

Background:

In 2000 HCF's Board of Directors commissioned a report by May Wong. This report based on an extensive consultation on how the community viewed the HCF's role and their recommendations on how the Foundation's grantmaking would be most effective. The report presented options reflecting varying degrees of focus on priority areas. Within the context of the mission, vision, and values of the Foundation, a review was conducted of the community's most pressing issues.

It was determined that most, if not all of these concerns stemmed from poverty. Subsequently, the Board approved adopting a central focus on poverty for the Foundation's unrestricted grantmaking. The Board approved a commitment of at least \$750,000 per year from 2004 - 2007 to address poverty alleviation, prevention and reduction. Funded initiatives fit with a series of strategies identified by the Caledon Institute as being effective "pathways out of poverty".

During this first phase of TPT (2004-07), 86 grants totaling just over \$3.4 million were made to support 64 initiatives.

In 2007 the TPT advisory committee recommended to the Board that TPT II be further focused on neighbourhoods. The Board made a further financial commitment of \$5M over five years to support this work. The rationale behind this increased focus included our deeper knowledge about the disparities between Hamilton neighbourhoods, the creation of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and the desire to integrate the "Growing Roots...Strengthening Neighbourhoods" small grants program into TPT. The "theory of change" developed for TPT II led to a granting program with two primary components:

1. Supporting "neighbourhood hubs". Following an open call for proposals from the neighbourhoods themselves, six neighbourhood hubs within challenged inner-city neighbourhoods were recognized and supported in 2008.
2. Recognizing the need to continue to support policy and systemic issues for the broader community, "foundational" grants (both proactively and through an open call) were also made for policy-related initiatives or for those that crossed multiple hubs. An additional two neighbourhood hubs were added in 2009.

In 2009 the focus of the foundational grants was adjusted to make investing in programs to benefit social housing tenants a priority.

In 2010, with two years remaining on the Board's five year commitment to TPT II, a review of outcomes to date and best practices from similar initiatives in other jurisdictions was undertaken. The review identified several key elements to neighbourhood development the most notable of which was the importance of having community development workers on the ground to organize and support local planning teams and facilitating service provision. At the same time this work was underway, the City of Hamilton was establishing its Neighbourhood Development Strategies (NDS) office under the direction of Paul Johnson. It was felt that this City initiative offered a new and exciting opportunity to increase the impact of TPT by creating a partnership between HCF and the NDS initiative. For 2010-11 the Board approved a funding round to be focused on four components:

1. Co-ordinated model of asset-based community development
2. A convened and supported 'lab school' for community development
3. Developed neighbourhood service plans
4. Comprehensive evaluation of HCF's CD approach

To ensure the stability of the local planning teams and the work which was being done, a decision was made to extend the 2010-11 TPT grants for approximately six months until December 2011. This was to allow the time needed to establish the partnership with the City and to put in place a co-ordinated team of community development workers. This work would be the underpinning of both the remaining two years of TPT II as well as the City's work in developing extensive, broad and deep neighbourhood plans. The initial extension was further extended providing funding until July, 2012.

HCF staff has worked closely with the City Neighbourhood Development office to hire, train and support a team of community development workers. A partnership with the Best Start Network allowed for the hiring of an additional community development worker to complement the four funded by HCF. In October 2011 the community development worker team was in place. Suzanne Brown was seconded from Public Health to work out of the City Manager's office for the Neighbourhood Development initiative. Suzanne coordinates the CD worker team which has been renamed the "Neighbourhood Action Team". A working group composed of representatives from HCF, the City Neighbourhood Development office, and the Best Start Network meet regularly to share information and plan for the initiative.

Each CD worker supports 2 neighbourhood hubs, including the priority neighbourhoods of the City (Stinson, McQuesten and the South Sherman Stadium area). All of the hubs are actively engaged in producing neighbourhood service plans which are to be completed by July 2012 and will form the focus of the last and final call for proposals to TPT.

Accomplishments: What improved because of our work?

1. **Community Leadership and Participation**

The Foundation has supported eight neighbourhood hubs in some of Hamilton most challenged, yet resilient, neighbourhoods. There are local planning teams within each hub with significant resident involvement. A snapshot in time shows over 150 residents as active members of planning teams working with service providers, business representatives, government representatives and the faith community, to improve their neighbourhoods. All hubs now have resident leadership on the executives of the planning teams. Each hub also has a sub-committee of residents who oversee the small grants initiatives.

2. **Citizens are receiving help in meeting their basic needs where they live.**

Food security has been identified as an issue of concern across the hubs. Five of the hubs have established small food banks. The others have assisted by providing emergency food vouchers. Five of the hubs have also developed community gardens, most notably the McQuesten hub which engaged 275 children and adults in planning, planting and maintaining 50 garden plots producing a diverse range of vegetables and herbs for local residents and the food bank. In this example, HCF funding was leverage for funding from the Red Hill Trust of \$5,000 and significant in-kind contributions from multiple partners including the City of Hamilton and Home Depot. Other ways the hubs have supported food security issues include the establishment of a grocery shuttle, community dinners, and cooking classes. Five of the eight hubs also offer the Good Food Box program.

Another basic need for residents is transportation. Each hub has an emergency transportation fund to purchase bus tickets and taxi vouchers on an emergency basis. Examples include; transportation to a new job; out-of-town court appearance; hospital visits for a sick child; and attending substance abuse rehab program. On a more systems- level, the Keith hub has successfully advocated for a bus line through the Keith neighbourhood and the CATCH (Quigley) hub successfully advocated for stop signs to ensure the safety of children around a local school.

A number of the hubs have become one-stop providers of information to help residents get their basic needs met. The development of service provider / institutional partners has resulted in workers from Ontario Workers / Ontario Disability Support Program, City Housing, Ontario Dental Works and Home Management services being available on site.

Additional basic needs support included:

CATCH (Quigley) – work boots, mattresses, child clothing exchange, Christmas gifts

Riverdale – furniture, hygiene products
Wever – winter clothing, computers, and haircuts
South Sherman – clothing closet, health care through Parish Nurse
Keith – clothing, health care
Jamesville – clothing, Christmas gifts
McQuesten – prenatal care

3. New programs and services are planned, delivered and provided at a neighbourhood level

One of the greatest strengths of the hub model has been the provision of services and programs. While services/programs cross all age groups, there has been a focus of services for children and youth. The services have most often come about as a result of identified needs followed by partnership development with service providing organizations. Service providing organizations have given significant in-kind support in addition to the funding they receive from TPT II. Several service providing organizations, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' & Girls' Club, Hamilton Public Library, and the YMCA are partners in multiple hubs.

Investment in child/youth programs fall within one of the six strategy areas for poverty prevention which are: academic afterschool initiatives; early years support; literacy for children and youth; access to recreation; and risk reduction. Every hub has at least one after-school initiative including homework clubs, mentoring and language programs. In several neighbourhoods, ethno-culturally specific programs for children are offered to assist with language retention and integration. One example is the Muslim Children's program in McQuesten with 55 active participants.

Based on reports from the hubs, a conservative estimate of children and youth supported through academic and recreational programs is approximately 9,100. This does not include one-time or annual events such as Eid celebrations, Christmas parties, block parties, environmental fairs, theatre trips and school nutrition programs.

For the youth, programming tended to focus on leadership development, healthy living and risk reduction. These programs have been offered through established service providing organizations such as STAR, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' & Girls' Club and the YMCA but also through volunteer run programs supported through the TPT small grants program.

While adult and senior programs were fewer in number, they provided important resources to meet residents' needs in relation to employment, income support, parenting support, and socialization. For example, 622 people were assisted by Adult Basic Education Association with educational assessments, information and referrals. Job finding clubs and employment support services were provided in many of the hubs. John Howard Society provided this support in Riverdale and McQuesten. Over 1,500 seniors have been supported with financial workshops, tax clinics and information sessions focussing on ensuring that they receive all the financial benefits they are entitled to.

4. Neighbourhoods look different

A significant change as a result of the hub model was the use of decommissioned schools and churches into community centres offering a wide range of services/programs. This took place in Jamesville (St. Mary's School), McQuesten (St. Helen's School), South Sherman (St. Peter's Anglican Church) and Keith (Robert Land School).

Additional physical changes include the building of affordable housing in Keith through Habitat for Humanity, neighbourhood park clean-ups, playground builds in Riverdale and McQuesten, and the creation of community gardens and a leash-free dog park. Building improvements for both homes and small businesses have been made through the dedicated volunteers of the Property Elves in Crown Point and the Property Angels in South Sherman.

5. Grassroots groups have access to space and support

Of the eight hubs, four have dedicated space within community centres established from closed schools or churches (Jamesville, McQuesten, South Sherman and Keith). These hubs have made it possible for grassroots groups to utilize space free of charge or at a subsidized rate. This has been particularly successful in the Jamesville hub where the Jamesville Community Centre has been utilized by a arrange of groups such as Narcotics Anonymous, Hamilton Free Skool, Hamilton Urban Theatre, Muslim Women's Group, Liberian Canadian Organization, and the LGBTQ Youth group. Funding from HCF provided centre supervisors that allow the centre to be open for community programs in the Jamesville hub as well as the McQuesten hub.

6. Awareness

The term "neighbourhood hubs" has become part of community conversation bringing an increased awareness of the challenges and good work being done in local neighbourhoods. Part of this increased awareness is attributable to the Code

Red series by the Hamilton Spectator. It is interesting to note however that an “unscientific” review of Spectator articles over the past year, also show 39 articles published on the positive work going on in the hubs. Awareness is a two way street. Not only has the broader community become more aware of the hubs but the residents of the hubs are becoming more aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Most significantly however is that the neighbourhood hub model has been a significant part of the decision of the City of Hamilton to establish a Neighbourhood Development office with a \$2M budget to enhance and expand on the original hub model. This will help to ensure that this important work is embedded within the City structure. It also offered the opportunity for the Foundation to work in partnership with the City and has resulted in the joint funding of a team of well-trained, experienced community development workers to support the organizing within neighbourhood hubs and the creation of neighbourhood plans covering the next five years.

Overall Learning and Identified Challenges

The learning achieved and challenges faced, as identified below, have been compiled from hub participants, residents, community development workers and staff. These realities must be employed to help HCF shape the granting opportunities that follow TPT II. By acknowledging and responding to these challenges and by building on these successes, subsequent granting will have a greater, more meaningful impact for our community.

1. Importance of community development workers – this is a lesson we learned quite early in the process of supporting the neighbourhood hubs and has been addressed through the hiring of five community development workers supervised by a coordinator at the Neighbourhood Development department of the City. The workers are participating in an extensive training program supported by Bill Lee from McMaster University. An evaluation of this component is being done by Sarah Wakefield from the University of Toronto.
2. Space has an impact on the development of the hub. It has been noted that the hubs with designated space are better positioned to offer a wider range of programs to more people. The challenge to designated space is that it is difficult to sustain.
3. Evaluation is difficult. This is in part due to the complexity and time involved in community development work but also because the hubs benefit from the support of a number of funders. To provide a full picture of the benefit of the hub to the community, we need to look beyond HCF funding.
4. We got it a little backwards. The intensive work that has gone on over the past year with pulling together a solid team of community development workers and the development of neighbourhood plans should have been the focus of our efforts when

the program was initiated. The neighbourhood hubs are now in a position to move forward in a way that they weren't previously.

5. The small grants component to TPT II remains an effective tool to engage residents in neighbourhood improvement efforts. This has been particularly effective with various ethno specific cultures. In some cases, small projects funded through the small grants program have gone on to grow and become ongoing programs in the neighbourhood.

Going Forward:

As our TPT- Neighbourhood Action Strategies commitment expired in June 2013 and we looked to the future of our Community Fund we pondered these questions:

Are we “done” our poverty work? What impact have we made? Who was included in the previous funding opportunities? Who was left out? What, if any, were the consequences? What else is going on in the community that might help to shape or leverage our efforts? What are current best practices in terms of unrestricted granting by community foundations? Many of the answers to these questions have shaped our future focus on education – increasing literacy rates, high school completion and post-secondary access generates many of the very outcomes we seek to achieve. Regardless of the future iterations of our community fund, we reflect on these lessons from TPT and Neighbourhood Action Strategies:

- We should all be proud of TPT...the HCF Board took a courageous step in committing our unrestricted assets to one critical community issue – the first in Canada to do so
- Our granting has become more strategic – more “need” to do and less “nice” to do
- Our granting has brought what is often an unheard voice to the table – the citizens of Hamilton rather than only the institutions and organizations
- The capacity of residents has increased to allow them to play an active decision making role
- The broader community is more aware of the struggles of Hamilton's neighbourhoods as well as the potential for change
- Our relationship with the Poverty Roundtable, while still evolving, has helped make the critical links between on-the-ground work and policy / advocacy issues
- We are poised for sustainability – for the first time, our relationship with the City offers the opportunity to embed neighbourhood development work into the structure, budget, and operational processes of the City
- This is social justice work which the Foundation committed to – it's about “change...not charity”