proven ability to work sensitively with low-income families of diverse ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds.

- Ability to work with a team of individuals from diverse ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds.
- Experience with asset-based models desirable.
- Desire to advocate for their respective community.
- Respected by community.
- A minimum of two years experience working in and/or with diverse communities of color and/or refugee and immigrant communities.
- Proficient in use of e-mail and utilize e-mail as the medium for communication.
- Own or have access to a computer with Windows 98 or higher and proficient with software such as MS Word and Excel.
- Must have own transportation.

Scope of Work

- Provide outreach and information to community members in White Center.
- Recruit for, organize, and implement periodic community meetings.
- Serve as liaison between community members and institutions and agencies.
- Attend planning and policy meetings as necessary and work with specified institutions, groups, and agencies serving White Center to advocate for community members and to work together to increase the well-being of families in White Center.
- Develop linkages with schools and other agencies in White Center.
- Utilize an assets-based approach and affirm community members capacities for achieving self-sufficiency.

- Create opportunities for community members' participation at schools, councils, and other community groups.
- Participate in quarterly meetings with other community partners to coordinate and share information.
- Attend all required meetings and participate in staff training as well as other professional development opportunities.
- Make oral presentations and/or speak on behalf of NAC, *Making Connections*, and the Trusted Advocate Program to groups.
- Prepare monthly, quarterly, and final project reports along with any required products that document best practices and other strategies developed.

We are currently seeking advocates from the following communities: African American

Time Commitment: Two-year commitment

Selection Process: Steering Committee will be involved in final decisions on new advocates.

Application Procedure: Submit cover letter and resume to the Nonprofit Assistance Center. Please include experience as an advocate, parent, community organizer, and/or facilitator and your work with diverse multi-cultural groups as well as any experience related to early learning and school readiness.

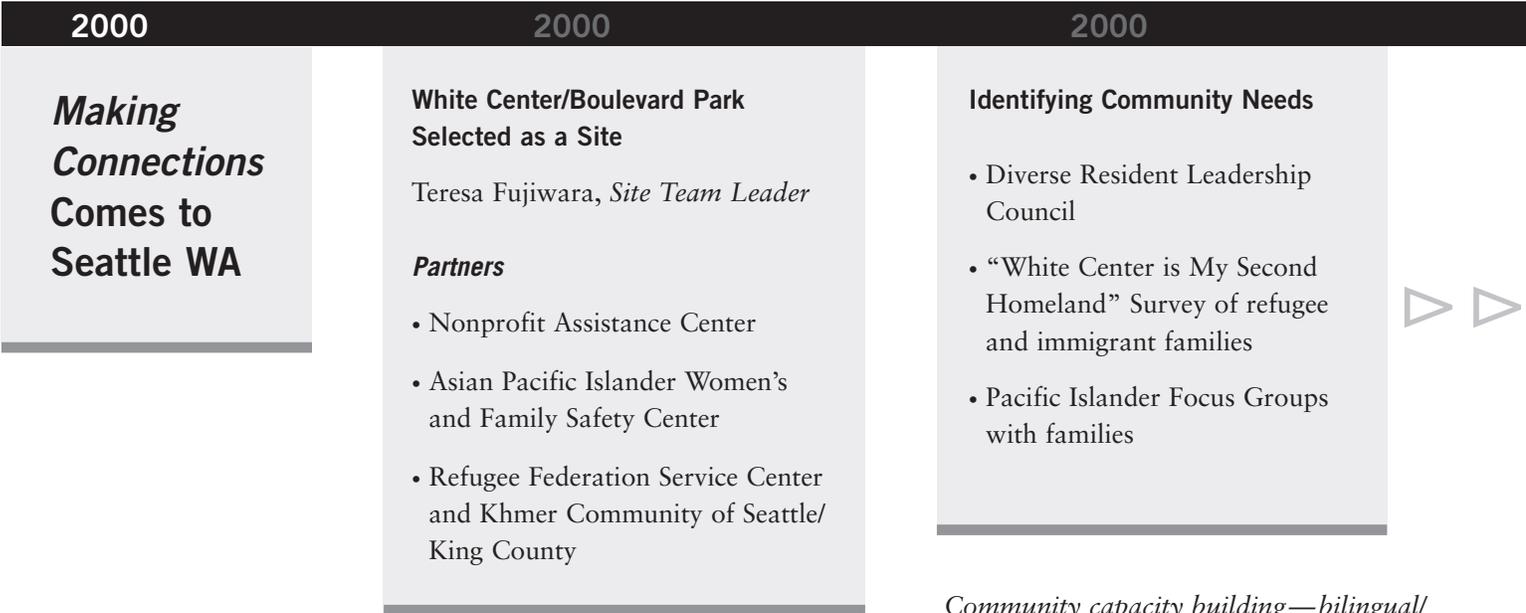
For more information, call Eugene Shen at 206 767 0858

Nonprofit Assistance Center/*Making Connections*

10025 16th Avenue S.W.

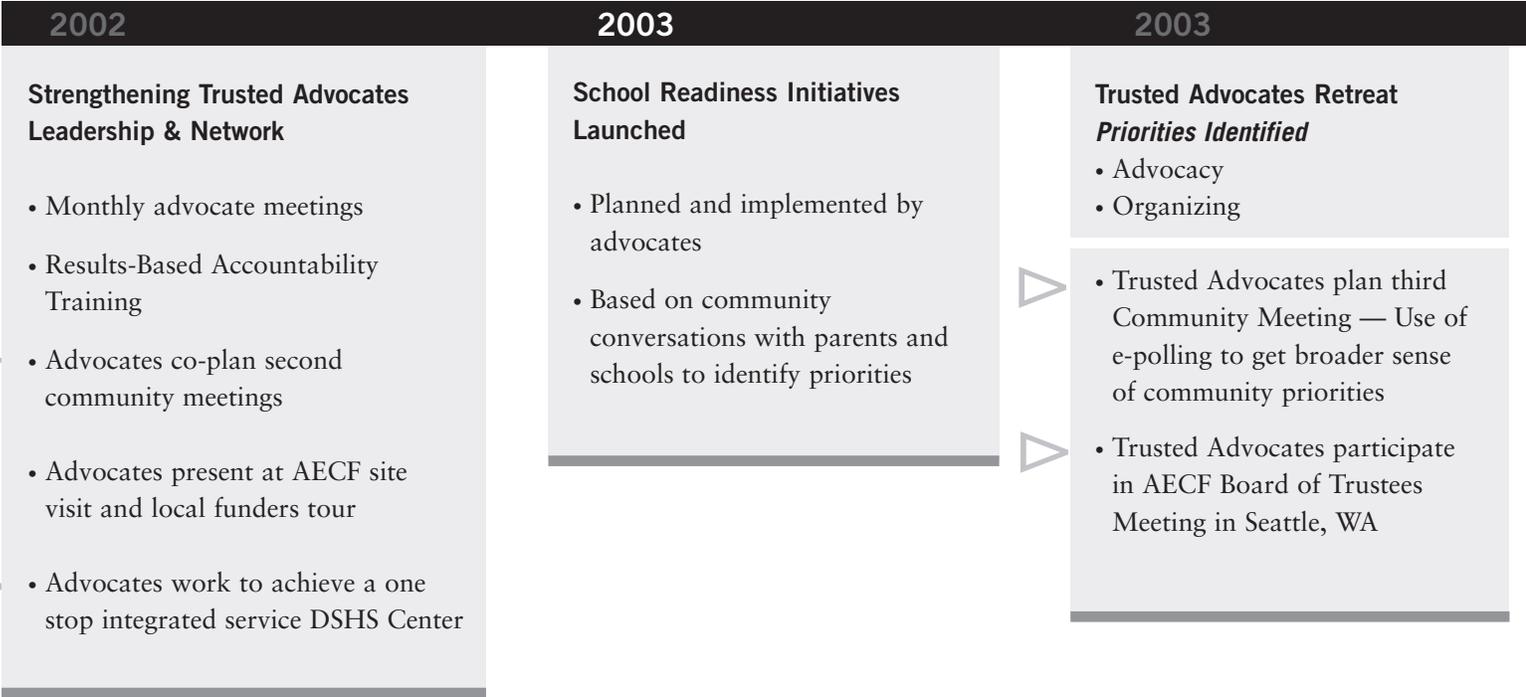
Seattle, WA 98146

Applicants may e-mail resume and cover letter to: eshen@nacseattle.org.



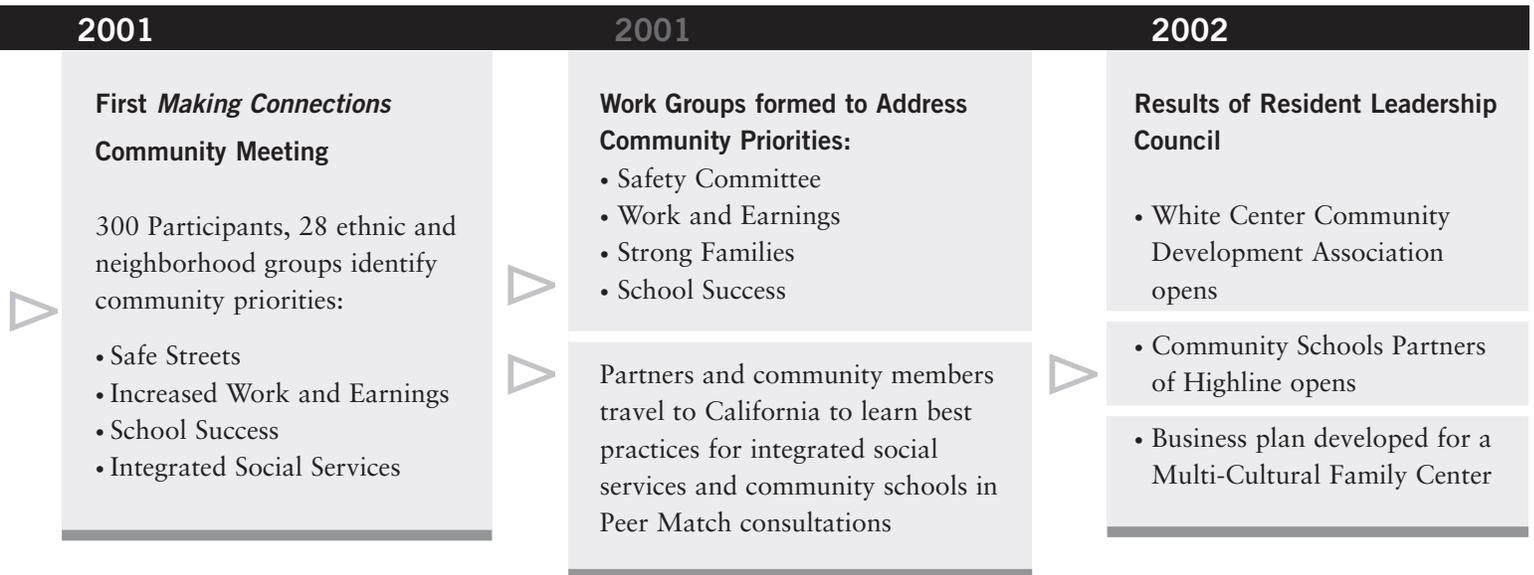
Community capacity building—bilingual/bicultural leaders trained and paid to facilitate community conversations with the residents

Infrastructure includes partnerships that build on the skills and assets of local grassroots community-based organizations

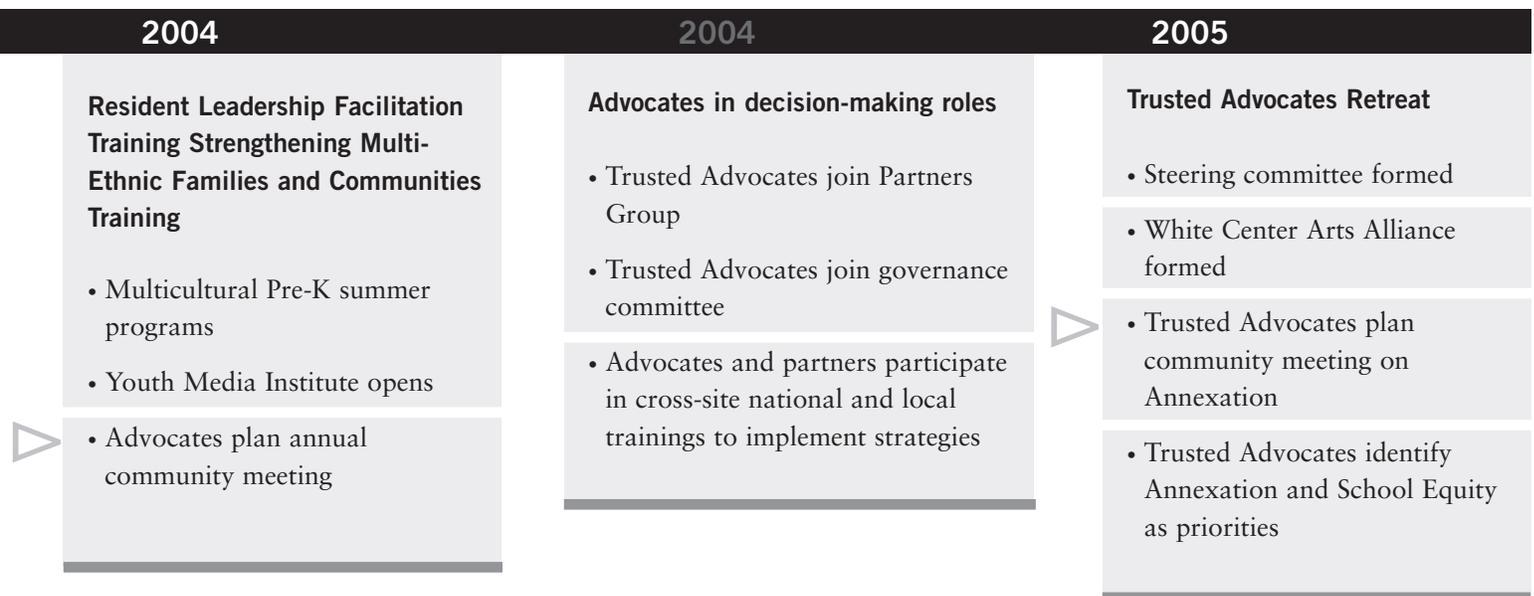


Skill building and leadership development for Trusted Advocates

Trusted Advocates increase leadership and advocacy role



Community capacity building — Workgroups co-led by Trusted Advocates



Trusted Advocates work with partners to achieve results in strategy areas

Trusted Advocates inform Making Connections agenda as decision-makers — Focus on structure for Trusted Advocates

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