

Learning Curves

Expanding the Constituency
for Comprehensive
Sexuality Education



Applied
Research
Center

By Rinku Sen and Kim Fellner

Prepared for the Ms. Foundation for Women
Fall 2005

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Project Director: Rinku Sen
Research and Writing: Kim Fellner
Research assistance: Kendra Field, Rhoda Linton,
Sonia Peña, Will Pittz
Copyeditor: Susan Starr
Graphic Design: Mónica Hernández
Print Management: Denise Granger

The Applied Research Center and the Ms. Foundation would like to thank the New Partners grantees for their cooperation with this research process.

Family Planning Association of
Chelan-Douglas Counties
Las Sinfronteras
Luz Social Services/Luz Academy
Northwest Communities Education Center
Radio KDNA
Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity
Odyssey Youth Center
Omeyocan YES and the Southern Arizona
AIDS Foundation
Southeast Arizona Behavioral Health Services
New Turf

The Ms. Foundation for Women would like to thank the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their support of this project.

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In 2002, the Ms. Foundation for Women initiated a program to support organizations in building a new constituency for comprehensive sexuality education. This report describes the New Partners/ New Initiatives Program, details the experiences of the foundations and the grantee organizations and reflects on the lessons that emerged.

The New Partners Project: Growing the Constituency for Reproductive Health

Support in the United States for comprehensive sexuality education is overwhelming. Yet a small, vocal opposition and increasingly hostile public policy have deterred its implementation in many communities across the country.

This chasm between community support and public policy prompted the Ms. Foundation for Women and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation to launch the New Partners/New Initiatives Project in 2001 to help build non-traditional constituencies who would stand up for reproductive health. The three-year initiative, housed at the Ms. Foundation with funding from the Packard Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ultimately supported eight groups in two underserved regions—Eastern Washington State and Southern Arizona. The goals were to broaden the availability of comprehensive sexuality education and to build a constituency that would publicly advocate on its behalf. The foundations chose sexuality education precisely because it is one element of reproductive rights that enjoys strong and diverse support.

Both external and internal factors constrain new constituency development. The communities in which these grantees operate have been targets of conservative institutions such as the Christian Coalition and Operation Rescue since the early 1980s. While conservative constituencies are not necessarily large, they are vocal and effective in addressing incidents and policy matters immediately and within a variety of private and public institutions, including schools. In addition, longstanding traditions of political disengagement in many communities create an intimidating impression of what it means to do policy work. These factors influence the speed and visibility with which grantees publicly push their issues.

The concept was bold, the approach experimental, and the outcomes varied and, on occasion, unexpected. Two of the groups dropped out before the end of the grant cycle; others discovered new strengths and exceeded their goals. This report describes the New Partners project, details the experiences of the foundations and the partner groups, and reflects on the lessons that emerged.

The Ms. Foundation hired the Applied Research Center to document and analyze each group's work over the three-year

grant period. The Center conducts research on race and public policy nationwide, and had produced a report on the racial effects of abstinence-only sexuality education in California. The Center has thus written a report describing the lessons learned through the New Partners project for a diverse audience of practitioners, philanthropists and policy leaders. Researchers conducted documentation trainings for staff members, and to some extent, members of the groups, and used the research methods listed below:

- conducting site visits
- observing meetings held by each grantee, as well as statewide and national gatherings hosted by the Ms. Foundation
- interviewing staff members, volunteers and allies of the grantees
- reviewing documents collected by the grantees themselves, including grant reports, staff journals, media coverage, and program evaluations
- interviewing Ms. Foundation and Packard Foundation staff

The foundations chose sexuality education precisely because it is one element of reproductive rights that enjoys strong and diverse support.

Three questions drove the Center's inquiry. Have the activities of New Partners grantees generated increased education, interest and activism among young people, low-income people and people of color, thereby contributing to a broader base of support for reproductive rights? Which factors have influenced the pace of growth in this constituency, and where do New Partners resources fit? What kinds of support do the groups need to raise the visibility of sexuality education and other reproductive rights issues?

Ten major lessons emerged from the study. These do not serve as a blueprint for future efforts. Rather, the authors hope that readers will use the lessons to identify the next steps in broadening the base of support for comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive rights in general.

1. The project outcomes in terms of constituency-building, advocacy, and policy were numerically modest but represent significant "pre-organizing," with the potential to provide a base for longer-term organizing. New constituencies that have not traditionally been associated with reproductive rights expressed substantial interest in comprehensive sexuality education, which does appear to be a good issue through which to involve people. These factors indicate potential for building a much larger base of support for comprehensive sexuality education.
2. Latinas and queer youth emerged as significant new constituencies, despite commonly held assumptions about their lack of support for or interest in reproductive health struggles. Latinas were the staff backbone at many of the projects and emerged themselves as a critical constituency supporting reproductive health. Directly involving and educating parents is an effective strategy for buy-in, especially among Latina mothers and grandmothers who may not have had access to sexuality education themselves. In spite of the seeming lack of relevance of "reproduction" to their lives, queer youth were motivated by sexual health concerns and by their recognition that the fluidness of sexuality can surface new issues.
3. Curriculum development provided an avenue for groups to increase their comfort levels with the subject matter of sexuality education and claim ownership of the program process. The lack of readily accessible, affordable, comprehensive sexuality education literature—especially the absence of appropriate materials in Spanish—was a major concern at most of the sites. Grantees used popular education or other non-didactic methods to allow youth development and consciousness-raising to take place. That development lays the groundwork for future political activism by allowing youth to gain skills and confidence, and to develop power analyses.
4. There was less community resistance than the grantees had originally anticipated and feared. Resistance mainly took the forms of parents objecting to the curriculum or survey tools, school administrators refusing permission for comprehensive sexuality education, or individual community members expressing opposition to a specific lesson. Resistance was rarely collective or organized, and the grantees were able to easily diffuse it for the most part.
5. The biggest challenge for the grantees was in moving from service to advocacy. The imperatives of a service organization differ from those of an advocacy organization, and service organizations in this project were often ill equipped to conduct the basic work of building and activating a constituency. People expressed confusion between policy work—which they largely saw as a matter of legislative advocacy to be carried out by one or two people—and constituency-building work. Partners had trouble seeing policy work as encompassing a broad range of institutional practices and decisions subject to the intervention of the people most affected.
6. Prior advocacy experience in service organizations did not necessarily enhance advocacy on this issue, even though it was a requirement of getting the grant. Some groups had taken positions on local regulations and events successfully, but little of that experience seemed to influence the grantees' work in the sexuality education context. The barriers appeared to be both a lack of internal, cross-staff training and a reluctance to treat sexuality education as a public rather than private issue.
7. The most significant impacts—both advances and challenges—were internal to the organizations and their immediate constituencies rather than to the external political environment. Many of the groups found new strengths and honed new skills. As younger staff people taught about empowerment, and youth constituents absorbed the lessons, they started to seek changes in their own organizations. This had not been fully anticipated by either the agencies or the Ms. Foundation and caused friction at several sites. The presence of a dedicated senior staff person who advocated for the project internally pushed some of the grantees to greater success.

8. Unstable staffing situations prevented many of these projects from moving forward consistently. Every grantee suffered substantial and disruptive staff turnover in the course of this project, and the staff that did stay frequently had little idea of how to go about organizing—rather than serving or educating—a youth constituency.
9. Local consultants hired to support the grantees on a daily basis played a critical role, as did technical-assistance organizations. The availability of local and culturally appropriate technical assistance and ongoing collaboration is key, particularly training programs on organizing, fundraising, policy analysis and media work, in addition to supporting networks, intermediaries, and constituency groups.
10. Alliances and networks helped grantees craft plans and fight isolation. The Ms. Foundation created convening opportunities for grantees to meet each other and other potential partners, but did not require collaboration. The grantees formed loose alliances and supported each other's work, both within a region and between the two sites. In addition, the grantees formed relationships with other reproductive health networks, including some mainstream organizations such as Planned Parenthood, indicating the potential for stronger partnerships between mainstream groups and new constituency groups.

Taking a Fresh Look at Reproductive Health

This millennium brought new challenges for reproductive health advocates in the U.S. Hostile federal policies and funding mandates promoted an abstinence-only bias against sexuality outside marriage and began to cut off support for comprehensive reproductive health approaches. Just before the general election in 2004, the House of Representatives approved a 49 percent increase in the budget for abstinence-only programs—as part of the Special Projects of Regional and National Significance-Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS-CBAE) program—while bypassing national family planning programs that are already underfunded and currently can provide publicly funded services to only half the women who need them. At the same time, demographic and cultural changes across the country suggest that many potential constituents for reproductive health—across lines of generation, sexual identity, ethnicity, and race—had come of age

or immigrated to the U.S. after the reproductive health battles of the 1960s and '70s, and were not being engaged in the dialogue.

Assessing the landscape, program officers of the Ms. Foundation and the Packard Foundation were concerned about the challenges among established reproductive rights groups to enlarge their constituencies, defend critical policies that provide access to reproductive health services, particularly for low-income people, and advance new policies to expand access.

Hostile federal policies and funding mandates promoted an abstinence-only bias against sexuality outside marriage and began to cut off support for comprehensive reproductive health approaches.

Both the Packard Foundation and the Ms. Foundation had long histories of funding reproductive health advocacy groups, including Planned Parenthood, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, and statewide pro-choice coalitions. The Ms. Foundation, established in 1972, is the largest public, national, multi-issue women's fund in the country, and the Reproductive Rights Coalition and Organizing Fund (RRCOF) is one of seven Ms. Foundation programs supporting state and local organizations advocating for progressive policies that benefit low-income women and women of color. This strategy itself reflected the Ms. Foundation's commitment to funding outside of the mainstream. Still, in analyzing their work to date, the two foundations were conscious of strategic and tactical gaps in the existing approach. They recognized that, for many people, reproductive rights had become too narrowly identified with abortion and highly polarized around that question. The Ms. Foundation had begun experimenting with strategies to engage new constituencies in reproductive health work, and they knew that annual grants and limited assistance would not necessarily enable groups to take larger risks.

Kathy Toner, program officer at the Packard Foundation, noted that the reproductive rights advocacy groups sometimes seemed like soldiers fighting battles in the trenches who never had time to stand up and view the whole battlefield and how it had shifted. "It's not a new debate anymore, it's a very polarized, entrenched debate," she says. "That just changes the way folks in the middle view all the sides."

Ms. Foundation Vice President for Programs Margaret Hempel also felt that the need to defend abortion rights had prevented many of the established organizations from expanding their frames and constituencies. "By the late '90s, you were seeing attacks on contraception," she explains, "but the beachhead was still really around abortion...and their memberships, either institutional or individual, were very committed to access to abortion. That made it hard for groups that you would more typically think of as pro-choice to expand their mission. The main strategies are legislative and have been divorced from a constituent base."

Only seven percent of Americans oppose sexuality education in the schools, with seven out of ten supporting teen access to birth control without parental consent.

Patricia Jerido, then program officer at the Ms. Foundation elaborates that in states where the reproductive rights movement is strong, it operates at the legislative level. "The struggle becomes this internal, professionalized fight over language," she states. "It centers on bills and positioning and really isolates itself from the average person. How do we bring these issues out so they're part of everyday conversation, and people see them as connected to what they're doing right now?"

That question spurred the foundations to explore new avenues to expand the constituencies for a broader reproductive rights agenda and led to the establishment of the New Partners initiative to augment and build broader support for the critical work undertaken by established organizations in the field. Although the RRCOF programs had explored some aspects of expanding the base of support, New Partners offered an opportunity to go "farther upstream" in that effort with more focused funding and technical assistance.

The Ms. Foundation and the Packard Foundation decided to use sexuality education to introduce new communities to the politics of reproductive health and to bring young people and their allies into that realm. They chose the issue because Americans are known to support sexuality education in large numbers. A 2001 survey by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) revealed that more than 80 percent of Americans support sexuality edu-

cation and more than 70 percent oppose the use of federal funding for abstinence-only programs that do not include contraception education. A 2004 poll by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government reinforced those findings: only seven percent of Americans oppose sexuality education in the schools, with seven out of ten supporting teen access to birth control without parental consent.

Additional considerations as New Partners was being developed were that the issue of comprehensive sexuality education was important to young people; made a real difference in the lives of women and girls; had the potential to link health service, education, and advocacy groups in new ways; and provided opportunities to hold public officials accountable for its delivery in the schools.

The two foundations therefore determined to use the issue of sexuality education to test the hypothesis that many people care about reproductive rights who currently do not participate in the struggle to preserve and expand those rights, but who could be developed as advocates. As Toner put it, "Packard had the objective of building toward grassroots support and fostering new alliances. New Partners was designed to test an approach to doing that, bringing non-traditional players into conversations and advocacy around reproductive rights, around the specific hooks of young people and sex ed."

The goals were to:

- broaden the base of people willing and prepared to stand up in defense of comprehensive, accessible sexuality education, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color;
- help grantees build a wide range of alliances on reproductive rights issues, including school administrators and teachers, parents, reproductive health organizations, youth organizations, and others;
- emphasize the importance of non-traditional constituencies in debates about access to services and education; and
- bolster local advocacy capacity that holds public officials accountable.

The Ms. Foundation, the funding partner responsible for implementation, created a program that would provide three-year grants and technical assistance to a small number of groups.

They also made a number of key decisions about the process:

- The grants would provide \$45,000 per year.
- The program would also include supportive technical assistance, beginning with the early Request for Proposals (RFP) and extending through the entire grant program cycle.
- The program would focus on regions of the country where reproductive rights work, as well as general progressive political infrastructure, were weak and in need of support.

These decisions were designed, in part, to test the effectiveness of a grantmaking/technical assistance model to engage new constituencies in conservative and rural settings. Some of the questions the foundations hoped to explore were: Can community-based projects focused on progressive sexuality education find traction, even if there is little progressive infrastructure in the forms of organizations, intermediaries, public officials, and legislation? Can such projects take advantage of political opportunities to make change, however small or localized? Is there a latent constituency for reproductive health waiting to be tapped?

Early Choices: Places and Partners

There were many considerations about where to target the grants. The Packard Foundation was working in seven states in the west, with the goal of strengthening regional advocacy capacity. A focus in the west could augment those ongoing efforts.

The Ms. Foundation wanted to fund in areas that had limited progressive organizing but that seemed to have some of the requisite political will and organizational infrastructure to carry out the New Partners goals. In addition, the two regions needed to be different enough that they could be compared. Finally, the foundations wanted regions in which it would be possible to form a network of groups to maximize impact and facilitate the delivery of resources and technical assistance.

To narrow the field, the foundations undertook a mapping exercise in six states. They met with advocates, public officials, foundations, and technical-assistance providers to identify the strength of local and state infrastructure, upcoming political opportunities, and potential challenges. Eastern Washington and southern Arizona emerged as workable sites for the project.

Washington has substantial progressive infrastructure, Arizona much less. In both states, however, the mapping exercises revealed a sharp contrast between the capitol or large cities and the rest of the state. Washington particularly exposed the difference between urban sites—which tend to have clusters of progressive activity, including community education, advocacy, and grassroots organizing—and the rural parts

The Arizona legislature has severely limited young people's access to health information and services. Conservatives even attacked an effort to change the maximum eligibility age for the Children's Health Insurance Program from 14 to 19.

of the state. Washington's urban centers of Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia are all in the western part of the state and are sites of substantial reproductive rights activity, as well as of youth organizing. These communities also have access to training, technical assistance, and foundation funding.

While these resources rarely reach the eastern part of the state, a result of the geographic marker of the Cascades mountain range and cultural or political tensions, eastern Washington offered enough encouraging signs to warrant Ms. Foundation investment. There are groups in the reproductive rights infrastructure that wish to reach out to rural communities, as well as a network of sex educators and active gay and lesbian organizing. It also had interesting farmworker organizations, dating back to the early '70s. Finally, state policies often support young peoples' access to reproductive and health services. For example, young people can legally access confidential services for drug and alcohol problems at age 13 and for reproductive, mental, and primary health care at 14. This environment suggested some potential for influencing statewide policy.

Arizona presented a more challenging setting. While the Ms. Foundation found several small and medium-sized groups working on sexuality issues, they operate in a conservative climate that presents sex, contraception, abortion, and sexual orientation as private issues for which people might need support, but which should not be discussed in public. The Arizona legislature has severely limited young people's

access to health information and services. Conservatives even attacked an effort to change the maximum eligibility age for the Children's Health Insurance Program from 14 to 19. Although the age limit was ultimately raised, advocates had to agree to prohibit any enrollment from taking place in schools. Furthermore, Arizona's shared border with Mexico creates a violent edge to the state's race politics, fueled by the influx of national militias and vigilante groups from California and Texas who take it upon themselves to "police" the border. The southern part of the state, however, had somewhat more progressive infrastructure and large, underserved Latino communities, so the Ms. Foundation decided to focus on that region.

The Search for Partners

Given the goals of the project, the Ms. Foundation sought to expand and vary the types of groups engaged in sexuality education, diversifying the base from the usual national and international organizations that anchor reproductive rights work. Once the target states were selected, the process of recruiting prospective grantee organizations began. At this point, Ms. Foundation contracted with Carol Pencke (Washington) and Caroline Hotaling (Arizona) to serve as state strategy consultants to coach the groups and coordinate ongoing technical assistance. Pencke is the former executive director of A Territory Resource, a public foundation based in Seattle, and also a former board member of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL). She had been

"I knew the issue was controversial and was surprised that mainstream groups applied."

working for several years as a consultant for nonprofit philanthropic and educational organizations on questions of organizational development and fundraising. Hotaling had worked mainly in the immigrant/border rights and environmental justice movements, and was bilingual, with substantial experience working with rural and Latino organizations. She had been the associate director of a non-governmental organization, helped to start a rural community foundation, and was then the coordinator of a community coalition that also conducts regranteeing.

This use of state-based mentors was a distinguishing feature of the project, taking it beyond the usual distribution of funds. With their knowledge of the organizational landscape

and a wealth of experience with community groups, the consultants were well suited to play a bridging role between the foundation and the prospective partners in the field. Their first assignments were to disseminate the RFP, provide technical assistance to applicants, and help groups discuss all the implications of applying for New Partners grants.

Among the criteria that the Ms. Foundation and the consultants established for prospective groups were:

- Champions for the work on the board and staff
- Existence of a constituency or base
- Staff interest in organizing, even in the current absence of capacity
- An organizational analysis of how change happens
- A willingness and ability to connect this work with the organizational mission
- A gender lens
- A race and class analysis
- Enough resources to learn about this new issue and style of work
- Ways of connecting sexuality education to their core issues
- A willingness to take risks as an organization, including being explicit about sexuality education

Identifying new groups and getting them to apply, however, proved to be a challenge. Initial response to the RFP was muted. "It was interesting to me who was interested," says Hotaling. "I sent [the RFP] to all the activist groups I could think of, and there was no one calling and asking for more information." Groups with organizing experience did not apply, nor did multi-issue, political advocacy organizations.

Some otherwise progressive organizations that addressed immigrant rights, racial justice, and poverty expressed a lack of fluency about women's issues in general, and reproductive rights in particular. These issues may be seen as divisive within the membership or contrary to the organizational or community culture. Pencke hypothesizes that, "For these groups, the work may not have been as much a barrier as the issue itself."

Hotaling notes that activist groups seemed unprepared to tackle these subjects. "They often talked through the RFP and said, 'We don't have any gender analysis in our work,' even if they were female-driven, and, 'We don't deal with sexuality.' A maquila organizing project, or groups that [I thought would] have a natural link, would say 'We're not at this place yet,' although there seemed to be some interest in getting there."

When It All Comes Together

An expanding vision. Skilled leadership. Good timing. And, of course, money. They all converged at the Odyssey Youth Center to create the conditions for successful organizing. Like all of the New Partners projects, Odyssey exists in a small city with a less-than-hospitable school system, a strong current of homophobia and a political climate biased toward abstinence-only sexuality education. And like most of the projects, its first year was spent thrashing around for direction and plagued with staff instability.

But the organization also had some advantages. Despite the conservatism of Spokane, it benefits from a more urban environment, with a small but defined progressive base of support. Odyssey had also recently become independent from its parent organization, gaining the space to develop its own culture without the weight of entrenched bureaucracy, and relatively free from the generational tensions that emerged in some of the other projects.

The new staff who took leadership in the second program year proved well-equipped to maximize the moment. Executive Director Elizabeth Whitford and Organizer Shannon Bedard used their prior administrative and community organizing experience to: develop a viable plan; build an active youth constituency; forge relationships with allies; parlay their New Partners grant into additional fundraising; and take some bold steps to expand the scope of the organization.

Over the last two years of the grant cycle, Odyssey transformed itself from a safe space for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ) youth with an intentionally low public profile to an active and innovative participant in public policy issues concerning sexuality and civil rights.

Planned Parenthood Education Director Laurel Kelly has lived in the area since middle school and conducts a monthly presentation at Odyssey. Kelly believes that, "Odyssey's role is huge. I think Odyssey has changed the landscape of the schools. It's empowered young people and given them a place to be. It gives them power to say, 'I won't tolerate this,' and feel confident."

In 2004, the Planned Parenthood Youth Advisory Board and Odyssey collaborated on a lobbying trip to the state capitol to support comprehensive sexual education, jointly hiring two youth interns to organize the effort.

"We were able to pull in youth who had been more tangentially involved," Bedard relates, "and the carrot was the trip to Olympia; it helped a lot of them get up on the issue, and get invested personally. Once we were actually there, we took little groups out to scheduled appoint-

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”

ments. Once they got the hang of the first one, suddenly it all clicked and they started coordinating their own visits to people who weren't previously on the list, wondering 'who's on what committee, how can we talk to that person, maybe we should just drop in and talk to the aide.' Suddenly the people on the west side of the state making decisions became very real to them. A year and a half ago, these kids would have said, 'I hate politics, I don't do politics.'"

The interns' next task was to organize a virtual lobby day in March to coincide with a national day of action around comprehensive sexuality education legislation. With the Spike Coffeehouse as their home base, members split into groups and went downtown carrying cell phones, petitions and sandwich boards with safe sex messages. They dressed in hockey and football uniforms, with signs saying, "you wear protection for everything else, why not for sex?" To illustrate the fact that every 11 seconds a young person is infected with STDs, they chalked the outline of one of their bodies on the sidewalk, then walked for 11 seconds and did it again.

"Unfortunately, they chose to do this right outside the courthouse, so the cops came to stop them, and the news caught that," said Whitford. "The police wouldn't even let them stand with their sandwich boards out on the sidewalk, and they used terrorism as an excuse. That was the students' first experience with civil disobedience." The incident generated numerous letters to the editor. "It was all on the front page of the newspaper the very next day," said Whitford. "They never used to follow letters to the editor, but now they do!" That evening, the members generated about 100 postcards from the Coffeehouse and greeted high-profile elected officials and their aides.

"This grant had a huge impact on the direction of Odyssey. We weren't doing community organizing at this level, and it was a big risk for Ms. to fund us; the grant more than doubled our budget. And we had some challenges....But in the end the public policy work ended up building a base."

About advocacy groups, Pencke suggests that, "This is a lot more work than many of the groups had the capacity to do. The nature of organizations other than our 'usual suspects' like Planned Parenthood is that they have really limited capacity. When it came to bringing together a whole new program, they just couldn't do it, even though we were funding them at a greater level than they get for other projects."

So the foundation extended the deadline, sending the RFP to a wider circle of groups, including service organizations. As Hotaling notes, "There is this connection between social services and activism, particularly on the border. I sent [the RFP] to a couple of groups that I knew of that were social service groups, but activists, and was surprised that some other social service groups that I had not contacted got it and applied. I knew the issue was controversial and was surprised that mainstream groups applied."

In the end, the foundation received 18 proposals and met with 11 groups. Eight were selected, four from each state.

The Washington groups were:

- Family Planning Association of Chelan-Douglas Counties based in Wenatchee, a clinic;
- Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity, a multistate, anti-hate organization headquartered in Seattle;
- Northwest Communities Education Center, a Chicano service organization that operates a radio station and has farmworker roots in Granger; and
- Odyssey Youth Center, a young Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ) group in Spokane.

The Arizona groups included:

- Las Sinfronteras, a new women's arts project in Tucson;
- Luz Social Services, a longstanding Chicano substance abuse prevention program with a related charter school in South Tucson;
- Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (SEABHS)/New Turf Prevention, a substance abuse program in the four southeastern counties, based in Sierra Vista; and
- Latina Leadership Project (later renamed Omeyocan YES) of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF), the major HIV/AIDS agency in Tucson.

For most of the groups, the New Partners initiative required a significant departure from their customary focus and methodology. Although four of the groups had some direct experi-

ence with reproductive health issues, that experience didn't necessarily permeate the entire organization. Only two had direct experience with the issues of comprehensive sexuality education or reproductive health. In addition, the grantees were primarily service providers. With limited experience doing political education or policy advocacy, they did not generally define clients as a membership base, nor did they have experience mobilizing clients.

The concentration of service organizations among the final grant recipients led the Ms. Foundation to modify the program's advocacy focus and emphasize other aspects of base-building, such as community education, curriculum development, and research. These activities, the foundation hoped, would enable groups with credibility in the community to gradually treat their clients also as constituents. Thus the foundation scaled back the expectations for the level of organizing the groups would do, but included concrete steps toward systems change.

"Yes, we expected tension within the service organizations," says Jerido, "but I also come out of a different service/organizing model. A lot of my work was in HIV organizations, which took on advocacy in a different way than other service organizations. I don't want to just say that because you do service, you can't do advocacy, but there is tension in not having a clear political analysis about what it means to take on this kind of work."

Not only were the organizations and the foundation challenged to reassess their assumptions and practices, but the project also highlighted how hard it is to sustain the leadership of progressive organizations in difficult political and economic climates. Ironically, the two organizations most focused on progressive advocacy—Las Sinfronteras in Tucson and the Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity in Washington—dropped out of the project before the halfway mark, due to organizational limitations. The Northwest Coalition has since closed its doors.

In retrospect, foundation staff agreed that the geographic constraints in selecting grantees prevented them from scouting more widely for organizations with capacity to do policy advocacy and organizing campaigns. Also, the idea of comparing outcomes in the two states was impractical because the differences between the political environments and the groups themselves were too great. The groups in Arizona, for example, were all part of relatively large social service bureaucracies, while the Washington groups were much smaller, independent entities.

Despite the challenges that emerged in defining and carrying out the initiative's goals, the three-year process pro-



New Partners staff and grantees gathered in Arizona in 2002.

vided many rich experiences, some notable successes, and a raft of lessons learned on developing a new constituency for reproductive health issues. Most importantly, constituencies that have not been seen traditionally as part of the reproductive health movement responded enthusiastically to the research and public education activities the groups took up. The process of designing curriculum to engage young people in reproductive health issues also served to raise the level of knowledge among staff people. New alliances emerged that indicate real potential for the larger reproductive health networks to absorb and advance the work of new groups.

The following portion of this report presents case studies that detail the experiences of New Partners grantees.

Some representative highlights include:

- Odyssey partnered with Planned Parenthood to obtain a grant for a youth lobbying trip to Olympia to support a bill mandating accurate, comprehensive sexuality education. The youth also did local leafleting, street theater, and letter-writing to support the bill.
- Students participating in the New Turf program in Tombstone circumvented school district opposition to sexuality education by doing a survey in the community and then winning approval from the school board to conduct the survey in schools.
- When the Spokane school district truancy officer got permission to set up a Christian-based, abstinence-only rally hosted by Miss America and made attendance manda-

tory for some students, Odyssey youth protested the rally, and Odyssey parents phoned the district to complain about the religious messages going out to students. In response, the district forced Miss America to remove all mention of Christ and to change her emphasis on marriage.

- Following up on their research on teen pregnancy, students at Luz Academy asked that the school administration permit condom distribution in the school.
- The New Turf Youth Advocates group in Benson did a survey of youth needs and took their findings to the City Council. They made public presentations and got official support for a youth center.
- Omeyocan YES youth visited wealthier neighborhoods and learned about the differences in access to sexual health education between those neighborhoods and their own, advancing their political analysis through popular education.
- The NCEC program countered parents' initial resistance to sexuality education by offering a session with Planned Parenthood for mothers. Engaging the moms and giving them access to the information first expanded the base of support for the program.
- Students at a local high school defended Family Planning's condom application demonstration by printing instructions in the school newspaper after parents tried to have condom demonstrations banned. ■

Overview of New Partners Grantees

ORGANIZATION (YEAR FORMED)	TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	BUDGET	NEW PARTNERS PROGRAM
Family Planning of Chelan-Douglas Counties (1969) Wenatchee, WA	Reproductive health clinic providing reproductive health care and education	Under \$700,000 Project: \$45,000	Mother/daughter talks to assist mothers in introducing their daughters to puberty and menstruation
Luz Social Services (1971) Luz Academy (1997) Tucson, AZ	Geared toward the prevention of substance abuse and its related consequences in Hispanic community	\$2.5-3 mil. Project: \$45,000	Conocimiento Es Salud, Conocimiento Es Poder classes at Luz Academy focusing on health and citizenship, including research projects
Northwest Communities Education Center (1976) Granger, WA	Service, education and information provider for Hispanic community. Runs Radio Station KDNA	Under \$500,000 Project: \$45,000	Hola! Que Onda? radio program for youth; and classes on reproductive health and self-esteem for young girls in two towns
Odyssey Youth Center (1992 with health dept., 2000 as independent 501(c)(3)) Spokane, WA	Provide education, support, information and a safe space for GLBTQ youth	Under \$100,000 Project: \$45,000	General support to develop leadership skills for GLBTQ youth to advocate in their own behalf
Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (merged 1997) Omeyocan YES! (2002) Tucson, AZ	Create community health through compassionate, comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS	Over \$3 million Project: \$219,000 (with additional funders)	Omeyocan YES and MAYA to advance health and leadership in youth of color through popular education classes and youth-led activism
Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (1979) New Turf Prevention (1992) Sierra Vista, AZ	Provide affordable mental health services to 4 SE Arizona counties; New Turf focuses on prevention	\$15 million Project: \$45,000	Youth Advocates is a youth driven program focused on leadership development toward self-esteem and community well-being

PROGRAM CONSTITUENCY	CURRICULUM	ADVOCACY AND OUTCOMES
<p>Mothers and daughters aged 9 to 11—both Anglo and Hispanic. Efforts to have reproductive health classes with older children in schools.</p>	<p>“Cafeteria plan” of sex and self-esteem topics from which groups can choose, combining inter-active techniques, readings and more. English/Spanish</p>	<p>Expanded Hispanic constituency for mother-daughter groups. Exploring larger advocacy role. Petition drive for comprehensive sexuality education.</p>
<p>Adolescents primarily from South Tucson enrolled at Luz Academy.</p>	<p>Staff designed, citizenship based. Classroom inter-active learning and field trips. Student research projects in second semester.</p>	<p>Students presented research to community.</p>
<p>Youth from Hispanic community. Radio program for ages 15-21, classes for girls 10-14. Also mothers of girls.</p>	<p>Using US/Health and Human Services workbooks—La Niña Que Soy; youth involved with radio show do own research and programs.</p>	<p>Radio novelas on teen pregnancy. Involved mothers. Planned Parenthood opened clinic in NCEC Granger Headquarters.</p>
<p>GLBTQ youth in the Inland Northwest.</p>	<p>More program than curriculum-focused. In-house presentations, some by Planned Parenthood staff.</p>	<p>Moved from safe space to activism over course of grant. Lobbying days on comprehensive sexuality education in Olympia and Spokane. Demonstrated at abstinence-only rally.</p>
<p>Morphed from Latinas aged 15-18 to youth of color in Tucson. Majority is Hispanic/Chicano/Latino</p>	<p>Staff designed popular education integrating health and sexuality issues with citizenship and empowerment issues.</p>	<p>Classes at charter school and South Tucson community centers. MAYA youth host “Seeds of Color Uprising” youth of color conference.</p>
<p>Youth 12-20 with special focus in largely Hispanic border towns.</p>	<p>Rikers Health Advisory Program in schools, modified and supplemented. Staff-compiled leadership workbook for Youth Advocates.</p>	<p>Entry into some Douglas schools; Benson YA youth advocate at city council; Sierra Vista does parent/youth reproductive health conference.</p>



“ Given the goals of the project, the Ms. Foundation sought to expand and vary the types of groups engaged in sexuality education, diversifying the base from the usual national and international organizations that anchor reproductive rights work. ”

Partner Profiles

Family Planning Association of Chelan-Douglas: Mothers and Daughters Learn Together

We distributed Spanish-language brochures about the mother/daughter program in the clinic, the packing shed, and the migrant camps. One of the ladies said she was interested. She brought it up to her extended family, and they agreed that it was important, and they wanted all the cousins to be in the program. The first session was 90 minutes, the second was three hours!

Lisa Agnew Santos, Bilingual Family Planning Educator

The Family Planning Association of Chelan-Douglas (FPCD) is the only New Partners group whose long-term mission is to provide comprehensive sexuality education, and, with a 35-year history, it is the oldest group as well. It is based in Wenatchee in north central Washington State, a conservative area that has been designated an "abortion-free zone" by local anti-abortion organizations. The area also has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country, and the clinic notes that its clients are getting younger: roughly 15 percent are under the age of 18. With an annual budget of approximately \$700,000, the clinic serves close to 3,000 clients a year. Between 2001 and 2002, the number of clients coming into the clinic for emergency contraception (Plan B pills) jumped from 990 to 2115, an increase of more than 100 percent.

Early on, FPCD recognized the need to expand into reproductive educational services, and it has continued to change along with the communities it serves. Thirty-five percent of FPCD clients are now from the Latino community, and four of the 17 clinic staff are fluent in Spanish. In its initial submission, FPCD proposed building on Girl Talk, a program of mother/daughter dialogues.

Participants would then be trained to foster and facilitate additional mother/daughter groups and advocate for compre-

hensive sexuality education in the 11 school districts in the county. The clinic envisioned a resource library and public relations campaign to augment and amplify their efforts.

As with all the New Partners programs, even gaining entry to public schools, not to mention actually modifying curricula, proved extremely difficult. There was also a critical staff turnover in the third program year, both the bilingual family planning educator and the program's lead educator left within a few weeks of each other. Nonetheless, the program yielded significant gains. The grant funded a much-needed educator slot; additional organizational capacity-building assistance greatly increased the agency's computer capability; and the mother/daughter program flourished.

Mother/daughter groups were established in Wenatchee and Manson, north of Lake Chelan. Some of the Manson sessions, with fourth- through sixth-graders, are bilingual. In addition, one of the two FPCD educators has finally been able to gain access to the Manson school system, teaching a class for ninth graders.

Elizabeth Athair, a mother of two who lives in the small community of Lake Chelan, had high praise for the mother/daughter program. "When I heard they had a mother/daughter program, I decided to get it for my daughter Lily and her friends. They range from nine to 13. We especially liked the menstrual beads and the self-esteem mobile. It's a great combination of topics. We talked about our bodies, unsafe touching, image things. And the parents thought the program was great."

For the last two years, FPCD has also offered groups in Spanish. Like her counterparts at other New Partners programs, Anna Cortes, a bilingual family planning educator, found herself in a delicate bridge position between the agency and Latino culture, and between generations. "Often, it is the parents who learn something that they didn't know before," Cortes relates, "and then they say, 'I wouldn't have had all these children if I'd have really understood how it all works.' They're glad they have the class. We see 12- and 13-year-olds who are sexually active. What we say to girls is, 'Wait if you can, but if you can't, here's information you need to know.' The mother/daughter

program has to do with changing the patterns of the past and opening communication.”

For the initial mother/daughter groups, the clinic had put out the word and waited for parents to contact them. Cortes challenged the clinic to go out into the community and more aggressively seek out participation. This approach has been continued by her successor, Lisa Agnew Santos.

Recently, Santos was asked to start a group for an extended Latino family of several sisters and sisters-in-law and their daughters—four mothers and nine girls. “They’ve expressed to me that they want it to continue until we don’t have anymore to share. If one mother is not there, there will always be an aunt,” Santos reports.

FPCD has quietly survived and grown by keeping a relatively low profile and by carefully cultivating personal relationships in the community. Therefore the grant focus on advocacy was a challenge. “Fly under the radar as much as possible—that’s how it’s been,” says FPCD educator Kathleen Miner, who participated in the project from the start. “What we do is not popular for a lot of people, but if you don’t attract attention, you can go about your business quite well. So we’ve sometimes said, ‘Let’s let that one go, let’s not write a letter to the newspaper.’ Now, it’s time to fly into the radar, but the transition hasn’t been made yet. We haven’t quite figured out when do we pull stops out and how do we explain it to our board and constituency and create buy-in?”

“We’d like to find somebody willing to run for school board and cultivate them.”

While some parents in the mother/daughter groups expressed an interest in advocating for state legislation for comprehensive sexuality education, they never really became active, and the girls, mostly ages nine to 11, proved too young to take on an advocacy role. Still, the staff is optimistic that the move toward greater advocacy is underway. In May 2004, as part of a Regional Day of Action sponsored by the Reproductive Freedom Network, FPCD staff created and collected signatures for a Proclamation of Human Sexuality Rights. “Ninety-seven signatures were collected in less than three hours at Wenatchee Valley College,” Executive Director Carol Oakes reports. “Students were surprised that there was, and is, no requirement for medically accurate sexuality education in Washington State schools.”

Terry Talbott-McCall, who recently joined the staff as educator for the mother/daughter program, is excited by the

possibilities. She and Miner are thinking about the school board, as well. Talbott-McCall says, “We’d like to find somebody willing to run for school board and cultivate them. Three of the members on this side of the river are Mormon. Our school board has gotten more and more conservative the longer I’ve lived here. Terry and I still both have kids in school. As parents, there may be something we can do around the city to make some inroads.”

Luz Social Services/Luz Academy: Exploring Health and Citizenship

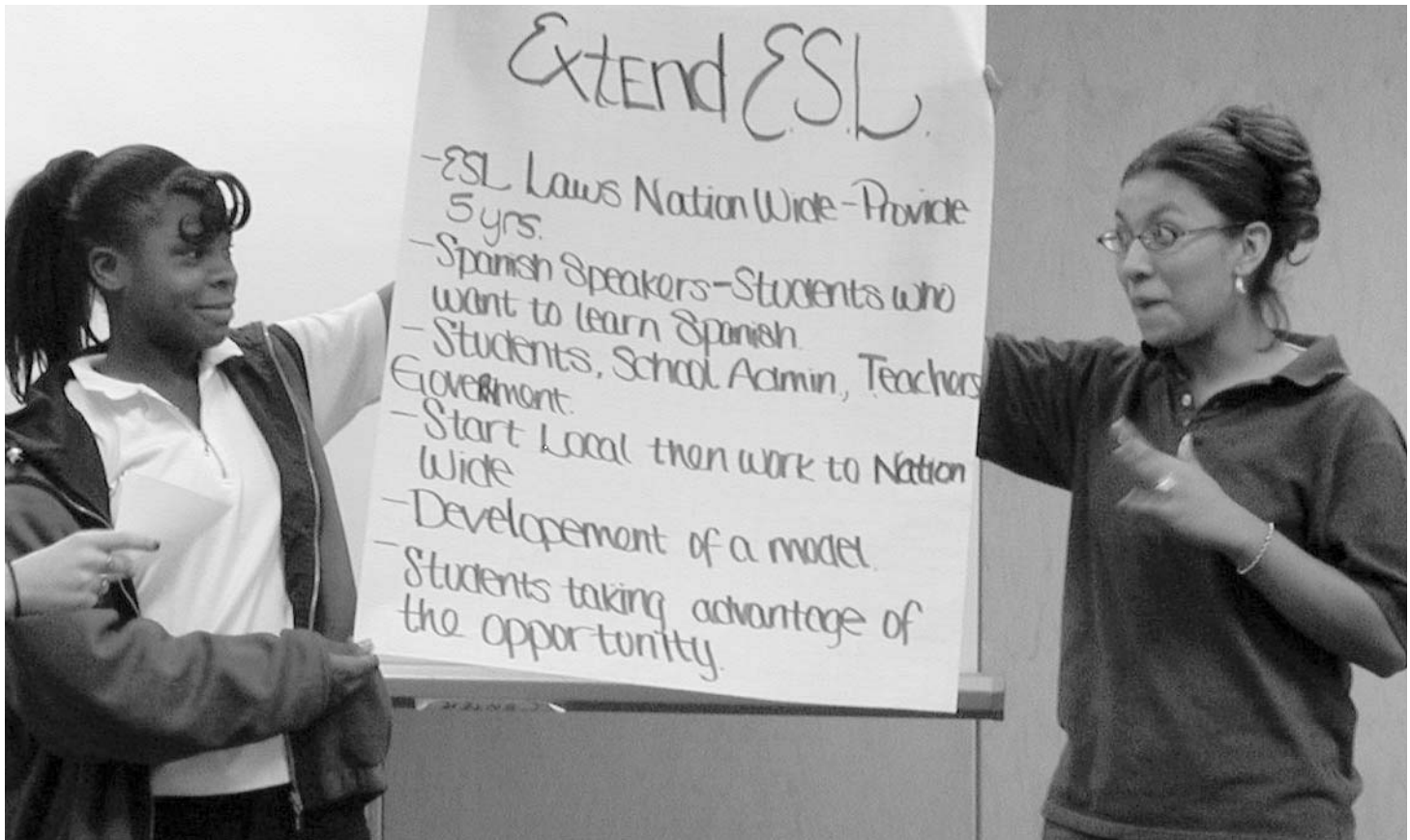
We try to give a broad enough perspective that incorporates literacy, body image, things we and everyone should know about. We’re not leading, but we are framing. We’re careful to create debates rather than give opinions. We’re letting students learn to think and giving them tools to speak for themselves.

Nastia Snider, Luz Social Services Associate Evaluator

Luz Social Services was founded in 1971 to serve the Latino community on the south side of Tucson and has become a leading agency around issues of substance abuse and prevention. Anchored in the activist history of the Chicano movement, Luz has a budget of roughly \$2.5 million and has skillfully stretched its initial mission to encompass a wide range of health and community issues. In addition, Luz CEO Dr. Pepe Barron had dreamed of a school to foster the advancement of Latino students by creating a learning environment with strong cultural ties to the community. In the 1990s, the Luz Academy charter school and Adalberto Guerrero Middle School were established as part of the Luz Social Services family.

The Luz application for a New Partners grant was spurred by serious community concern over the high rates of teen pregnancy and STDs. The crux of the Luz proposal was “Conocimiento Es Salud” (Knowledge is Health), a series of interrelated classes on reproductive health and citizenship, to be implemented with students at the Luz Academy.

In preparing for the initial classes, the staff knew that they needed to craft a curriculum geared toward their students, many of whom are struggling with literacy and come from monolingual-Spanish households and stressed family circumstances. They also needed to strike a balance between a community culture that they perceived as favoring an abstinence-only approach to teen sex and a student body in which many were sexually active and at risk. Project evaluator Nastia Snider helped develop the curriculum, and Mia Ruiz, a Luz service learning coordinator, became the primary pro-



Sexuality education is taught in the context of other social issues.

gram teacher. Rene Salgado served as the initial program director, until Esperanza Lumm took over that role in the second half of 2003. Luz Social Services Executive Director Ricardo Jasso provided a supervisory bridge between the program and the school administration.

The program development process at Luz was common to most of the New Partners groups: the first year was unsettled in terms of staff and program; the program was substantially reworked over the course of the second year. Early in the program, two challenges became apparent. (1) The curriculum as originally envisioned, where the same students would move from a health class to a civics class to a service learning class over a two-year period, did not mesh with the way the school actually assigned students to classes. (2) Developing the curriculum was a difficult process, taking up more staff time and energy than had been anticipated. As one of the key staffers acknowledged, "For us this is a small grant, requiring high maintenance, which can be a problem."

In the second year, Luz offered both a Conocimiento Es Salud health class and a Conocimiento Es Poder civics class, with

roughly 15 students per class. Health and civics counted as electives, rather than core classes, so many students chose classes that fulfilled graduation requirements instead. Only a few students were able to sign up for the whole series. The first semester explored core topics, featuring discussions, debates, and field trips. The civics class included reproductive rights examples, notably a segment on *Roe v. Wade*. The second semester involved community research projects by the students. That work culminated in a very successful community banquet, a public display of achievement that bolstered support from the parents and the board. The students were also asked to make presentations at several outside conferences. Students Ous Hamdou and Fernanda Badilla presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology and again at the Choice USA conference.

Snider conducted surveys that also showed an increase in tolerance and self-esteem among student participants. "We had really good outcome data," she reports. "Self-esteem increased with the program group and not with the comparison group, and it's partly tied to the activities. For example,

students teaching adults is such a role shift, they felt really proud of themselves. And they developed skills: they learned to use a sophisticated data analysis software and how to make public presentations, grant proposals—things that are real-world tasks. We hear that again and again: 'This is about real life and most of school isn't. These are things we'll use again.'"

As New Partners entered its third and final year, Luz expanded to three classes—health, civics, and community service learning. "In the first part of the year, in our health class, we learned about STDs and HIV," says Ruiz. "We talked about homosexuality. We did units on body image and tolerance. In the second half of the year, we worked on the student projects in all the classes. We taught them different research methods and different ways to capture information." The students had to use at least two research methods in their projects, conduct the surveys and interviews, analyze the data, and present the findings at an annual banquet. In 2004, the topics included academic performance in the Latino community, abortion, emergency contraception, teen pregnancy, condom availability, alcohol use, and neighborhood safety.

In the final year of the grant, the Luz students also organized a mini-conference and a presentation at P.A.D.R.E.S. (Parents Against Drugs through Recreation, Education and Service), a mostly monolingual-Spanish parent support group. With money received from mini-grants that they had written, the students arranged for a meeting location, food, and childcare, and they made presentations in Spanish on drunk driving, emergency contraceptives, and teen pregnancy. The pre-

"We have to walk a fine line when it comes to sex ed."

vious year, students had made a similar presentation, including information about teenage pregnancy. This time, however, before the scheduled presentation a Luz Academy board member expressed strong disapproval of the topics, and the program director, fearing major repercussions, decided to cancel the presentation on condom availability in schools.

In reflecting on this event, staff and board members acknowledged that the potential for such controversy was there from the start. As one board member put it, "It's a delicate balance. Essentially, this is what we've been saying: Our preference would be abstinence. We know that it is not realistic, we know it cannot happen. So we provide information about avoiding pregnancy with condoms, but we shy away from passing

them out. We're trying to discourage them as much as we can, but still give them all the information they need." An administrator said that the board had been fully informed and supportive of the proposal to join New Partners, and later of the curriculum that was developed, although the Luz Academy had already been accepting abstinence-only funding: "When we got funded [by the Ms. Foundation], we had to make an adjustment to abstinence-plus, a comprehensive sex ed program. We had to merge these two concepts, especially because we had a five-year contract to do abstinence. We have to walk a fine line when it comes to sex ed."

"We were counting how many graduating students have had kids," notes Esperanza Lumm. "In our culture, your teenager comes home and says, 'mom, I'm pregnant,' and you respond, 'OK, well you better get married.' I went to one poor child's wedding, and you could just see the dismay on her face. I'm glad we had this funding, because people need a wake up call. I'm very impressed with the students. They have done an amazing amount of work, and it's just incredible."

New Turf: Many Communities, Many Approaches

Prior to having the funding, anything having to do with sexuality, we didn't think it was our place. We'd dance around it, just deal with substance abuse or violence. Now that we're facing it head on, it's become apparent that it is a critical issue for the youth. It would be so much easier to not deal with it, but we'd be ignoring one of their primary needs.

Anne Rego, Executive Director

New Turf Prevention Services is a division of Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services, Inc. (SEABHS), a private, nonprofit organization with an annual budget of more than \$15 million. It differs from the other New Partner projects in that it covers a broader geographic area and a larger number of communities. Headquartered in Sierra Vista, 75 miles southeast of Tucson, New Turf covers Cochise, Santa Cruz, Graham, and Greenlee Counties in southern Arizona, including three communities directly on the U.S./Mexico border. SEABHS/New Turf applied for the Ms. Foundation New Partners grant to support and expand its Youth Advocate leadership development program to include health issues and move into several new communities.

The largest constituency in the target population—which is about 40 percent white—is Latino, as much as 80 percent in

some communities. There are also a small number of Native American constituents, as well as African Americans and Asian Americans in the community around the army base in Sierra Vista.

The core funding for SEABHS/New Turf has been for substance abuse prevention and youth development work. In addition, New Turf runs a resource library on health and development issues. They give out roughly 12,000 pieces of literature per month. The librarians note that there is a lack of both non-abstinence-based literature and literature in Spanish, although they are constantly combing the internet for free downloads to augment their materials.

As with most of the New Partner projects, the Youth Advocates program changed over the course of the grant in both staffing and focus. The grant initially proposed training youth to conduct forums and collect data to develop community action plans, including classroom trainings and one-on-one peer mentoring, which they had done on other issues in the past. However, while the Youth Advocates program retained its focus on self-esteem and leadership, it took different forms in each community.

In Douglas, after several false starts, a small Youth Advocates group became involved in a cross-border project with the colonia of Agua Prieta in Mexico. Their first effort was to help bring in water lines, and they envision a women's community center down the road. Although health and sexuality largely dropped out of the Douglas group's agenda, one of the prevention staff people has been able to get into several public schools in the area. This seems due to the good reputation of New Turf and a careful laying of groundwork with allies in the school system. "We're called the sex people," Marisa Zepeda laughs. "We have really wonderful conversations with people; they ask us very intimate questions, so I think we're doing good. They say, 'I wish my dad and mom would take this class. Can you give it to them in Spanish?'"

In Benson, a core of eight Youth Advocates participants has worked to establish a community center. They did surveys of youth needs and made presentations to the city council. The youth mentor is a resource on issues of sexuality and health. She also took this project to heart, seeking additional professional development on adolescent pregnancy and working to develop a rape crisis infrastructure in her small town, even though the local hospital had no rape kit.

In Nogales, New Turf provides classes on health, including sexuality education, at two local charter schools (15–18 youth per group between the ages of 16 and 20) and two boys-and-girls clubs (seven to ten youth per group, about 14 years old). One of the staff members mentors Youth Advocates groups

in Nogales and Patagonia. They have established literature racks in the club bathrooms, including information on sexual health, and the Nogales group has done a Public Service Announcement on substance abuse and wants to do one on pregnancy. "The youth decide what to do," says youth mentor Veronica Padilla. "I tell them, 'You decide, but once you do, you're going to follow through. I'm going to provide guidance, a ride, help with writing, connections—but you're the one doing the legwork.'" The staff hopes to have a Youth Advocates group in Rio Rico next year.

"You have to explain the benefits, educate the community, start by teaching individuals that it's OK to stand up, to want more. Then you link them, and eventually you have more leaders, and you start to change policy."

In Sierra Vista, the Youth Advocates group, with approximately 10 members, meets after school and has a focus on sexual health within the context of self-empowerment. They also planned a sexuality education conference for parents and youth.

"The program has gone well," Anne Rego, the program director at New Turf/SEABHS, reflects. "Now we're restructuring, so it's more uniform. It's good for everybody to have some flair, but the essential programs should be the same. We've asked the staff to have cross-functional teams with essential elements around violence prevention, sex/HIV, parenting, and community coalition-building."

Although the New Turf staff sees the road to policy change as difficult and slow, they suggest that their work with Youth Advocates is an important step in the process. "The core in changing policy is education," says Nogales staffer Yara Sanchez. "Once you teach them that they have skills and resources to a point where they know they have choices and don't have to let everything happen around them, then you have that connection. You have to explain the benefits, educate the community, start by teaching individuals that it's OK to stand up, to want more. Then you link them, and eventually you have more leaders, and you start to change policy."

Northwest Communities Education Center: Finding a Voice for Reproductive Health

When we first partnered up with Planned Parenthood, some of the mothers had said they weren't going to let their daughters come. So we invited the mothers to a Planned Parenthood session first, and they had a very positive response. The mothers themselves have not really had an education on some of those issues. One mother walked to the training more than a mile, they brought their carriages and toddlers. It bodes well that the women were willing to make that trek.

Ricardo Garcia, Executive Director

The Northwest Communities Education Center (NCEC) in Granger, Washington, near Yakima, developed in the early 1970s out of the farmworker struggles in the apple orchards. Granger, unlike the other Washington State sites, has had a substantial Latino community for decades, and Latinos have begun to make some inroads into the political structure. More than 80 percent of the lower Yakima Valley is Spanish-speaking, with many monolingual families.

"We started out as a farmworker advocate group, with Office of Equal Opportunity programs, and then realized we needed a radio station to serve our community," explains office manager Amelia Ramon, who helped shepherd the New Partners project over the three-year grant period. This led to the establishment of KDNA/Radio Cadena, serving the Yakima Valley Latino community. Radio KDNA is the only one of the original Radio Campesino projects to survive.

"The most successful strategy for our program was our involvement with Planned Parenthood and the parents,"

NCEC fulfills its important community role on a modest budget of under \$500,000. They have recently received both new equipment for the radio station and a well-equipped—and actively used—community computer lab.

NCEC has always provided a mix of activism and service, in addition to the radio station, that includes programs focused on health and environmental justice, domestic violence, edu-



Latino youth broadcast *Hola! Que Onda?* radio show.

cation, and housing. They have been working on immigrant issues since the mid-'80s. They later became known as Radio Condón for their role in HIV education and prevention. Ramon explains that, "We've always gotten into unpopular subjects, and teen pregnancy is a very critical issue. So we thought we'd give this a try, with a base of positive values, so kids can be thinking about the future."

The original NCEC proposal to the Ms. Foundation laid out a multipronged, bilingual effort to provide comprehensive sex health information to youth ages ten to 21. It used a skill-building and leadership development approach to enhance communications and self-esteem. A live radio show by and for 15-to-21-year-olds—"Hola! Que Onda?"—was proposed as a key component.

Despite staff turnover in the second year, NCEC achieved a number of its goals. Over the course of the three years, KDNA produced 36 one-hour programs by and for youth and trained ten young people in public affairs programming. The staff and participants developed and produced six mini-dramas, including two on teen pregnancy. Station manager Gabriel Martinez reports that the effort, their first in engaging youth with the radio station, gave young people an opportunity to explore complex topics while improving their skills. Some participants were able to attend conferences, and the young woman host-

ing the show received a youth community service award from Yakima County.

Although in this project, as elsewhere, attempts to get into the schools were rebuffed, programs for young girls were set up in both Mabton and Granger. In Mabton, the classes were initially run under the auspices of the school district. But as the girls started asking more explicit questions about sex, the district forced the program to change venues. Moving to a HUD housing project and cosponsored by the Yakima Diocese of the Catholic Church, the program was recalibrated to focus on self-esteem and culture. Thus the program was saved, but the sexuality content was obscured. Over the three years, 47 girls participated in the Mabton sessions.

NCEC also ran two sessions involving 32 girls (one for seven weeks and one for 39 weeks) at their Granger headquarters. Those sessions were conducted by Dora Saenz, a parent volunteer. "Often pregnancy is about issues of self-esteem and confidence," she notes. "We want the program to help them figure it out. We want them to know there are always problems, but always solutions as well, and they always have someone to confide in, so they are not alone. We need parental support, to be there to say we all make mistakes, we're going to be there. If we get communication going now, it makes it easier for later."

NCEC Executive Director Ricardo Garcia, Amelia Ramon, and program coordinator Berta Balli highlight one critical lesson and a related success: realizing that it was essential to engage parents early on in the process and get their buy-in, NCEC formed a partnership with Planned Parenthood. "A lot of the moms, when we brought them in for the Planned Parenthood meeting, they didn't know some of the current birth control that's out there," Balli relates. "A lot of them were talking about how their moms didn't talk to them, so they found it awkward to talk to their daughters. So they'd rather know someone is giving them accurate information. The important thing is to have that connection with the parents."

"The most successful strategy for our program was our involvement with Planned Parenthood and the parents," Garcia reports. "Without the parents, we could not have had Planned Parenthood's involvement, and without Planned Parenthood, we would not have had as good a program as we did."

As a result of the New Partners experience, Planned Parenthood recently opened a clinic in Granger at the NCEC headquarters. At the same time as the relationship with NCEC was developing, Planned Parenthood had received a grant to conduct outreach to Latinas. The organization keeps two staff people at NCEC once a week. "We're seeing quite a few

young people ages 13 and up. They feel very comfortable coming in and just chatting. We know there's a group of people who need services and have access difficulties, and there is no other health care provider in that town. And the radio keeps people informed that we're there. That's wonderful for us," says special projects coordinator Carol Seagraves.

Odyssey Youth Center: From Social Service to Social Change

Part of my goal is to make the constituency visible. The more visible the constituency, the more policy I can affect.

Elizabeth Whitford, Odyssey Executive Director

Sometimes organizations, as well as individuals, come out. During its three years of New Partners funding, Odyssey Youth Center made a conscious decision to be more than a safe space for its youngGay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning (GLBTQ) constituency—it began to advocate for community and policy changes affecting queer youth, with the young people themselves taking a central role. And it has succeeded beyond expectations.

Odyssey began its work as an HIV/AIDS prevention project of the Spokane Health Department. After nine years, it got a 501(c)(3) designation and was just starting out as an independent organization when it applied for Ms. Foundation funding. At that time, it had a part-time director, a budget of roughly \$45,000, and a core of dedicated youth and volunteers. The

"We share coming out stories. We can celebrate in ways we can't with our parents. It's like a second home. It's comforting to be here."

initial proposal sought general operating funds to continue its work as a safe drop-in center for GLBTQ youth, while providing them education, leadership skills, and opportunities to advocate on their own behalf within the school system and in the larger community. The grant would double the organization's budget and provide an additional staff person to work with the youth and serve as liaison to other organizations. The organization started with Education Within Our Communities,

a program that trained a team of teen educators to deliver a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in community settings (outside of the secret location of the youth center) to a mix of GLBTQ youth and straight youth.

Within a year of receiving the grant, the long-time director and the organizer both left. Elizabeth Whitford was hired as the new ED, and she brought on Shannon Bedard as organizer. The women laughingly relate how they had to "hit the ground

In March 2004, youth from Odyssey and Planned Parenthood—armed with signs, costumes and props—collected petition signatures and garnered press attention in downtown Spokane.

running," planning for the second year of the grant and going to a Ms. Foundation-sponsored meeting in Denver. "When I came in, we took three months to think about where to go," says Whitford. "The structural problems were so clear. We decided to move away from the off-site comprehensive sexuality education program that Odyssey was then sponsoring. It was set to attract straight youth, and we wanted to bring it back to the core GLBTQ constituency and then educate them about allies."

They also decided to step up to the challenge and opportunity of strategically linking reproductive rights to GLBTQ issues. Bedard was interested in youth development. "I'd worked on Power of Hope (an art project) and wanted to take those voices of youth and attach them to causes they care about," she explains. Together, Whitford and Bedard expanded the drop-in hours and integrated the reproductive rights components into that framework.

Odyssey Youth Center is open for group sessions Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings. These are well attended and led by volunteers and the youth themselves. Odyssey held 49 on-site educational presentations in the last year. "We're lucky to have volunteers here that interact really well," says Danielle Carver, Odyssey's first youth intern. "We share coming out stories. We can celebrate in ways we can't with our parents. It's like a second home. It's comforting to be here."

Carver is also credited with starting a gay/straight alliance at her school as a senior project, thereby advancing the agenda

in the city. And the work yielded a prestigious Spokane Chase Youth Award for Personal Achievement for the Odyssey youth members and staff. Carver has spoken on a number of panels and made a presentation to SIECUS' semi-annual national meeting of sexuality educators. As Carver puts it, "I have a passion for this work. I wish there were more internship opportunities. I'd love a job like Shannon or Elizabeth. To open up a center like this is my dream."

Building on an energized youth constituency and carefully constructed community alliances, Odyssey moved to a more public role. An early effort won school system support for an GLBTQ Valentine's Day dance. "With the dance, we knew we were cutting new ground," Whitford says. "It marked a change, a shift from a not very empowering, more service way of doing things. We got the kids to think, 'How would I do this?'—getting it formalized, taking steps, identifying resources. Then other youth see it and get inspired. We also hired a youth intern to help organize the Gay/Straight Alliances in the schools. Access to those clubs means we can do more."

In fall 2002, Odyssey learned that the school district had budgeted \$25,000 to provide a three-hour show urging abstinence sponsored by Teen Aid. Odyssey members and allies like Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, and the Spokane Human Rights Task Force challenged that decision and forced an investigation. In spring 2003, when the Spokane school district truancy officer got permission to set up a Christian-based, abstinence-only rally hosted by Miss America Lakita Garth—going so far as to make the rally mandatory for some students—Odyssey youth protested the rally, while Odyssey parents phoned the district to complain about the religious messages going out to students who had been taken out of class for the event. Now, Odyssey is working to prevent the Spokane school district from applying for federal SPRANS money, which limits sexuality education to an abstinence-only perspective.

During the final 18 months of the grant, Odyssey's public activism increased significantly. The organization fought for a role on the school district's Human Growth and Development Committee, weighed in on school curriculum, and won a permanent slot on the committee. Bedard became a member of the board for the city's Health Improvement Partnership (HIP) and got HIP to reject abstinence-only funding as inconsistent with the inclusiveness values in its mission statement. And, in partnership with Planned Parenthood, Odyssey youth took to the streets and the halls of the state legislature to generate support for comprehensive sexuality education in the schools. In March 2004, youth from Odyssey and Planned Parenthood—armed with signs, costumes and props—

collected petition signatures and garnered press attention in downtown Spokane. Later, they sponsored a virtual lobbying day at a local coffee house, drawing support from several local politicians and generating dozens of email letters to legislators.

The crowning achievement was a youth lobbying day at the state capitol, supported by a \$10,000 grant to Odyssey and Planned Parenthood from Advocates for Youth as part of the "My Vote Counts!" campaign. "Only one grant was distributed per state, and we would never have received it, were it not for the increased capacity and involvement in this issue afforded by two and a half years as a New Partners grantee," states Whitford. Two student interns were hired to help coordinate the lobby day trip, and 30 young people from the two organizations got on the bus to Olympia and made the case for comprehensive sexuality education to their representatives. "The youth exceeded our expectations by spontaneously visiting many of the representatives who had signed onto our bill, just to show appreciation and thanks," reports Adam Cogswell, one of the interns who organized the trip. The second intern, Katharine Isserlis, notes, "The knowledge I gained from my internship about the legislative process and policy making has been invaluable to me in my activist career."

"Our experience in Olympia solidified for the youth the reality that these policies are made by real people and that they can speak to these legislators and be respected constituents," Whitford adds. "They also went away with a sense of real accomplishment when the Health Information for Youth Act passed out of committee unanimously.

Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation's Omeyocan YES: Leading with Youth

What turned MAYA around was making it a youth-led organizing group, rather than an advocacy group where we advocate for the young people. It's the whole idea of allowing them to make their own mistakes and own their own work, without going in and dictating. I've changed my ideas about organizing, empowerment, and self-determination.

Barbara Dawson, Project Manager

The Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) was formed in 1997, merging three AIDS service organizations in Tucson. With an annual budget of more than \$3 million, it is the premier agency providing comprehensive HIV/AIDS services in southern Arizona and includes several AIDS prevention pro-

grams targeting youth. The Latina Leadership Project (LLP) was launched when a 1999 health survey revealed a high level of sexual activity, coupled with minimal information on the prevention of STDs. Noting that conventional prevention approaches were not succeeding, the program offered Latina women between 15 and 18 years of age a holistic approach to health with an empowerment focus. LLP explicitly dismissed an abstinence-only approach to sexual health and was grounded in native Mexican culture. It paired the young women with slightly older mentors (comadres), and those who graduated from the program became Credible Peer Leaders who could share accurate sexual health information.

The grant proposal to the Ms. Foundation New Partners initiative envisioned a strengthened and expanded Latina Leadership Project "to empower youth to be a political force, to advocate publicly for policies that support their sexual health, and to prevent other social injustices." Early in the grant cycle, the young women in the LLP decided that women were only half the equation, and the program was expanded to include young men and renamed Omeyocan Youth Empowerment and Sexuality—Omeyocan YES (Omeyocan is Nahuatl for "duality" or "balance.") In the third grant year, the program grew from a focus on Latinos to include all youth of color. It also added a new component: Movement in Achieving Youth Activism (MAYA), an explicitly progressive, youth-led group focusing on popular education and activism.

"We have two hearts," explained Barbara Dawson, who managed the project in its second and third years. "One is the curriculum about culture, reproductive and sexual health, substance use, violence prevention, and youth organizing—that's a 45-hour curriculum. We teach it as a class at a charter school and as an after-school program in three South Tucson 'safe haven' community centers. South Tucson is probably 90 percent Mexican, and the pregnancy and dropout rates are off the charts. And then MAYA is the other heart—a youth-led organizing group. It is non-school and non-curriculum affiliated. You do not have to have gone through the class to become a member, but the Credible Peer Leaders have to have gone through it."

The core curriculum for Omeyocan YES evolved over the three years, piloted by César López and Luís Perales, who served as health education specialists. They created a popular and cultural education component that integrated health issues into a larger, progressive societal analysis.

López and Perales struggled to reconcile the service, education, and organizing aspects into one holistic approach within the agency parameters. "It's not just the issue of health or substance abuse. These are all direct attacks on our people," López

explains. "You may attack by taking away women's right to choose or even men's right to be a part of that process. Or you may be attacking with liquor stores and liquor licenses. Or on education, or the border, or environmental—it's all together. It's making those links and seeing it as an attack on young people of color across the board."

"We've created an atmosphere where it's youth-led, and that's what gets them excited...They're empowered to make decisions and talked to in a way where they and their ideas are respected, and their talents are supported."

"I guess for a long time we got stuck on that piece [reproductive health]," Perales adds, "trying to see how it fit with everything else. It started to make sense when we started to talk about how does youth organizing have anything to do with mental health. If you affect something here, you also affect something over there. By bringing awareness to young people that regardless what the [single] issue is, it's the same [overall] struggle."

Above all, Perales says, "We've come to be critical of what we present. We tell the young people to always question what we say. Because that's what everyone else doesn't do. They don't allow that room. With practice, we've learned how to say, 'OK, this is what we believe, but look at it yourself, be critical of everything around you, because that's what going to make you capable of mitigating all these things you come across.'"

In its second year, the program added two women's health education specialists, Nicole Trujillo and Patty Valera, and MAYA really blossomed. As its brochure describes, "Members create and sustain a healthier community by becoming critically aware and conscious of the injustices facing our communities. MAYA develops skills in direct action, coalition building, community mobilization, strategic planning and workshop facilitation."

Participant Lena Garcia says the arrival of Valera and Trujillo made the youth group even stronger. "There's more of a balanced energy, as well as ideas. The women can put in ideas

that sometimes the men couldn't see, and vice versa. We had youth groups before, but nothing like the passion and number that we have now. Before, there were maybe ten altogether, but I never saw those ten people at the same time—some would be at one meeting, some at another. Now, there's 20 youth in one room, all core people. The best thing going on is not just more numbers, but the passion. We've created an atmosphere where it's youth-led, and that's what gets them excited. They come from far away, on the bus, and I think it's a new thing for them when they're empowered to make decisions and talked to in a way where they and their ideas are respected, and their talents are supported in a positive, not a demeaning, way."

MAYA members attended weekly meetings, participated in community events, and sponsored their own workshops and cultural events. In April 2004, with an additional \$10,000 Ms. Foundation grant, the MAYA youth planned and hosted "Seeds of Color Uprising: An Organizing Conference for Youth of Color," drawing 250 participants from several states. The conference—the first of its kind in southern Arizona—included workshops and cultural performances, most of them presented bilingually in Spanish and English. Topics were wide-ranging and included: My Sexual and Reproductive Rights; U.S. Imperialism; Are you mental? (a discussion of current mental health and medication trends); and Queer Youth of Color—Linking Issues.

The four health education specialists who mentored the lengthy youth planning process were surprised and pleased by how well the conference turned out, both in attendance and content. "Of the 250 people, about 80 percent were young people," Trujillo reports. "They asked their families to come, and they did—their moms, their cousins, they all took time out to come." Perales adds, "All the workshops were pretty much popular education, and many people stepped up, so it wasn't just our conference, it became everybody's. That was dope."

Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity and Las Sinfronteras: Two That Got Away

The Ms. Foundation initially selected eight organizations for funding under the New Partners initiative. However, two of the grantees left prior to the end of the project.

The Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, based in Seattle, Washington, was founded in 1987 to track and combat right-wing hate groups in the region. It was well

regarded for brave stands and innovative community education against racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry. In 1999, the group merged with the Coalition for Human Dignity (founded in 1988) to establish the Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity (NWCHD). At the time it applied for New Partners funding in 2001, NWCHD had a membership of more than 220 organizations and more than 600 individuals, and an operating budget of just over half a million dollars.

Although there was some controversy in the newly merged organization, NWCHD had decided to increase its focus on youth and pursue a broader civil and human rights agenda that viewed "reproductive health and sexuality education in terms of human rights, self-determination and women's autonomy." This recalibrating of mission to explicitly align reproductive rights and human rights emerged from an intense board process instigated by the Ms. Foundation RFP. Posing the question, "What would you be doing right now if you were not afraid to speak up in your community about the assault on women's reproductive freedom?" NWCHD committed to engaging its own network groups in the dialogue, with the intention of doing organizing activity at some future point. They produced a report analyzing the principal players behind the racist right's attacks on reproductive rights, revealing that the groups and individuals involved were also active in race-based conservative causes, especially border issues.

By the beginning of the second year, however, NWCHD appeared to be both fiscally and structurally stressed. Although this upheaval was unrelated to the Ms. Foundation grant, the group was unable to continue with its participation and has since ceased operations.

By contrast, Las Sinfronteras in Tucson was barely nine months old when it applied for New Partners funding and had a proposed (and largely unrealized) budget of less than \$112,000. The group emerged from the feminist arts community and united women musicians, artists, filmmakers, writers, sex workers, and theorists. With sexuality and reproductive health already the subjects of performance works presented by the group, Las Sinfronteras proposed a range of public forums to share creative tools (radical cheerleading, performance art, zines, etc.) with young people from underserved Latino and Native American communities.

The initial proposal was forthright in laying out some of the structural questions that Las Sinfronteras was still pondering. It was small and nontraditional, lacking a clear decision-making and governance structure. Both the Ms. Foundation and Las Sinfronteras understood that the grant was something of a risk. And, indeed, the New Partners project turned out to be

ill suited to the ethos of the grantee. By the time the money was granted, the people with buy-in were no longer active in the group leadership, and the group was not equipped to carry out the project. The grant was not renewed, although the group has continued its work.

Despite the loss of these two projects, many of the other groups applauded the foundation for funding them. Family Planning of Chelan-Douglas regretted the loss of the Northwest Coalition, noting that, "They had much to share with all New Partners, and we're sorry not to have their work in the region." The final report from SAAF/Omeyocan YES noted that, "Despite the fact that Las Sinfronteras did not complete their grant, it is a positive thing for the Ms. Foundation to support small, grassroots organizations and not just larger groups."



Lessons Learned

1 Lesson One

The project outcomes were numerically modest but represent significant “pre-organizing,” with the potential to provide a base for longer-term organizing.

New constituencies that have not traditionally been associated with reproductive rights expressed substantial interest in comprehensive sexuality education, which does appear to be a good issue through which to involve people. These factors point to the potential for building a much larger base of support for comprehensive sexuality education than what currently exists.

Before a group can launch a full-fledged campaign—including clear demands of an institutional target and multiple tactics ranging from letter-writing to protest—to advance its cause, it generally has to conduct research to quantify the impact of policies on a particular community; to identify changes in policies and practices that would improve conditions; to analyze the power structure surrounding a particular issue; to raise the community’s consciousness about the problem;

and to build support for the proposed solutions. The speed with which these activities occur depends on two things: the experience and resources available to the group at the beginning of the process, and the size and openness of the institution being criticized. A campaign to set up a free vaccination program might move more quickly, for example, than one that aims to reform a police department. These activities help potential activists become more comfortable with their issue and with each other.

The main form of New Partners pre-organizing came in implementing a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum, researching the general availability of such curriculum, and testing community attitudes toward sexuality education and sexual health tools such as condoms and emergency contraception. The organizations have had up to 50 participants each in their ongoing sexuality education programs annually. These participants then carried out further education with several hundred young people in their communities, usually in one-time conversations or presentations.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES	EXTERNAL OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge about, and comfort with, the issue of comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education. • Stronger relationships among the grantee groups, and expanded participation in state, regional, and national networks concerned with reproductive rights and organizing. • Development of reflection and documentation practices that capture the lessons learned and provide building blocks for future work. • Substantial use of state strategists and Ms. Foundation technical assistance to strengthen infrastructure, ranging from technology assessments to youth organizer training. • Greater understanding of GLBTQ issues and the impacts of race and gender. • Development of curricula to engage constituents in the issues of reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education. • Important experience piloting youth-driven programs and fostering youth empowerment. • Critical internal discussions and assessments about values, power, and culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the level and kinds of sexuality education available to young people in the community, including discovering the actual curricula used in schools. • Stronger organizational relationships and alliances, with potential for future collaborative work. • Tools that enable young people, parents, teachers, school administrators, and others to ask questions and speak out on the issue. • Modest inroads into school districts and school boards, engaging with those institutions in ways that are new for the groups. • Greater understanding of and advocacy for GLBTQ youth in the larger community. • Delivery of curricula in community centers and schools. • Expansion of dialogue on sexuality education to parents, grandparents, and extended community.

About half as many constituents became involved in some form of political inquiry or action, and in some cases they were an entirely different group from those participating in the sexuality education programs. While the number of people exposed to appropriate sexuality education grew as a result of New Partners funding, the number of newly activated constituents—people who understand the institutional workings of sexuality education/reproductive rights and are willing to raise their voices in support of a rights-based agenda—remains small.

The data show that comprehensive sexuality education is a galvanizing issue that speaks to core values of access to information and self-determination. Without consistent agitation, though, someone who becomes interested in these issues can easily focus on the need for information and become inactive after she receives it. Developing and adding an active political voice to this arena requires more political education and power analysis to get people to focus on the systemic reasons that such information is not widely available.

Lesson Two

Latinas and queer youth emerged as significant new constituencies, despite assumptions about their lack of support for or interest in reproductive health struggles.

Queer youth were interested in spite of the seeming lack of relevance of “reproduction” to their lives, motivated by their need for sexual health and by their recognition that sexuality is fluid and therefore so are educational needs.

In five of the six groups that completed the New Partners grant program, Latinas played an important staff role and were a critical constituency. The funders chose the geographic areas for the New Partners project knowing that they included large numbers of Latinos, and some communities along the Arizona border were almost entirely Latino. Latina staff often served in crucial bridge positions between cultures and generations, and served as a critical link in outreach to Latino communities, providing insight and energy to present a broader vision of reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education to their constituencies. They searched for new ways to integrate broader, abstinence-plus approaches with more conservative cultural norms and frequently succeeded. In many cases, they also pushed their agencies to more fully engage their communities, as at Family Planning, where the Latina staff promoted an aggressive outreach in the packing sheds and migrant camps. Often, they had less support than they needed for those pioneering roles that made them vulnerable in collisions around organizational power and values.

Latina staff also struggled with external legitimacy. As Marisa Zepeda of New Turf relates, “In Elfrida [scrutiny from school officials] had to do with race. I was Latina. If I’d been Anglo, the board wouldn’t have been sitting there.”

The decision to educate moms as well as the youth was a significant and successful departure from most existing reproductive health programs. Latina mothers and grandmothers, time and again, proved a vital secondary constituency for the projects undertaken by the grantees. They formed

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mother/daughter groups, came to public events, and asked for more programs. Many were spurred by the recognition that they themselves had been deprived of critical information when they were young, and they did not want the same for their daughters—they wanted their girls to graduate high school and go on to college, rather than dealing with early pregnancies.

However, despite strong efforts throughout the process, the needs of this constituency were not fully met by the program design and support. Ms. Foundation Program Officer Desirée Flores observes that Latinas were brought in to provide technical assistance occasionally but not consistently, and the most significant opportunities came somewhat later in the grant cycle. It wasn’t until the second year that the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR) was brought to Arizona to share experiences with the Latina staff in New Partners projects. “That cultural piece is a huge part,” says Flores, “because, as grantees learned within their trainings—especially around media and messaging—it’s so much around the messenger, who you listen to and who you trust.”

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ) youth at Odyssey also comprised a new constituency that isn’t commonly thought to be interested in reproductive health. Shannon Bedard reports that some form of that assumption was at work even within the organization prior to applying for the grant and that some of the youth members also wondered about why Odyssey was engaged in the issue. But the experi-

ence of being silenced because of their sexuality, of not being able to get coherent answers to sexual questions, and of going through Spokane schools without a comprehensive sexuality education helped many Odyssey members relate. Member Adam Cogswell was motivated by the need to know. "I feel like kids are getting mixed messages, people are still deciding whether it's ok to tell their kids about sex," he says.

"We need students to go out there and say, 'This is what we need' when all the adults are saying no."

The opportunity to take leadership in some form of policy struggle also attracted many of the Odyssey youth to this project. A large number recalled their political activities as fun, engaging, and exciting. Member Megan Cuillar says, "We need students to go out there and say, 'This is what we need' when all the adults are saying no." She adds, "I consider myself an activist. I've become more active since I've been going to Odyssey, because I have a lot of support here to be who I am."

In addition, Bedard notes that sexual identity is far from rigid. "As soon as one of our young men had an experience with the opposite sex and had to worry about birth control for the first time, suddenly, reproductive rights became an issue," she relates.

Lesson Three

Curriculum development provided an avenue for groups to increase their comfort levels with the subject matter of sexuality education and claim ownership of the program process.

The lack of readily accessible, affordable, comprehensive sexuality education literature—especially the absence of appropriate materials in Spanish—was a major concern at most of the sites. Curriculum development was not a matter of quickly coming up with lesson plans, it was a matter of cultural urgency. Teaching provided an entrée to the issue; thus, curriculum development was seen as a strategy, not as a diversion.

Curriculum development provided an avenue for groups to increase their comfort levels with the subject matter of sexuality education and claim ownership of the program process. Grantees used popular education or other non-didactic methods to allow youth development and consciousness-raising to

take place. That development lays the groundwork for future political activism by allowing youth to gain skills, confidence, and analytical experience.

The organizations in the New Partners grant program all faced a challenge: how to deliver comprehensive sexual health information to their constituencies, even though many had limited or no prior experience doing so. For most of the organizations, this involved selecting, modifying, and sometimes creating a curriculum that often made them the only outpost of comprehensive sexuality education in an abstinence-only environment.

Although the grantees had access to existing curricula, most of the groups went through the process of adapting curricula for their own needs. Grantees gathered all the available sexuality education curricula from health groups and SIECUS. They evaluated the curriculum available to public school students in their areas, designed new curricula, trained organizational staff to deliver it, and measured its effects on students. This process helped the grantees get comfortable with the issue and develop a sense of ownership about the project as a whole. The groups in part recognized that their own staff did not always have the correct information and therefore could not competently evaluate or critique local, state, or national policy on sexuality education.

Most of the New Partners were troubled by the difficulty of identifying and obtaining affordable comprehensive sexuality education literature, and many specifically cited the absence of appropriate materials in Spanish. New Turf maintains a resource library that disseminates more than 120,000 pieces of literature a year. The librarians note that, while they are flooded with free abstinence-only materials, they must scour the internet for alternatives—a difficult process that they pursue doggedly, nonetheless.

This absence of Spanish-language materials was repeatedly identified as a major problem. The only readily available, bilingual workbooks that these groups considered "culturally appropriate" are *La Niña Que Soy (The Girl that I Am)* for young girls and *Los Consejos de la Abuelita (Grandma's Wisdom)*, both publications of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Girl that I Am* is heavily focused on self-esteem, and sex is not mentioned. *Grandma's Wisdom* encourages mothers to teach their daughters accurate information about puberty and to encourage them to defer sexual relationships. For young Latinas, the most frequently used resource was *Mariposa*, written by Maria Elena Fernandez for the California Department of Education/Connections Leadership Project. It focuses on leadership, decision-making, and achieving goals. Well designed, it devotes 17 of its 246 pages

to relationships, but the sexual focus is on fear of pregnancy and AIDS, with no information on alternatives to abstinence.

Tracking down and evaluating existing public school curricula required investigating public institutions, building relationships with individual teachers and principals, and asking young people directly about what they learned in mainstream schools. The research that NCEC, Odyssey, and New Turf did, for example, revealed that much of what is called medically accurate abstinence-based education is actually inaccurate abstinence-only education, or that no sexuality education is taught at all.

The experience of receiving effective and accurate sexuality education raises participants' expectations for what they should receive from larger institutions, such as schools and medical clinics. Rising expectations may in turn increase potential for participant involvement in small- and large-scale struggles over school and health policy. One student at Luz Academy says, "The school teaching this just takes one thing off my parents shoulders...I'm 18, and my parents are still, 'oh no, she's my little girl, I can't talk to her like that.'" Another spoke about how the classes helped her be more open-minded. "When I first came here, no doubt, I was [resisting]. The first time they started talking about gays and lesbians, I just kept it all in. And then later on, slowly, it expands perspective, you get respect for them, and it shows you lots of stuff, without hurting anybody. I think it's the society we grow up in. Everybody is afraid of change. Everybody wants it to be just the way it was, and they don't want to accept other people's changes."

Lesson Four

There was less resistance than anticipated or feared. Grantees were largely averse to taking political risks, citing the conservativeness of their communities and their fear of being shut down.

In truth, they encountered very little organized resistance from the community, and found a good deal of latent support. Some incidents of backlash did take place. Family Planning, which is consistently equated with abortion rather than health care, was criticized for conducting a condom demonstration at a school, and one board member's daughter objected to their use of the word "sexuality" on the front of the mother/daughter brochure. New Turf has logged similar examples. Anne Rego reports, "We had gone in and done basic education. What we tend to do is have students write questions, but we found the schools pull out questions they don't want answered. We were showing a tape with basic information,

and a parent got upset. We tend to do it on community level, because the schools are too narrow."

Both states, as well as numerous school districts in these communities, have accepted federal abstinence-only money, and the communities often have small but well-organized, vocal, conservative groups that object to comprehensive sexuality education. The attempt to avoid attack forces groups to move more slowly and less publicly toward constituency-building and community action. Luz Academy has other programs

The librarians note that, while they are flooded with free abstinence-only materials, they must scour the internet for alternatives—a difficult process that they pursue doggedly, nonetheless.

that receive abstinence-only money, while one chapter of New Turf had previously used the *Why Am I Tempted?* abstinence-only curriculum. "We find that schools themselves don't want you to do sex ed," says one New Turf staff person, "but we can get in the back door by working with the counselors. The federal abstinence promotion is really out there, and schools don't want to lose their funding." The back-door approach is strongly characteristic of four of the six groups and somewhat present in the other two. In interviews, staff at New Turf and Family Planning expressed some fear of losing program funding or other support if they are too upfront about their work on sexuality. NCEC stood by the program, even though it actually cost them some grant monies.

For the most part, however, the resistance grantees expected when they took on the issue of sexuality education failed to materialize. Luz Academy youth participants conducted community-based research, including interviewing parents and attending neighborhood meetings to develop a community needs assessment, which they used to prepare a group presentation at the end of the semester. These activities received very positive parental feedback. Students participating in the New Turf program in Tombstone circumvented school district opposition to sexuality education by developing a parental permission form, getting permission from administrators to run surveys and promote sexual awareness, and then winning permission from the school board to conduct surveys at schools.

Students and the school received far more positive feedback during that process than expected.

At several sites—Family Planning, Omeyocan and New Turf among them—it appeared that access to youth in institutional settings was directly tied to the perceived marginality of the youth: The more marginal the youth, the greater the access. Racism and economic discrimination play a large part in

“We find that schools themselves don’t want you to do sex ed, but we can get in the back door by working with the counselors.”

this: frequently the decisions to deny or grant access are made by whites, and the at-risk youth are, in most of these instances, majority Latino. “I think in public schools it’s more political. Here a lot of these kids, no one likes to recognize them. Some of the parents know this is the last school they’re going to go to, so why create problems. We have kids with behavior problems, attitude, drugs. This is a place of last resort for a lot of these students.” New Turf had a terrible time getting into the larger schools in Sierra Vista, but had greater access to smaller, more rural schools.

Similarly, the education specialist at Family Planning in Chelan-Douglas was able to provide very explicit sexuality education to youth in the juvenile detention system but not in the public schools. Omeyocan and New Turf both had access to charter schools seen as “end-of-the line” schools for students at risk for incarceration. The principal at the commercially run charter school says,

There’s no services, no WIC program—obviously, I have to go out and get some services. I like the program. The kids are getting real information, which they don’t get at home or on the street. The kids are asked to give a permission slip, so the parents already know. The kids are older, they need the information, and it’s up to them, we’re not forcing them to take it. All the parents gave consent, and there have been no problems.

Although grantees have discovered that their work gets more support than they expected, and some of the resistance they prepared for did not materialize, they are still fearful. Tight-knit communities and organizations often strive hard for consensus, which can lead to an aversion to conflict and

a pervasive culture of unanimity. They avoid pushing too visibly for fear of losing support, participants, or funding. These are understandable fears, and they create opposing motivations that affected New Partners work.

If new constituencies are to emerge strongly enough to shift the policy direction, however, that fear must be dealt with as a political obstacle, rather than accepted as an unchangeable fact. The majority of incidents that grantees referred to as resistance actually fall into the category of individual parents asking for clarification or expressing a specific concern—hardly on the order of organized resistance. Grantees missed excellent opportunities to build a base of support that slowly becomes accustomed to standing up for itself and for the idea of reproductive health. These opportunities include many openings to work with their own organizations’ boards and constituencies to modify the larger organizational culture and context. The systematic development of advocacy elements, such as power analysis and training in advocacy and organizing skills, may embolden the groups to activate their silent supporters, without demanding that they change their entire institutional identity. If they had initiated small, external fights, then grantees would have been able to see more clearly the potential relationship between their “pre-organizing” or “pre-campaign” activities of education, community research, and institutional mapping, and future advocacy efforts they might take on.

Lesson Five

The biggest challenge is moving from service to advocacy. Service approaches sometimes clashed with organizing, and groups lacked both a sufficient theory of change and skilled organizers on staff.

Staff often thought of policy work as only legislative and thus missed some opportunities to advocate in smaller arenas for change in institutional regulations and practices. Grantees were largely oriented to providing services and conducting education. To implement the New Partners project, they have had to develop the attitudes, skills, and power analysis needed for successful advocacy—planning in ways that minimize the potential for counterattack, while maximizing the potential for activating the community. Because they lacked those elements, most of the groups had no plan for how exactly to make the move from education to advocacy.

Initiating political action is very different from service provision and sometimes even contradictory. It is also clear that many of the grantees think of “policy work” in a narrow way that has only to do with state or national elected officials

and lobbying for formal legislation. The Ms. Foundation repeatedly stated that it considered policies at all levels of institutions, no matter how small, a fair test of advocacy potential among the grantees and their constituencies. For example, some of the "policy" work engaged in included establishing an after-school self-esteem program for girls, getting a school district to deny funding for a Christian assembly about sexuality, and asking a city council to conduct a feasibility study about placing a clinic in low-income communities. Much institutional behavior is not legislated; therefore, legislation is only one way—possibly not always the most effective way—to expand access to sexuality education.

New Partners groups argued that action to advance reproductive rights in their smaller communities may look more service-oriented and less attentive to discrete, current policy issues than that of a traditional urban reproductive rights or activist group, while still expanding the numbers of people likely to get involved in future political activity. Omeyocan YES staff believes that their popular education model, in which learners direct their own study and action, will lead the youth to community projects but not necessarily to legislative advocacy. In this case, students were interested in establishing an accessible health clinic and/or youth community center that would also provide health resources.

Odyssey Youth Center's experience shows the potential of using small, local controversies to build a base. Odyssey tracks how the district spends money and what kinds of sexuality-education events the district sponsors. When the organization learns of something likely to generate anger among students and parents, it takes action. These actions have helped Odyssey youth gain experience in asserting an alternative analysis, as well as in activating parents and supporters.

Lesson Six

Prior advocacy experience in service organizations did not necessarily enhance advocacy on this issue.

Such experience was a requirement of getting the grant, and some groups had taken positions on local regulations and events with some success, but little of that experience seemed to influence the grantees' work in the sexuality education context. The barriers appeared to be both a lack of internal, cross-staff training and a reluctance to treat sexuality as a public rather than private issue.

Even where service or educational organizations have some activist history, as was true at NCEC, Luz and, to a lesser degree, SAAF, funding restrictions and philosophical limitations can make it difficult to incorporate advocacy. For example, Luz

Social Services has a history of engaging in civic action, including attending protests. They built that goal into their curricula by integrating community service as an educational requirement, but that occasionally collided with the interests of

There is a large, sometimes jarring difference between engaging clients and challenging a community member to make the commitment to attend a meeting or be accountable to a larger group.

Academy leaders. René Salgado, director of Luz Social Services, notes that even in an organization that embraces exercising a political voice, internal negotiations have to take place. "Luz students went to a protest at the federal building," he says, "which was a big no-no with the school, because of the sources of school funding. The kids loved it, but we have to negotiate—we as an agency are ready to do it easily, but the school has some [issues]."

Institutional identity aside, the lack of experience in conducting collective advocacy means that there are important gaps in the skills and analysis of project leaders. There is a large, sometimes jarring difference between engaging clients (people receiving something from an organization but not expected to give anything back) and challenging a community member to make the commitment to attend a meeting or be accountable to a larger group. General program planning doesn't prepare someone to plan a campaign that has to target an institution, develop specific proposals, and gradually escalate pressure on decision-makers. While some of the very talented people working at the grantee organizations have some of these abilities, the skills were not consistently present, and the institutional support for developing or using such skills was sometimes missing.

Having a clear and consistent power analysis is also a determining factor in successful advocacy, but this element was either absent or inadequate in most of the organizations. In a few cases, there was a gap between the analysis and the capacity to organize around that analysis. In many instances, the groups teach about power in a cultural sense—such as New Turf's curriculum that gets participants to discuss the power of media images in shaping relations between men and women—but do not necessarily see their role as taking the step from analysis to action.

Comprehensive power analysis includes being able to identify:

- the major public and private institutions that shape a community;
- the individual decision-makers and their sources of power, as well as their vulnerabilities;
- the resources each community has for influencing or correcting those institutions;
- the dynamics of immigration status, poverty, and educational access in determining civic life;
- a clear sense of how monies flow through a community; and
- how the community is related to those surrounding it.

Knowing these things shapes a group's goals for the shift in power relations that should result from their constituency-building. Without that specific vision, it is difficult to build one advocacy effort from the results of another. Moreover, the collective analysis of the organization has to match up with the analysis of each individual involved, which means that both staff and participants need access to political education. On a touchstone issue like sexuality, about which people tend to have strong feelings, the above factors are even more critical to advocacy.

Because the New Partners grantees lacked an advocacy and organizing frame for their work, they missed opportunities to build a base. For example, although Family Planning mother/daughter groups provide a natural organizing structure for discussing and acting on policy issues, and although

A surrounding set of organizations and intermediaries can support the development of new organizers and advocates.

Family Planning had stated its intention to politically activate at least the mothers in the mother/daughter groups, former education specialist Jane Miller acknowledges that she did not invite them to the political skills training. As a result, none of the four pairs of mothers and daughters interviewed knew about the opportunity to argue for medical accuracy legislation or about the political skills training. Family Planning's instinct to activate the mothers was a good one; its ability to act on that instinct two years later, given a specific opportunity, was not as strong.

Lesson Seven

The biggest impacts were internal to the organizations and their immediate constituencies rather than to the external political environment.

The complex processes demanded by the project combined with the service-orientation of the grantees shifted the primary impact of the grant from an external focus to an internal one. The biggest changes were the ones closest to home.

The New Partners project challenged most of the grantees to: incorporate a new issue into their mission and mix of programs; develop new staff skills and infrastructure; take more risks; redefine their relationship to public policy on reproductive health issues; confront community and organizational power and culture; and test the group's core values.

Some of these transformations took the form of increased individual and organizational comfort levels dealing with issues of sexuality. During the first round of documentation site visits, staff people from grantee organizations rarely used the actual words "sex," "sex ed," or "reproductive rights" in interviews or curricula. It was clear that such language was not an established part of their lexicon. New Turf used the language of "prevention" and "self-esteem," the frame also favored by NCEC and Family Planning. Omeyocan used a more general "empowerment" frame. In later interviews, however, staff talked more explicitly about sexuality. Anne Rego, the program director at New Turf/SEABHS relates, "All the staff connected with this issue have expanded on an individual, personal level. I think that having to discuss it in staff meetings, asking questions of each other, talking about things going on with youth has been a new experience for us."

Some outcomes were difficult for the organizations. At NCEC, for example, involvement in New Partners coincided with ending their longstanding grantee relationship with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), an anti-poverty and racial justice foundation that prohibits its grantees from working on issues related to abortion and homosexuality. Similarly, Luz Social Services could have decided to accept exclusively abstinence-only funding but instead worked to balance those programs with comprehensive sexuality education.

There was some level of unease between staff and board in at least half the organizations, ranging from mild to severe. At Family Planning, the staff was concerned that the board might not relish a more public role for the agency, which had survived for decades by "cruising under the radar." One staffer notes, "The board is still fairly conservative, but they, too, have made strides in some of the stances."

Organizational Readiness

Several additional factors indicate an organization's readiness to take up controversial issues in an advocacy or organizing mode. These include:

- an explicit and collectively articulated theory of change that includes organizing and advocacy, if not exclusively, at least in a position of primary importance.
- a workplan that includes testing the community's willingness to engage in that issue through participating in educational forums, outreach to other members, analyzing policies and speaking out in public.
- internal language that reveals how an organization views the people coming through its doors—are they clients, students, community, constituency or members?
- a staffing system that recognizes the special skills required in organizing, including any that are particular to the specific constituency. Also a plan for handling conflicts between the project staff, supervisors and the Board of Directors.
- a recognition that organizations include people who fall into different slots in a political spectrum, and that constant internal organizing is required especially on controversial projects. Organizations should be able to identify a senior-level person who can provide updates, predict conflicts and facilitate communication and collective planning.

Funders should meet with all the parties regularly through semi annual meetings with directors and staffs, and at least an annual meeting with board members.

At both Luz and SAAF/Omeyocan, the board/staff tensions were more pronounced, as the organizations grappled to reconcile conflicting values. The conflicts also reflected a generational divide—as the younger New Partners program staff fostered empowerment in the youth, they themselves became more forthright in expressing their views. At Luz, there was a gender component as well, between younger, female line staff and predominantly older, male board members. At Omeyocan, there was a race component, with a Latino/Chicano line staff and a mostly white administrative staff and board.

Barbara Dawson, the former program manager at Omeyocan, wryly noted that internal tension resulted in part from the nature of organizing and leadership development: "Those effects have been pretty profound, and a learning lesson for us. There is that cycle when your consciousness level is being

raised, where you don't know anything; then you learn things and get really pissed off, and it's a long time before you actually become more tolerant. And we never talked about that before. We could have done a better job at giving young people a heads-up about what could possibly happen and how that might play out."

These challenges had not been anticipated by either the partner groups or the foundation.

"I guess we were thinking more that the conflict would come up as a result of the tension of losing their allies," muses Patricia Jerido. "One site-selection scenario we presented would be that they've gone out on a limb to do a letter-writing campaign to their state assemblyperson, and the ED gets a call from an ally saying, 'I just got a call from an assemblyman [complaining].' I wasn't thinking about the conflicts involving board members." Margaret Hempel adds, "When we were interviewing groups, we wanted to make sure that they were ready to take this on and had the capacity and were aware of the potential risks vis-à-vis their communities and other funders. We did not conceptualize it as internal transformation."

Lesson Eight

Unstable staffing situations prevented many of these projects from moving forward consistently.

Staffing issues have to be factored into multiyear grant planning, especially in geographic areas where the pool of potential experienced staff may be small. Staffing makes a tremendous difference, therefore so does the infrastructure that trains and supports staff. Ideally, such a foundational context includes the presence of a champion among the staff leadership who keeps all the stakeholders informed and organized, as well as an ability to recruit competent line staff.

New Partners groups all experienced important interruptions or false starts in program staffing, which forced a much slower pace than they had planned for. At Odyssey, the two initial staff people left one year into the program. At Omeyocan/YES, there were three managers in the course of a year and no women on the staff for more than a year in the middle of the program. At NCEC, there was no younger staff consistently involved in the program. And Family Planning lost two of its three key staffers in the last year of the grant.

Staffing challenges are common among nonprofits and progressive groups, but the particular challenges of New Partners may differ from those of groups in more urban, politically diverse areas where the progressive infrastructure is stronger

and there is a larger pool of potential staff applicants. A surrounding set of organizations and intermediaries can support the development of new organizers and advocates, both by raising their consciousness and by training them in the practical realities of outreach, issue research, and campaign planning.

Most of the staff had little organizing experience, and some had a deep mistrust of government and political systems. The first was expressed in staff reluctance to be directive with participants about the need to work on policies related to sexuality education, as well as potential action steps. When individual staff members do not ask people to do things such as call their state representatives, then individual youth or parents must decide for themselves what they will work on. Without such agitation and an adequate investment of time, the organizing process slows to a crawl. Hotaling remarks, "On the staff level among the grantees, there was almost no knowledge of the actual policy process for any issue. That knowledge varied by the person. The line staff had to learn it all from scratch—we're talking like how a bill becomes law. All three [Arizona] groups had a pretty good sense of grassroots work and hooking those community people with policymakers, but they didn't necessarily know what happens then."

The grantee staff also had mixed attitudes about political activity. One staff person said her main impression of politics was of "lies, driven by testosterone," a process that often confused her. In many cases, staff people saw political action as an elite activity and saw themselves as grassroots people who

In many cases, staff people saw political action as an elite activity and saw themselves as grassroots people who just get things done.

just get things done (i.e., privately provide comprehensive sexuality education) rather than demanding that an institution get involved. Another staff person feared that getting into political action would take up all of her own and her organization's time, leaving none for their other duties. Where grantees moved the most quickly toward advocacy, they had staff that was both philosophically inclined toward that work and experienced in its basic systems, such as issue identification, campaign design, and leadership development.

High staff turnover is a fact of nonprofit life that is unlikely to change in the near future. That requires additional training resources from foundations or other supporters. In the New Partners project, these proved invaluable to helping inexperienced, new staff people get up to speed.

Lesson Nine

The state consultants played a critical role, as did technical assistance organizations.

This suggests a need to assess the general infrastructure in the area—training programs for organizing, fundraising, strategic planning, policy analysis, media—and the necessity of supporting networks, intermediaries, and constituency groups. Advancing a new agenda or constituency requires an intensive investment of resources and support, which were underestimated in this case.

The New Partners funders and organizations were trying to do many things, all of which are difficult even under ideal circumstances. The Ms. Foundation was committed—and innovative—in providing not just multiyear funding but also consistent technical assistance, organizational effectiveness training, and opportunities for individual staff to receive skills training and do networking.

Without Ms. Foundation resources, grantees reported, their work would never have come as far as it did. Most significant among the resources were the state strategists—Carol Pencke in Washington and Caroline Hotaling in Arizona. Both women were involved from the project's inception, disseminating the RFP and recruiting organizations to apply. They saw themselves providing a liaison between the foundation and the grantees; helping the grantees identify training and support needs; directing grantees toward financial, organizational development, and political resources; and organizing meetings with allies and conducting trainings when necessary.

Pencke met with each group monthly and occasionally with their boards and larger staffs. She organized gatherings in which the Washington groups exchanged information; political skills trainings conducted by experienced rural organizers in each funded community; and a reproductive rights convocation in Spokane. Specifically, Pencke helped Odyssey with strategic planning, NCEC with staff training, and Family Planning with recognizing opportunities to frame their work politically.

Hotaling sent out regular resource listings, also met frequently with grantees, reviewed their workplans and reports, and helped them bring in new resources. She organized three gatherings in Arizona for the groups to exchange

information and address specific topics. One was on policy advocacy; another on sexuality education in Arizona and on organizing youth; and the last was on sexuality education delivery issues and national policy implications. Hotaling also organized a special training in Arizona, conducted by the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR). In both states, the consultants organized technological assessments and led the grantees to technological resources.

Grantees report that the consultants played a vital role in the process. "That makes this project really different from all the other foundations we get support from," said one. Having the consultants does not remove entirely the distance between the foundation and the grantees, but it does shrink that distance to facilitate communication and negotiation. Although this was unplanned, the consultants also served to provide institutional memory when the grantees experienced staff turnover.

Political training has been especially critical. The groups have generally been enthusiastic about participating in political skills trainings. Day-long trainings on legislative work, conducted in each Washington community, drew 40-50 people, with the largest turnouts at Family Planning and Odyssey. Those two groups conducted broad outreach throughout their communities, including at schools and community groups. Simultaneously, the grantees worked to get out the word on pending medically accurate sexuality-education legislation; Odyssey systematically gathered letters about that issue. Danielle Carver of Odyssey says she was surprised to find significant support for the medical accuracy bill. "I was very shocked that they would want to pass something like this, knowing how the other opinions were in the room. It made me feel good in a way that something positive was coming out of this and to get training on how we can help to change those things."

The foundation has also been able to provide opportunities for the groups to connect with effective reproductive rights organizations outside their immediate area. The groups have been trained in sexuality education design by SIECUS. The Denver gathering in September 2002, half of which was conducted jointly with the state reproductive rights coalitions also funded by the Ms. Foundation, gave the New Partners a sense of the reproductive health context of their own work and introduced them to activists who encouraged their entry into the issue. The same is true for the Western States Center's Community Strategic Training Initiative, a massive technical assistance conference at which the New Partners gathered and where GLBTQ issues were emphasized.

People also received some personal, one-on-one training opportunities. The Western States Center's Kelley Weigel worked with Shannon Bedard of Odyssey, and her coaching on power analysis was significant to Bedard, who then shared her learning with the broader community. There were five grantee gatherings in Washington and three in Arizona, in addition to two national gatherings hosted by the Ms. Foundation. The strong grantee responses to training and networking opportunities, as well as the clear need to support their constituency-building work, suggest that this was a successful, value-added approach to grantmaking.

Grantees report that the consultants played a vital and very valuable role in the process.

Even with all the additional support, including some added financial support for special events at several of the groups, the work entailed in the New Partners initiative proved to be far more demanding than anyone had imagined, costing the groups more time and money than they had to devote to it. A number of the larger agencies felt conflicting pressures between the relatively small size of the New Partners grant and the amount of staff time it consumed. As Nastia Snider, the evaluation specialist at Luz explains, "This is one of our most time-intensive and lower income-producing projects. We have \$100,000 [for another project], so that's where our time should go. Budget-wise, this project is not a good investment."

Flores at the Ms. Foundation comments, "At the beginning of this project, I never took into account how much energy needed to go into the education of the staff and board. We could have just spent three years around that." And, as Pencke observes, it's hard even for an experienced group to switch gears. "It crystallized for me that all of the groups I work with are used to being pretty successful in their own little sphere. But the idea of reaching out to a broader base to impact school districts at the board level, or city council level was a new challenge. When they went to talk to their school districts, they said, 'Here's a proposal,' and school boards said, 'Thanks,' and that was that. Then the groups didn't know what to do, so they went back to doing this education project."

10

Lesson Ten

Alliances and networks helped grantees craft plans and fight isolation.

A number of the grantees have built strong relationships with each other, with local institutions, and with groups working on sexuality or youth issues nationally. This networking has been largely facilitated by the Ms. Foundation and followed up by the grantees themselves.

Networking gatherings among the grantees allowed them to study each other's best practices, commiserate over their challenges, and gain insight into things they needed to think about. This was clearly a very important aspect of curriculum design, as grantees shared the ways in which they had researched the current curricula being taught in schools, gained access to principals, designed specific pieces of curriculum, and recruited/retained participants. While the strongest links were within each state, grantees have also learned from interacting with those in the other state. For example, New Turf began to understand the importance of language in creating access for young LGBTQ people from being with Odyssey, and NCEC was able to share insights about working with migrant Latino communities with Family Planning.

In addition to gaining peer support, the grantees also increased their sophistication about sexuality and reproductive issues from their exposure to the reproductive rights coalitions that the Ms. Foundation also funds. In the September 2002 national gathering of New Partners and grantees working on other aspects of reproductive health and rights, New Partners grantees gained a new understanding of the breadth of the reproductive rights field and came to understand that there are far more resources on the issue than they had realized. This may have encouraged the grantees to step outside of their comfort zones and be more public about the sexuality education issues they are working on. For example, with Pencke's help, the Washington groups went on to organize a convocation about sexuality education and the need for medically accurate curriculum specifically in eastern Washington.

A few of the New Partners groups, however, had a negative reaction to several presentations that focused predominantly on abortion, where the presenter assumed that everyone shared the same perspective. In summer 2004, the Ms. Foundation had New Partners groups attend the Community Strategic Training Initiative, where there was a gathering of reproductive rights groups. "I did go to the reproductive health workshop, and I felt alienated," reports one grantee's staff-person. "I felt that the trainer took reproductive rights, which I think includes so much—access to contraceptives, etc—and

talked just about abortion. I felt she made the assumption that her entire audience was pro-choice. It was abortion, abortion, abortion, pro-choice, pro-choice, pro-choice, and how bad the pro-lifers are. And I kind of thought, "They're fighting for the same things you are—they're fighting for their beliefs, you're fighting for your beliefs—and don't alienate your audience."

The grantees themselves have been creative about building alliances locally. Since the project started, most of these groups have initiated or deepened their relationships with local school boards, administrators, and teachers. They have also connected with the local branches of large national and international reproductive rights organizations, such as Planned Parenthood and NARAL, as well as with county health departments and public clinics. New Partners has given the grantees opportunities to engage these relationships, and grantees have found substantial openness. Hotaling reports that the work of Arizona's New Partners groups has generated more interest in these issues among the sorts of political and advocacy organizations that were unprepared to respond to the request for proposals four years ago. And Margaret Hempel at Ms. Foundation observes that the connections benefit the national organizations as well, introducing them to new partners and constituencies at the grassroots level and in regions where they need to extend their reach. ■



Looking to the Future

The results of the New Partners program indicate that projects designed to build and activate new constituencies around the issue of comprehensive sexuality education have great potential. That potential may expand over time to include additional reproductive health issues. Furthermore, progressive advocacy on policy questions may have an disproportionately large impact when it emerges from small and rural communities. Family Planning staff was told, for example, that 300 letters from their community means more to a legislator than 3,000 from an urban community.

A project to engage new organizations and constituencies in supporting sexuality and reproductive health priorities must combine education, capacity building and long-term issue campaigns to move organizations, their staff and their members to identify themselves as advocates. This requires a substantial influx of financial and human resources. Through a combination of support, New Partners was able to attract larger cultural, educational and service organizations that in turn have generated local interest in the issue among adults and young people living in places not normally viewed as "progressive." Given this potential, and the need to expand the base of support for these issues, there are a number of future program and steps that foundations and organizations should consider.

Recommendations

These recommendations apply to three primary audiences. First are foundations that support reproductive rights and health advocacy. The second is practitioners who are interested in adding sexuality education or reproductive health issues to their current work. Finally, the lessons uncovered through the New Partners initiative may also apply outside of the reproductive rights and health field, to anyone wanting to engage organizations or communities in organizing around new issues, particularly those that are seen as politically sensitive.

1 Recommendation One

Conduct an assessment of existing comprehensive sexuality education curricula, particularly those which incorporate systemic change and social action; supplement as needed; and distribute. Rather than groups across the country "reinventing the wheel," foundation resources could be strategically used to compile the best current curricula, fund development of curricula in Spanish for parents as well as youth, and make them accessible to education and advocacy organizations. In particular, if the goal is to generate new constituencies, there is a particular lack of curricula that emphasizes the larger political context and the need for systemic action. While regular public schools are unlikely to provide such curricula in our current climate, the experiences of Omeyocan YES, Luz Academy and Odyssey Youth Center show the power of such curricula in developing the analytic skills of their participants. It would also be helpful to provide additional training opportunities for staff around curriculum development, teaching, and popular education.

2 Recommendation Two

Make long-term investments in six-to-ten-year terms, rather than three. Shifting the priorities of an organization to include potentially sensitive issues and ensuring that staff and constituency are informed and confident enough to insert themselves into policy debates takes time. This is particularly true when the organization is shifting away from a client-based approach to embrace more organizing or advocacy—shifts that require generating new organizing infrastructure. In all projects, but particularly those that involve young people, this longer timeline is guaranteed to include high leadership turnover. Building capacity, therefore, must include supporting enough new leaders to sustain the work as participants move on.

3 Recommendation Three

Seek out organizations that have active and substantial advocacy or organizing strategies. Track records in these areas should be the foremost criteria used in selecting groups, taking care to balance the overall number of criteria at play. The most important factor in a group's ability to engage new constituencies is that they know how to organize, thus that should be the foremost criteria in a base-building project. Additional criteria should be weighed carefully to avoid loading down the project. For example, if cri-

teria include a specific constituency (youth) and a specific issue (sexuality education), it may be counterproductive to add further considerations such as geography, a very specific organizing approach, or a particular set of partners.

4 Recommendation Four

Establish measures of organizational readiness and progress. The Ms. Foundation was very explicit about the sexuality and systems-change focus of the project and assessed applicants by interviewing board members, presenting scenarios regarding potential political backlash and asking what the organization would do while being very explicit about the sexuality and systems change focus of the project. They looked for groups that had some history of advocacy, even if their primary identity was not political. Additional factors to consider include an articulated theory of change that they can apply to the specific outcomes of the project, the existence of on-staff organizing skills, and internal processes for engaging both constituencies and staff in political and issue education. In addition, to support the many potential activists currently working in social service, or advocates who would like to engage a new constituency, it would be helpful to document the "pre-organizing" process in additional issue areas, and how such a process looks in rural areas and small cities and towns.

5 Recommendation Five

Expand the infrastructure that supports grassroots organizing in communities of color, rural communities and conservative communities. Needed infrastructure includes training intermediaries, research institutes, foundations and donors, coalitions that pull together disparate groups, and independent media that serve a progressive constituency. In addition, there is a critical need for trainers, consultants and resources materials that can engage with racially and ethnically diverse communities and that speak to the particulars of organizing in rural and smaller urban settings. Such infrastructure has to be available locally. Regional and national efforts, while critically important, do not currently provide enough access to meet the potential of local organizing. These could be expanded to extend their reach, or new institutions could be built. Often, foundations set their guidelines to support one or another element of such infrastructure, but this approach has been shown to be inadequate.

Recommendation Six

Build the field's understanding of the relationship between social service provision and social change. A significant gap in progressive infrastructure in general is the lack of understanding about the potential and limitations of social services to contribute to a social change strategy. Service and education programs have a natural constituency in their clients yet do not, in general, join broader organizing or advocacy efforts. Service organizations that want to incorporate advocacy have several structural options that could minimize unproductive organizational conflict. In some cases, investing in changing their internal systems and staffing is possible. But as an alternative to a fully-integrated organizing program groups can build relatively autonomous projects and spin them off, or provide financial and other forms of support to an allied organization's campaigns.

Interviews

The Ms. Foundation for Women

Margaret Hempel, Vice President of Programs
Patricia Jerido, Program Officer
Carol Pencke, Consultant
Caroline Hotaling, Consultant
Desirée Flores, Program Officer

The David and Lucille Packard Foundation

Kathy Toner, Program Officer

Family Planning Association of Chelan-Douglas Counties

Aidalia Aguilar and daughter
Elizabeth Athair, parent
Rosa Baraona and daughter
Anna Cortes, Bilingual Family Planning Educator
Eileen D'Amico, Nurse Practitioner
Karen Knox and daughters
Carol Oakes, Executive Director
Jane Miller, Family Planning Educator
Kathleen Miner, Family Planning Educator
Heidi Shroeder and daughters
Lisa Agnew Santos, Bilingual Family Planning Educator
Terry Talbott-McCall, Family Planning Educator

Odyssey Youth Center

Shannon Bedard, Organizer
Danielle Carver, Member
Adam Cogswell, Member
Megan Cuilla, Member
Casey Halcro, Member
Elizabeth Whitford, Executive Director
Anthony Wilbourne, Member
Julie, Transgender Mentor
Missy Kolbe, Masters of Social Work practicum intern

Northwest Communities Education Center

Berta Balli, Program Coordinator
Ricardo Garcia, Executive Director
Gabriel Martinez, Radio KDNA Station Manager
Amelia Ramon, Office Manager
Dora Saenz, Volunteer Teacher
Elizabeth Torres, Development Specialist

Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

Judith McDaniel, Deputy Director
Barbara Dawson, Project Director
Lena Garcia, Participant
Velia Leybas, Participant
César López, Program Coordinator
Luís Perales, Program Coordinator
Nicole Trujillo, Program Coordinator
Elisa, Stephanie, Brianna, Guillermo, students
Michele Orduna, Evaluation Coordinator, University of Arizona
Patty Valera, Project Coordinator

Luz Social Services

Fernanda Badilla, Student
Pepe Barron, Chief Executive Officer
Daniela Cervantes, Student
Ruby Cajigas, Student
Bob Granado, Principal
Adalberto M. Guerrero, Board Member
Ous Hamadou, Student
Ricardo Jasso, Executive Director, Luz Social Services
Esperanza Lumm, Project Director
Edward Madrid, Board Member
Mia Ruiz, Service Learning Coordinator and Teacher
Nastia Snider, Associate Evaluator
René Salgado, Principal
Robin Southern, Teacher
Gloria Valenzuela, Board Member

Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services/New Turf

Kathy Barr, Prevention Resource Coordinator
Jacqueline Blakely, Prevention Specialist
Gloria Durgin, Prevention Specialist
Ana Maria Flannigan, Prevention Specialist
Ann Huber Rego, Executive Director
Susan Richards, Prevention Resource Coordinator
Michelle Madrid, Prevention Specialist, Project Coordinator
Yara Sanchez, Prevention Specialist
Veronica Padilla, Prevention Specialist
Marissa Zepeda, Prevention Specialist

Additional Interviews

Lisa Cappoccia, Spokane Health Improvement Partnership (HIP)
Sallie Christensen, Spokane School District Staff, Diversity Committee
Vicky Countryman, Spokane School District
Gail Delaney, Planned Parenthood of Spokane
Sandra Espinoza-Canchola, Kino Academy of Tuscon
A.J. Hutsell, Spokane Department of Health
Susie Jensen, St. Joseph's Catholic School
Laurel Kelly, Education Director, Planned Parenthood of the Inland Northwest
Carole Seagraves, Planned Parenthood, Yakima Valley
Jet Tilley, Spokane Planned Parenthood Action League/Public Affairs Director
Kelley Weigel, Western States Center



Applied
Research
Center

Applied Research Center
3781 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94611
P: 510/ 653-3415
F: 510/ 653-3427
arc@arc.org
www.arc.org

The Applied Research Center (ARC) is a public policy, educational and research institute whose work emphasizes issues of race and social change. The Center's prior research has revealed discriminatory effects of seemingly race-neutral policies in education, economic development and welfare.

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