



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION

**Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
Increasing Access to Facilities Offering Recreation
and Character Building Programs
for Children and Youth From Low Income Families:**

**A Meeting for Recent Grants Recipients April 18th,
2011**

Summary Report

Background and Purpose

The Lyle S. Hallman Foundation has recently funded a number of new local initiatives designed to improve access to recreation and character building programs for children and youth from low-income families. The purpose of this meeting was to explore the possibility of creating some type of shared measurement strategy for these programs. Shared measurement can act as a catalyst for more frequent and more in-depth communication about issues of access, and contribute to the creation of a more coordinated and strategic approach to services for children and youth in the Region.

This meeting used a theory of change approach. We began by trying to reach a shared understanding of what access means, and by learning more about the unique ways in which each of the new projects can contribute to access. Next, we identified some core evaluation questions that were of interest to all participants. .

There are a large number of technical and logistical hurdles to overcome in order for 5 very different organizations to collect even a small amount of common data. These logistical hurdles were not our primary focus in this first meeting.

In order for shared measurement to be useful, the organizations doing the measurement must be willing to share their information with one another openly and frequently. Collective, honest and critical discussion of the information gathered is necessary if “data” is to be transformed into insight, understanding, and action. At this meeting, we also discussed the ways in which this group might talk about what is being learned as these projects unfold.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the five agencies which received Children and Youth Capital Grants from the Foundation in 2011 and the Foundation.

Lyle S. Hallman Foundation

Hulene Montgomery, Executive Director

Facilitator

Andrew Taylor, Taylor Newberry Consulting Inc

Family and Children's Services Waterloo Region

Alison Scott, Executive Director

Jill Stoddard, Supervisor Programs

Candi Harrington, Supervisor, Fundraising and Communications

Lang's Farm Village Association

Bill Davidson, Executive Director

Centre for the Community Group -North Dumfries

Russell Hutchings, Board Chair

Kitchener Public Library

Sonia Lewis, CEO

Laura Reed, Coordinator of Children's & Teen Services

Paul Dickson, Manager, Campaign and Development

rare Charitable Research Reserve

Susan Whelan, Executive Director

Patti Leather, Director of Development

Observer and Photographer

Jennifer King

Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was set up as follows:

How do we understand access for children and youth?

- What does access mean?
- What are the obstacles?
- What are the facilitators?
 - o Shared space?
 - o Welcoming atmosphere?
 - o Programming?
- Who are the children and youth that face obstacles?
 - o Low income?
 - o Special needs?
 - o Visible minorities?
 - o Social isolation?
- What are the benefits of access?

Introductions to organizations and projects

- What does your organization do?
- What are you planning to do through this grant?
- Why are you doing this work? How does your work fit into our emerging model of access?

Where is the overlap in our interests? What are the evaluation questions that we share?

- What key indicators would everyone need to provide for us to address these key questions together?
 - o What core indicators would we all need to gather in the exact same way?
 - o What supplementary indicators would be nice to have, even if every member could not provide them, or even if each member provided them in a slightly different way?

How should we proceed? How can communication continue?

Discussion: Understanding Access

The group shared reflections on the issue of access. Some of the themes in this discussion are included here:

Facilitators of access include

- A focus on dignity and respect, universality, and choice
- An environment that lets children and youth feel a sense of trust, normalization and safety
- An environment that provides choice and control, by offering multiple services through a single location, various kinds of opportunities to get involved, and a means through which youth can be involved in the design and planning of programs and events
- A deliberate focus within the environment on linking people to multiple opportunities, people, and services. Active outreach.
- An environment that provides stability through time, because it is open all year, is branded in a consistent, distinctive way, and welcomes people of all ages
- An environment that is seen by youth to be cool, fun, and relevant. A place they will not be teased for visiting
- An environment where participating children and youth have a positive first experience that leads to an interest in returning
- Partnerships with educators, families, community groups and others. Partnerships focused on service delivery, but also partnerships that focus on sharing expertise and knowledge

Potential barriers to access can include:

- Barriers related to family resources:
 - o Fees

- Transportation
- Fear
- Alienation
- ☐ Barriers related to social and cultural influences
 - ubiquitous presence of technology in youth culture
- ☐ Barriers related to the organization offering access
 - Lack of appropriate staff training
 - Décor, location, and signage
 - Historical perceptions of the host organization

Benefits of access to recreation include

- ☐ A sense of belonging or inclusion
- ☐ Connection to services
- ☐ Leadership skills

Discussion: Shared Questions

After sharing with one another a bit of information about their projects and their outcome measurement plans, the group agreed that they had a shared interest in five core questions. These are:

1. Who is using these programs, spaces, or events, how, and why?
 - a. What is that experience like?
 - b. Are some people or groups getting more out of it than others?
 - *For many of the groups at the meeting, tracking data about each individual child who participates would be time consuming and intrusive. The group agreed, however, that this question might be answered by tracking the groups (e.g., schools, neighbourhoods, or postal codes) that make use of the facility or space.*
2. To what degree are these programs leading children and youth to have new experiences or try new things?
 - *Some of the organizations at the meeting already had in place tools and procedures to gather feedback from teachers or other adult leaders who bring groups into their space. These tools could be used to get a sense of how many children are trying something new. It may also be possible to track how frequently these experiences lead participants to get involved with other programs within each organization (by, for example, becoming a member of the library).*
3. How is this new initiative altering our organization's practice?
 - a. Are the changes to the physical space making a difference?
 - b. Are staff attitudes changing?
 - c. Is our focus and mission changing or becoming clearer?

4. What is working well, and what lessons could be shared with others interested in access to recreation?
 - *Questions 3 and 4 might best be answered through qualitative methods like focus groups with partners, or systematic collection of stories and examples from staff and volunteers.*
5. What role has this capital grant played in any changes to access? What are the ingredients necessary for success and sustainability in this type of work?

Reporting

Access to recreation for children and youth is an important, timely issue in Waterloo Region, and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation is interested in learning as much as possible from the experiences of the grantees present at this meeting. There was much discussion at the meeting about what kinds of information should be shared, how and when.

As a whole, the group felt it would be difficult to implement any kind of consistent measurement across projects. The timeline for construction and program launch is different for each initiative. The services offered and target populations also differ. Each organization already has tracking tools and methods in place that they hope to build upon for this initiative. Despite these concerns, it may be possible to gather some basic and high-level information consistently for each initiative.

The group was very interested in sharing over-arching learning and reflections about access with one another as their projects took shape.

Three of the grants approved involved development of facilities with shared space for nonprofits -Family and Children's Services, Lang's Community Hub and Langs-Centre for Community Group. Two of the participants -Alison Scott and Bill Davidson -are attending a conference Building Opportunities: The Nonprofit Shared Space and Services Conference from May 9 -11, 2011 in Los Angeles. They offered to share materials and learnings from this conference.

<http://www.nonprofitcenters.org/events>

Based on group input, I would like to suggest that the Foundation create a reporting template with the following questions:

- How is the development of your space progressing?
- Who is using your space?
 - Please share whatever information you can about the number of individuals, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds of the children and youth who are using your space

- Please share whatever information you can about the groups that are making use of your space.
- Are there any groups that are not accessing your space as you had hoped?
- ☐ How are children and youth benefiting?
 - How many children and youth have had the opportunity to participate in recreational activities that are new to them?
 - How many children and youth have been linked to other activities, events or services within your organization or outside your organization?
- ☐ What lessons are you learning about
 - Making spaces welcoming and inclusive?
 - Creating many pathways to engagement for people?
 - Training staff and altering organizational culture?
 - Building partnerships?

In addition, I suggest the Foundation facilitate further sharing among the grantees on their experiences in increasing access and use of shared space.

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