



DeKalb County Community Foundation

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VISION FOR A THRIVING COMMUNITY: CommunityWorks Impact Plan Addendum 2010 - 2011

HISTORY

In 2003, the DeKalb County Community Foundation began its CommunityWorks initiative in DeKalb County. The Foundation's Board recognized the potential of a community foundation as a change agent and community leader. It was ready to use its convening and grant-making resources to help improve DeKalb County's quality of life. The Foundation set about getting input from throughout the County on the needs, resources, barriers, and opportunities related to child care, land use, and workforce development in DeKalb County. These community conversations confirmed that the people of DeKalb County put a high premium on their quality of life and recognize that excellence in child care, land use decisions, and workforce development are critical to assuring a bright future for DeKalb County. An Impact Plan Committee consisting of Community Foundation staff and CommunityWorks Advisory Committee members in each interest area of child care, land use and workforce development was convened to work on next steps.

The Impact Plan Committee set about to discover the one or two ripe opportunities that existed for the CommunityWorks Initiative to focus on in the years ahead. Because the goal of CommunityWorks is to impact community quality of life, the Impact Plan Committee used rigorous criteria to identify ripe opportunities on which to focus on in our Impact Plan:

- There is broad **public desire** for a change or result (as identified in the community meetings).
- The foundation and its advisors have a **good understanding of the problem**. (Why are we getting the result we are in the community? What needs to happen to address it? What obstacles stand in the way? How can we remove these obstacles?)
- There **are good ideas for solutions** to address the problem. (What strategies and efforts could address the obstacles? Which of these are already underway in the community?)

- There are **key actors interested in these solutions** – enlightened political leaders, strong community-based organizations, local governments with good capacity, civic-minded business leaders, etc. are needed to solve problems. (What key actors and organizations are or could be involved? Do they have the interest and capacity to carry out the strategies identified?)
- The opportunity **plays to the community’s strengths**.
- The opportunity **takes advantage of an external opportunity** (for example, a new government initiative, new foundation funding in this area, a new study that received significant press coverage on the problem, etc.) or **addresses an external threat**.

The CommunityWorks Impact Plan Committee recommended that the Foundation consider ways to take advantage of the following ripe opportunities:

CHILD CARE

Opportunity	Rationale
There is a State of IL Quality Rating System (QRS) to set standards for practice and identify needs in child care settings. The higher the program’s score, the higher the rate of reimbursement from the state for subsidized children in their care.	Utilizing a state supported system for quality and access to increased state subsidy funds will help leverage local dollars and improve the overall quality of care for our children.
An information campaign will be needed to inform parents about the new quality rating system.	Parents who chose care in an informed way learn how to look for quality. Child care providers provide the highest quality care possible for prospective parents and their children.
While the business community provides very little direct support to specific child care programs in DeKalb County, there are proven strategies that could increase this support.	Giving area businesses a direct opportunity to support quality child care programs in their community helps meet practical needs for providers and demonstrates a commitment to their employee families.

LAND USE

Opportunity	Rationale
Land use leaders in the county would like to see a process to gain comprehensive input from various stakeholders on annual land use planning and implementation priorities throughout the county.	Land use planning and implementation priorities informed through a comprehensive community input process will increase public ownership of each communities’ land use decisions.
A proven, low-cost step to improve land use decision making exists, which is to provide basic land use planning training for elected officials, many of whom lack formal training in such practices, as well as additional tools for government staff and officials.	Various communities managing similar issues related to land use can share ideas and resources. Shared costs ensure an efficient way to provide quality training, research, or other resources for each community to access.
DeKalb County already has a centralized database for data and tools for government officials that could be	Capturing and making the resources created through CommunityWorks readily available provides an enduring

expanded with more resources.	benefit for current and future municipal representatives.
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity	Rationale
There is broad support among a variety of employers and educators to improve the soft skills of young adults entering the workforce.	Young adults with effective soft skills (ex. work ethic, appearance, and attitude) are more likely to succeed, producing positive results for their employer and themselves.
A low-cost step exists to improve vocational preparation practices, which is to replicate existing effective practices among educational settings throughout the county.	Exploring existing vocational preparation practices (both within and outside of DeKalb County) and providing resources to ensure their utilization in schools throughout the County will give all students an opportunity to be even more prepared for work.
Many local employers are willing to serve as resources to improve vocational awareness and soft skills in youth.	When employers directly engage young people in demonstrating their profession, modeling and supporting the use of effective soft skills, and working closely with educators, students' opportunities become even more real to them.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

The Impact Plan Committee developed recommended strategic responses in each of the issue areas that address pressing problems, take advantage of the ripe opportunities, and offer effective partners for the DeKalb County Community Foundation.

Childcare

Overall Goal: The quality, availability, and affordability of child care programs in DeKalb County have been increased and business support of child care programs has been increased.

- The Foundation will assist in funding initial education of child care programs and parents in DeKalb County on the new Illinois Quality Rating System (QRS).
- The Foundation will work through 4-C to assist eligible individual programs (benchmarked by the State of IL Quality Rating System (QRS) assessment) in raising their score on the rating scale through the provision of targeted validation, training, equipment, and/or curriculum enhancement.
- The Foundation and 4-C will work together to seek individuals and organizations in the community to “adopt a program” to assist in financing QRS enhancements.
- The Foundation, 4-C, Kishwaukee United Way, and select child care programs will work together to build employer financial and in-kind support of quality child care through building awareness of the value of child care and helping centers build 1:1 relationships with particular employers.
- **Key Partners for Strategic Response:**

4-C (Community Coordinated Child Care), Kishwaukee United Way (and perhaps other United Way entities in DeKalb County), individual/organizational donors who want to support comprehensive improvement in child care programs in the county, parents who will provide testimonials to the value of quality child care, McHenry County Community Foundation, and the State Department of Human Services, who will implement the QRS.

Land Use and Protection

Overall Goal: Tools that DeKalb County decision makers use to inform future land use decisions have been provided and utilized.

- The Foundation and the Regional Planning Commission will convene and utilize a DeKalb County Land Use Advisory Committee, representative of a variety of stakeholders, which will, on an annual basis, determine the priority land use issues and needs that various communities in DeKalb County have and identify ways to meet their information and training needs.
- The Foundation will, while seeking additional financial partners, fund efforts to provide information and tools to key government officials and staff based on the priorities and needs identified through the DeKalb County Land Use Advisory Committee.
- The Foundation and the DeKalb County Government will create a clearinghouse for land use resources, information, and tools for government decision-makers.
- **Key Partners for Strategic Response:**

DeKalb County Government, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission, agricultural organizations, and all DeKalb County city and town government officials and land use related staff.

Workforce Development

Overall Goal: Soft skills education for all DeKalb County middle school (6th-8th grade) youth has been enhanced and local employer participation in youth workforce preparation has been improved.

- The Foundation will work with the Regional Office of Education, Kishwaukee College, and Northern Illinois University to gather DeKalb County educators in an initial exploratory meeting to collect input on needs related to soft skills training with middle school youth.
- The Foundation will fund an evaluation to assess existing curriculum and programs in DeKalb County designed to build soft skills in middle school youth.
- The Foundation will lead an effort utilizing intern assistance to research existing smart practices and resources across the nation directed to soft skills development for youth in this grade range.

- The Foundation, the Regional Office of Education, school district representatives, Kishwaukee College, Kishwaukee Education Consortium, and Northern Illinois University will work together to evaluate the results of the previous steps and determine the best opportunities to implement soft skills education for DeKalb County youth.
- The Foundation, Kishwaukee Education Consortium, Indian Valley Vocational Center, and the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation will explore employer and educator collaborative opportunities for vocational awareness and soft skills development among youth.
- **Key Partners for Strategic Response:**

Kishwaukee College, Kishwaukee Education Consortium, Kishwaukee Education to Careers Partnership, DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, Indian Valley Vocational Center, Northern Illinois University, Chambers of Commerce, DeKalb County Regional Office of Education, and DeKalb County educators of middle school (6th-8th grade) youth.

PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIC RESPONSES (2008 – 2010)

The CommunityWorks Steering Committee, Vision/Advisory Committees and DCCF staff has worked diligently to implement the strategic initiatives from the initial Impact Plan. Fifteen CommunityWorks Endowment Funds total approximately \$1.95 million. These funds have produced grant funds that when combined with DCCF Unrestricted assets led to a total of \$114,163 in grantmaking in support of the Impact Plan. CommunityWorks grantmaking from 2007 – 2010 is detailed in Attachment A.

Leadership combined with grantmaking has led to significant developments within the three issues areas of CommunityWorks:

Early Childhood Care and Education - The Foundation, in partnership with key strategic partners, is meeting the goal of increased quality of child care programs in DeKalb County. In FY 2010 (July 2009 – June 2010) seven out of ten child care centers eligible for Communityworks support received or maintained a QRS rating of 2 Stars or higher. The actual annual revenue that participation in QRS brought into the DeKalb County centers was \$170,270. Since QRS started, a total of \$343,870 has been received by DeKalb County centers from the state of Illinois. Thus every dollar committed to QRS by Communityworks resulted in a \$4.30 return. A summary of uses of additional revenue in centers indicated that a majority of centers are using the revenue for materials, equipment, facility improvements and staff salary. Four out of seven centers increased the number of CCAP children served, increasing the accessibility of care for those families. Looking ahead, the goal of increasing quality continues as four centers move to increase star rating, with three centers attempting Star 4 rating in 2011. The QRS Specialist assists centers with maintaining and striving for star levels to ensure that quality is maintained and not just a short term change until star rating is achieved.

The goal for increased business support of child care programs has evolved; last year the Communityworks Child Care Advisory Committee decided to change philosophy and build

capacity for child care centers by providing training and consultation in the areas of strategic community and fund development. The rationale to work toward increased child care center capacity is based in the idea that centers will be better positioned to elicit business support on their own. In February 2010 a Strategic Communication Workshop was held for child care centers with representatives from approximately nine centers attending. The workshop concentrated on branding, website development and image professionalization. Follow-up consultation was offered to the DeKalb County nonprofit centers and two centers took advantage of the offer. A Fund Development Workshop is being planned for early 2011. Discussion has initiated with First Children's Finance to provide the training. Child Care Providers have indicated they are extremely interested in the workshop and topics available (including, financial management, budgeting and fundraising).

Land Use - The Foundation, in partnership with key strategic partners, is working toward meeting the goal set forth for land use. The past year was spent meeting with officials from 12 of the 14 DeKalb County municipalities to determine land use priorities. The key questions asked of each municipality included:

- In your community what are your land use priorities?
- What do you envision your future or on-going land use priorities to be?
- If the Land Use Committee granted your community \$10,000 for land use expenses related to training, research and/or planning needs, what would you spend it on and why?
- Do you have favorite land use tools and/or resources? Which do you utilize? What keeps you from utilizing certain tools and resources?

Of the 12 municipalities interviewed, 10 indicated that water was a land use priority; stormwater, ground water, water supply or water quality was indicated. A ripe opportunity occurred to partner with the DeKalb County Planning & Zoning Department and the Regional Planning Commission to offer a workshop on the newly developed contour maps designating two-foot elevations on the county website. The maps can be used to make planning decisions for development. The workshop provided hands-on training to municipality officials on how to utilize the maps, and a brief presentation on how to relate that information to stormwater management. A mini-grant opportunity was developed for municipalities with representation at the workshop. The purpose of the mini grant is for municipalities to have funding to go toward the costs of a consultant to create municipal stormwater ordinance development and comprehensive plan refinement. Four municipalities applied for the mini-grants; three grants were awarded. The grants provide a resource to the municipality and may lead to additional funding opportunities from other sources, such as the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The Land Use Committee voted to continue working in the area of water priorities in 2011 to maximize leveraging opportunities and to work with municipalities to support best practices for water management.

Workforce Development - The Foundation, in partnership with key strategic partners, is working toward meeting the goals set forth for workforce development. The Workforce Development Vision Committee agreed that working with DeKalb County middle schools should match the need and experience of that school in terms of soft skill enhancement. A Soft Skill Enhancement Committee was convened consisting of business representatives and school personnel. The goal of the committee is to cultivate buy-in from schools on the soft skill

concepts and provide an informed perspective of the needs of educators around soft skills. The committees created a “Soft Skill Enhancement Grant” opportunity for educators to apply for funding for programs, curriculum or initiatives to enhance soft skills. A partnership with Northern Illinois University Collaborative for Early Adolescence will allow for third party evaluation of the programs, etc. supported by the grants to determine which opportunity is successful in enhancing soft skills. The first grant from this new opportunity has been allocated and an evaluation process is being developed. Grant opportunities and evaluation will continue in 2011. The committee continues to work on educating school personnel on soft skills and the alignment with national learning standards. Staff and committee members intend to meet with personnel from each interested middle school in DeKalb County in 2011 to share information and listen to educator needs.

The goal of local employer participation in youth workforce preparation is being addressed through the expansion of the 8th grade career fair. The fair has been expanded to additional schools to allow more DeKalb County 8th graders to learn about career options from the employers. The addition of Indian Creek School District was very successful in March 2010 and additional districts (Sandwich and Somonauk) will be invited to the 2011 career fair. The goal is for all DeKalb County districts to attend the 8th grade career fair. As part of the career fair, presentations on soft skill concepts are offered to students in attendance and the educators from each participating district.

2011 IMPACT PLAN ADDENDUM

As the cycle for the 2008 – 2010 Impact Plan draws to a close, the Communityworks Advisory Committees and Communityworks Steering Committee determined a one-year extension of the 2008 – 2010 Impact Plan for 2011 to be appropriate. The extension allows the work in the three issue areas to continue for further impact and evaluation. The timing coincides with Phase III of our relationship with the Grand Victoria Foundation; scheduled to end in September 2011. At that point, financial and other resources will be assessed to inform future impact plan decisions.

PROGRESS TOWARD THE 2012-2014 IMPACT PLAN

The CommunityWorks Steering Committee and Vision/Advisory Committees and DCCF Staff will develop the 2012 – 2014 Impact Plan. Specific work on creating the next plan will begin in the summer of 2011. The next impact plan will be developed utilizing a centralized CommunityWorks Town Meeting to inform stakeholders of progress to date and to generate ideas for next steps and ripe opportunities. The decision to organize one centralized Town Meeting, instead of numerous meetings as previously conducted, is due to the wealth of information received at the first meetings that is still applicable today, the on-going expertise of advisory committee members in the issue areas and the lessons learned, and available opportunities identified in the 2008 – 2010 Impact Plan and Strategic Responses.