
COMPENDIUM SUMMARY

After 40 years, community-based organizations are making a substantial contribution to developing communities and improving the quality of life in distressed communities. The papers in this volume show that not only do community development corporations provide a significant vehicle in community-based development, but faith-based development organizations increasingly play a part in community development.

This compendium seeks to identify critical capacity and organizational challenges limiting the impact of secular community-based development organizations and faith-based organizations directly involved in the development process. The major points and findings of the authors are summarized below:

- A significant amount of basic research still must be done to understand the organizational dynamics of community-based development organizations. Without such basic research, improvements to the work and impact of community-based development organizations will remain episodic.
- Faith-based development organizations are not a new force in community-based development. They have been active since before the advent of the modern community development movement. Separating their work and underlying challenges from secular community development organizations is counterproductive. Faith-based organizations do have some advantages (such as moral authority), but building an organization that can actively participate in community development has more to do with creating a standardized process than with the faith origins of the entity. In fact, assets such as moral authority are balanced by the tensions of maintaining a development organization/program parallel to the operation of the faith institution.
- A community development infrastructure containing strong intermediary organizations (financial, technical assistance, and training) is central to the continued growth and impact of community-based development. As leadership organizations vested with the trust and financial resources of resource providers, intermediaries have a special responsibility to be custodians and bellwethers of needed change in community development. Such groups must scan the external environment and move beyond short-term self interest to focus on the long-term health of community-based development.

- Capacity as an operational term can be defined and put to use in helping assess the impact of community-based development organizations.
- Community-based development stakeholders must develop more case analyses of organizational success and failure. Current case analyses suggest that rapid growth without accompanying organizational infrastructure leads to a number of failures, but we also need to document the appropriate organizational practices that lead to success.
- Community-based development needs much more basic research on leadership and staff development. The evidence suggests that generational changes in the community-based development field will increase the demand for new leaders. New and existing practitioners also want much greater access to deeper training opportunities. Finally, new and different types of educational institutions, such as community colleges, should play larger roles in supplying the personnel needs of community-based development.
- The benefits infrastructure of community-based development has improved over the past 10 years, but further expansion of coverage to include pensions and training opportunities would greatly strengthen the human resource component of faith-based and community development organizations.
- Performance measures have the possibility for improving the work of community-based organizations, but they should not be used without practitioner input in the design of such measures.

This volume is the start of what should be a serious research agenda of the micro-foundation into what it takes to improve the operations and impact of faith- and community-based organizations. The field has demonstrated its potential. Reflective practitioners and researchers must now go the distance in devising appropriate learning opportunities and research studies to support this valuable field.