

A New Way to Give It Away:

How a small grants program has engaged residents and achieved quick successes in Boston

“In the past when foundations have tried small grants programs, I don’t think they explored deeply enough the potential of these funds to really get residents to be a source of energy for resident engagement. Denver and Boston have absolutely convinced me that they can.”

—Garland Yates

A Boston small grant supported this soccer program for neighborhood children.



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A challenge in doing a long-term community transformation initiative is what to do about the short-term. Residents have needs now. They want to see change now. Many have witnessed initiatives that stayed a few years then disappeared, leaving behind very little if any evidence of change. What will make this new initiative any different?

Having been part of many prior community change efforts, Garland Yates understood this dilemma. It takes a lot of time to pull off large-scale change, especially if you want residents to play a big role in the change process.

But if you focus too much time and resources on planning and building capacity and developing relationships, most residents see no change. Most don't even know that a change effort is underway.

"We knew from RCI [the Rebuilding Communities Initiative] and some of these earlier comprehensive community change initiatives that one of the difficult issues is to get residents who are facing challenges right now to buy into something that is intended to produce results well up the road," explains Yates. "How do you make this long-term process have practical, immediate connections to people's sense of community?"

Another risk of focusing on a long-term planning process is that you never get beyond the usual suspects, the existing leaders of community organizations who are used to going to meetings and trainings and planning retreats.

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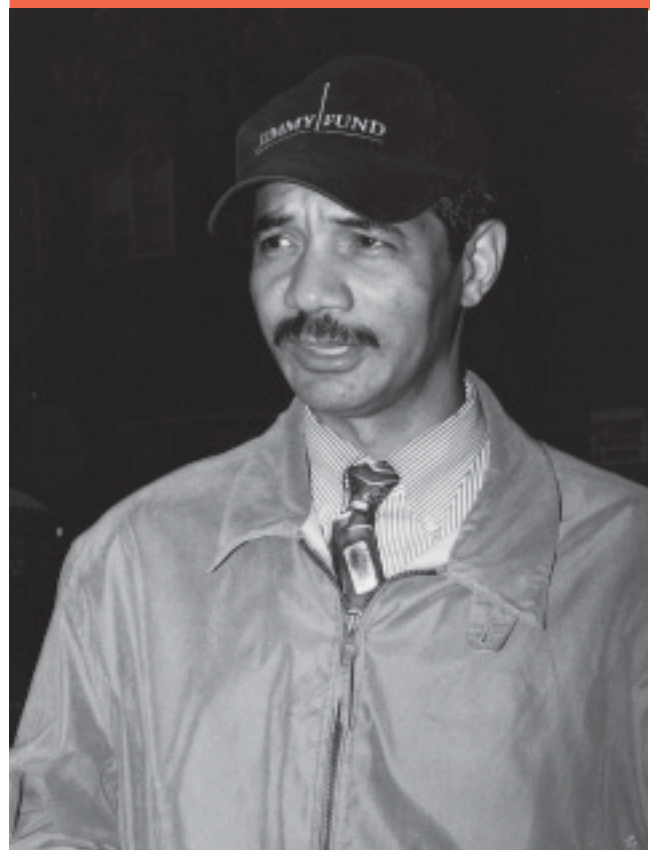
—Garland Yates

One way Yates has tried to overcome this dilemma in two of his Making Connections cities — Denver and Boston — is to fund resident-driven small grants programs. “If I were going to do anything in these neighborhoods, the very first thing I would do is to make provisions for a small grants program.”

Not only does such a program allow for quick successes, it also communicates a message, Yates believes. “If you want people to be involved and to see your intentions as honest and that you mean what you say, this is a way to do it. You are saying to people that, ‘We want you to have your own stake in this. We want you to participate because it is meeting some of the needs you want it to meet right away.’”

The small grants programs in Boston and Denver have communicated something else about the Making Connections’ strategy. In each site, not only are the projects developed by residents, a panel of residents decide which ones should be supported. This reflects a strong belief that residents themselves need to have a strong voice in the process of transforming their neighborhoods.

“It’s important that residents be motivated and believe that their ideas are worthy and that they can in fact make change happen,” Yates says. “For sustainable change to happen in these neighborhoods, residents have to do it. After 50 years or so of trying to do it from outside the community, it’s time for the community to have its own go at it.”



The Boston small grants fund looks for individuals who want to make a difference in their neighborhood. Adalberto Teixeira coaches the St. Patrick’s youth soccer team.

Many foundations run small grants programs but nearly all “were basically run by the foundation,” Yates explains. “The foundation had a committee that oversaw it. They might have given residents a chance to have input, but the decision-making took place in the foundation.” This is not true of the small grants programs in Denver and Boston.

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The idea for small grants came out of the Rebuilding Communities Initiative, a decade-long effort by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to stimulate and support a change process in neighborhoods in five cities.

“We pushed each site to think about how to get residents more engaged in RCI directly,” Yates explains. “We needed to have the voice of residents.”

In response, each city came up with a version of small grants. “The idea was to provide seed money directly for residents to work on things they wanted to work on. And to do it in a way that didn’t require an organizational structure.

Robert Holmes is a trustee of the Riley Foundation, which has supported and administered Boston’s small grants fund.



“And the response in each site was incredible. All kinds of neat and innovative things started to come up.”

When the Casey Foundation began its Making Connections initiative, it anticipated an even longer time period for change. Yates knew that getting residents involved in such a long-term undertaking would require something that would produce short-term change. “How do you get ordinary people who work every day to pay attention to what’s going on? What’s their interest? Some of these changes aren’t going to be seen for 10 years.

“Making Connections was a pretty abstract conversation when it started. For me, one question was how you illustrate an immediate, tangible relationship between what we’re talking about and the short-term self-interest of residents.”

Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith was also interested in the potential of small grants programs. He asked Yates among others to test the idea. Yates did so in Denver as well as Boston

In both cities he quickly found a local partner — the Denver Foundation and, in Boston, the Riley Foundation. Having a local partner that could assume responsibility for administering the money made it easier to get small grants to groups that weren’t structured as nonprofit organizations. In Boston it also added to the pool of money that could be distributed.

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Yates has been very encouraged by “the level of resident energy” generated by both small grants programs. “It was immediate and tangible. They have allowed us to reach residents who are ordinary citizens and who don’t spend their day thinking about social justice or social change, but who are concerned about their communities. These grants have given them an opportunity to get involved.”

If someone asked him how to get parents and residents involved early in an initiative, Yates would unhesitatingly urge them to invest in a small grants program. “Use the small grants to get the word out to residents about what you are trying to do and to get residents deeply involved early on.”

Yates and others involved with these small grants funds are quite enthusiastic about the many benefits that can come from them:

> The grants have allowed Making Connections to quickly demonstrate some concrete family strengthening and neighborhood transformation in each city.

In Boston, for example, grants have supported neighborhood clean-ups, block parties, cultural activities, planning for a community garden, instruments for a drum and bugle corps for young people, a baseball club that engages more than 70 boys, life skills workshops and a summer camp for girls and much more.



Casey Foundation staff person Garland Yates (right) believes that a small grants fund is a way to involve “ordinary people” in a long-term change initiative.

It may not be big picture stuff, but it means a lot to the residents engaged in these projects, believes Chè Madyun, staff for the Boston Family Strengthening Small Grants Fund. “To see people who have been doing things on a volunteer basis, paying out of their own pockets, to be able to have things paid for, whether it’s crayons, a dinner or whatever, that’s exciting.

“And people who have had ideas they couldn’t do because they didn’t have the luxury to take money out of their pockets.

“And the people to whom it never occurred to do something in their neighborhood: that light bulb goes off and they do it!”

“To see people to whom it never occurred to do something in their neighborhood...that light bulb goes off and they do it!”

—Chè Madyun

> **The grants — and the process of making the grants — have helped Making Connections engage a broad group of resident leaders.**

Yates sees small grants as a very effective organizing tool. “They have become very good tools to encourage people in these neighborhoods to get involved in this work.”

They prod people into taking the first step of becoming a neighborhood activist: someone who moves from complaining about problems to doing something about them.

“It has been a way to get residents, who are not normally involved in these things, really involved in the community,” Yates add. “It’s given them an opportunity to grow and to do things the way they want to do them.”

Just as important, Yates adds, it’s given them a chance “to get together as residents around their issues.”

> **The grants have become an important way to train leaders.**

“The small grants are not really the most important part of the process,” says Keith Holt, the person who provided the hands-on help to the residents who run the Boston Family Strengthening Small Grants Fund. “As much as it is a grant-making program, this is a local leadership development process.”

Yates strongly agrees. “One of the lessons we learned from RCI about leadership development is that people learn by doing and by having the opportunity to fail. Organizations that want to encourage leadership development have to have a high tolerance for risk. In the end, people learn to lead by leading.” This said, only one project was not completed and the dollars were recovered.

The learning process starts with the residents who make the grant decisions. In each city these people have gone through training. They learn “how decisions are made about funding,” Holt explains. They also learn about the ideas underlying Making Connections, especially its long-term vision for neighborhood transformation.

“The residents have been identified, recruited and given an opportunity to learn about the big picture,” explains Yates. “So when they are making these grants they know it is connected to something else we are doing.” He says they start to think about how they could use this money to make grants that would make a difference in their neighborhoods as a whole.

Holt says the group of residents in Boston began to develop “a perspective beyond their own personal one, of what’s better for the whole neighborhood.” This helps keep these residents from doing what many outsiders would expect them to do, which is fund their friend from church or their cousin who lives down the street.

The residents learn a lot from the process itself, says Kelly Ediz, a young woman in her 20s who sat on the first residents’ panel in Boston. “When it’s so personal, when it affects your community and the people around you, every

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—Keith Holt

decision you make – no matter what it is – is going to affect you,” she explains. “It’s more difficult and stressful, but also more rewarding.”

As they struggle to make some hard decisions about individual grants, they learn valuable skills, Holt believes, such as “the role of compromise and consensus building in decision-making.”

The residents who get the grants also learn a lot from the process, Yates believes. Over time the experience can help them develop the skills to “plan, implement and evaluate their projects.” He believes this is why a lot of hands-on help is important, especially in the early years.

In Denver, residents who want grants must first go through Making Connections’ primary leadership training program, the Social Justice Institute. It is a rigorous, 10-week program that teaches them how to lead a long-term change process in their neighborhoods.

▶ **The St. Patrick’s Youth Soccer program involves two co-ed teams and this under-14 boys team**



> **The small grants process has brought together people who had never worked together before.**

Holt believes one important benefit of the Boston small grants program had nothing to do with the grants themselves. “It’s a family-strengthening process. You strengthen families by building relationship between people. Sometimes people had personal problems and members came to each other’s aid. That’s community building. Those kinds of relationship-building and community-building experiences are in many ways priceless.”

A current panel member, who is in her 20s, says she valued the fact that the panel included a wide range of people from her community. “How many times am I going to sit on a panel with people in their late 40s or early 50s and have a discussion about how our community is doing, our mission, how it ties into our view of life? We open up and share and we respect each other’s opinions. I love it. I always look forward to going in and exchanging ideas with other panel members.”

> **The small grants process has become a very good way to identify what residents really care about.**

Taken together, the grant proposals say a lot about what ordinary residents believe needs to happen in their communities. The discussions among the panel of residents helps these leaders clarify in their own minds the kinds of activities that can make a difference over time in their communities.

“I’ve been impressed with the variety of activities that people in the neighborhood value as grant-worthy. Residents have their own views about what will improve their community. They’re just not consulted or given the opportunity to act on them.” —Garland Yates

“I’ve been impressed with the variety of activities and things that people in the neighborhood value as grant-worthy,” Yates says. “It validates what we had thought initially: residents have their own views about what will improve their community. They’re just not consulted or given the opportunity to act on them.”

“I have learned about some new issues that grantees were concerned about that I didn’t know were now important to the neighborhood,” adds Madyun, who’s been an activist in her neighborhood for more than 20 years.

> **The grants have helped the initiative put into practice its notion of resident-driven change.**

From the beginning, Yates knew he wanted residents themselves to decide how this money should be used. “We wanted families and residents to play leadership roles, not just be consumers. So we set up the small grants fund in a way that gave control to residents to plan it, to have an overall strategy around it, to develop their own processes, to govern the resources and to determine the recipients.

“Essentially we set it up to illustrate and model what we meant by family-driven community change.”

Unlike many small grants funds, residents make the decisions, they don’t just make recommendations. In Boston, The Riley Foundation, which administers the money, agreed not to second-guess the residents.

This has made a huge difference, Madyun believes. “So often residents are allowed to participate and then are reminded by the powers-that-be that they don’t have the ultimate authority.” She praises the Riley Foundation for respecting the residents’ knowledge and knowing that “they are the experts in their own communities.”

The residents also developed the criteria that guide these decisions. “Other small grants programs already had a set of criteria, goals and expectations that were conceived by the foundations,” explains Madyun. “Ours were conceived by residents.”

> **By directly supporting residents, these funds have helped them believe in their ability to transform their neighborhoods.**

A small grants fund is a way to allow residents to relatively quickly accomplish small projects. But Yates believes that a fund can be much more than this. It can help break the mentality of failure and hopelessness felt by many residents of struggling communities.

“It’s important that residents be motivated and believe that their ideas are worthy and believe that they can in fact make change happen,” Yates believes.

The small grants programs in both Boston and Denver have had this kind of impact, Yates says. “The sense of power that it has given them to make these kinds of decisions, the kind of respect it has given them, has really been impressive.”

Boston's Family Strengthening Small Grants Fund

Of the more than 600,000 people released from prison each year in this country, some of the toughest challenges are faced by mothers, according to the Rev. Clovis Turner of the Citywide Outreach Ministry, a grassroots outreach effort in Boston. Rev. Turner has been ministering to these women in prison for more than 20 years.

“A lot of the women express great fear because they’ve never mothered their children,” Rev. Turner explains. “Just the idea of going home and taking up being a mother again is very frightening for them.”

Rev. Turner has developed a six-week workshop for mothers being released from the Massachusetts Correctional Institute. The workshop touches on basics such as parenting techniques. But it also delves into some of the underlying psychological challenges these women face.

“A lot of women suffer from guilt and low self-esteem,” Rev. Turner explains. “We help them get themselves together and forgive themselves.”

But delving into these underlying psychological and emotional issues isn’t easy, even for



Recipients of small grants in 2002 included the Eastman/Elder Streets Crime Watch, Sisterhood on the Move and the Titans Baseball Club.

“If you are going to get to residents directly, you have to remove bureaucracy, not add bureaucracy. The idea is to make it more flexible, to free this money to be driven by people’s imaginations.”

—Garland Yates



▶ Long-time Dudley neighborhood activist Chè Madyun is the coordinator of the Boston Small Grants Fund.

someone with training in the ministry. Rev. Turner realized that she needed someone with training in counseling. But her ministry is very small and didn’t have the money to hire a counselor.

One day a community worker at a local day care told Rev. Turner about a new program that had been set up to support individuals like her with good ideas about how to make a difference in their communities. Rev. Turner got an application, filled it out and, a few months later, received a \$4000 grant to hire a counselor.

The impact on many of the women has been profound, Rev. Turner says. “We try to help them express themselves and not have anger or fear or any other emotional things all pent up in-

side. We try to get them to open up and freely express themselves so they can learn how to cope.”

During the year of the grant, Rev. Turner and the counselor worked with four groups of women for six weeks each. “After the program several of them said that they could face their problems now,” Rev. Turner reports.

“It allowed us to really give those women hope that we would not have been able to give them otherwise. They would have just gone through an AA or NA program and that would have been the end of it. So we were really able to help the women see themselves as women of value, women of purpose and give them back some of their self-esteem.”

This story is but one of many that has come from the Family Strengthening Small Grants Fund, a creation of Boston Making Connections and the Boston-based Riley Foundation.

Started in 1999, the Small Grants Fund supports resident-driven projects in the Greater Dudley area of Roxbury and Dorchester. While the grants are small, ranging from \$500 to \$5000, they add up: a total of \$125,000 through the middle of 2003.

Two features distinguish this fund from many other small grants projects.

- ▶ **Who gets the money:** individual residents of the Great Dudley community, not organizations.

“Every community has potential leaders who haven’t gotten involved in a local organization, for whatever reasons. A small grants fund is a way to find and motivate these people.”

—Garland Yates

> **Who decides who gets the money:** a panel of residents, not a foundation staff person or committee. While the Riley Foundation administers the money, it has promised not to second-guess the residents.

To be eligible, individual residents or groups do *not* have to be a charitable organization. Funds can be distributed to a sponsoring fiscal agent. The Riley Foundation has set up an innovative way for some grantees to get their support: it establishes accounts for these grantees, allowing them to purchase materials and services they need for their project through the foundation.

“If you are going to get to residents directly, you have to remove bureaucracy, not add bureaucracy,” explains Garland Yates, site team leader for Boston Making Connections.



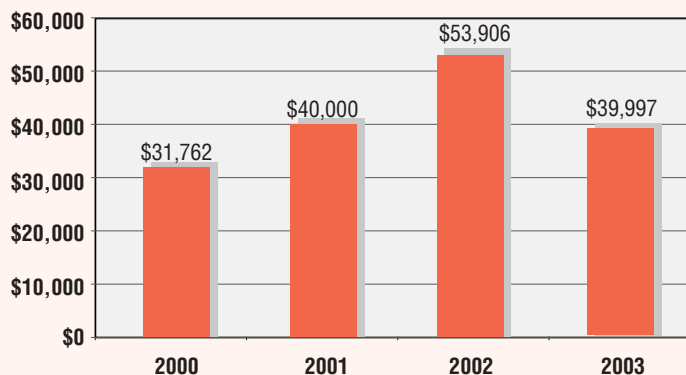
Project E.D.I.E.’s Joan Miller surveys residents about conditions in their HUD senior housing development. The resident-run Project E.D.I.E. educates other residents through a speaker series and organizing activities.

“The idea is to make it more flexible, to take away the strings, to free this money to be driven by people’s imaginations.

“You want to make the funds accessible to people who want to do something good in their neighborhoods right now. Some projects may not need permanent funding.” A few projects that need longer than a year to accomplish their goals can re-apply to the Small Grants Fund.

To successfully engage residents, Yates believes you need to go beyond the existing nonprofits. “Every community has potential leaders who haven’t gotten involved in a local

Grant Amounts 2000–2003



“It’s been very encouraging to see the level of resident energy and the types of activities that a very tiny amount of money has engendered in these communities.”

—Garland Yates

Grant Criteria

Grant criteria were set by a group of Dudley area residents. The Family Strengthening Small Grants Fund gives high priority to projects and activities that are created by individual residents and focus on:

- > Building, strengthening and supporting personal and family development
- > Broadening the horizons of individuals and families
- > Removing barriers to employment
- > Increasing parental involvement
- > Mending the social fabric of our neighborhood
- > Beautifying outdoor spaces
- > Improving the lives of youth

organization, for whatever reasons. A small grants fund is a way to find and motivate these people.”

One such person in Boston is Rev. Turner, who says this kind of support is invaluable for people like her: “People who are already established, I can’t see why they would need it as badly as a new group like my ministry.”

The grants have supported a broad mix of activities.

- > One grant supported a baseball club for more than 70 kids in Roxbury, helping them “stay safe and away from drug problems for

at least 10 weeks this year,” according to Victor Figueroa, a community organizer who started the club.

- > A second grant supported an idea that came from a college student who learned that local businesses weren’t hiring young people because they didn’t have the capacity to train them. She put together a workshop to get young residents prepared to work for these businesses. “Area businesses were very pleased with the training and want it to continue,” says Chè Madyun, staff person for the Boston Fund.
- > Another grant allowed the Grove Hall Mother’s Club to sponsor Family Fun Nights. “We think about when we were raising kids and we couldn’t afford to go out anywhere. Young mothers are frustrated and overwhelmed,” says Cleo Trammell. The Club’s activities “allow families and friends to do things together in a safe, nonthreatening environment.”

Other grants supported Puerto Rican cultural activities, playground improvements, a summer program for young children, instruments for a Drum and Bugle Corps, life skills workshops for young girls, neighborhood clean-ups and much more. (See complete list on page 17.)

Yates has been more than impressed with all that has come out of this rather modest investment by Casey Foundation standards. “It’s been very encouraging to see the level of resident energy and the types of activities that a very tiny amount of money has engendered in these communities.”

Lessons about how to develop an effective resident-driven small grants program

In both Boston and Denver, resident-driven small grants programs have been in existence for several years, allowing those involved with them to learn quite a bit about how to set them up.

However, the person who provided technical assistance to the Boston small grants fund, Keith Holt, warns people to not copy exactly what any other small grants program has done. “It would be very different to implement in each area because of local politics and history.”

A staff person who knows many residents and is comfortable with people – such as Boston’s Chè Madyun (left) – is crucial. Here she is with Boston Making Connections site coordinator Gloria Cross Mwase.



This said, here are some of the broad guidelines that people like Holt, Garland Yates and Chè Madyun would provide to people interested in setting up a similar fund in their communities.

> Develop a strong panel of residents to direct the grant-making.

The first step in Boston was finding residents who were willing to commit a fair amount of time to develop criteria for giving away the money and to review the proposals. Madyun, a long-time resident and activist in the Dudley neighborhood, was hired to do this. Her many connections proved to be critical.

“It helps to know a lot of people,” Madyun says. “That’s one of the advantages of living and working in the neighborhood. I’d sit on the bus and overhear a conversation and think I should keep certain people in mind. I haven’t actually asked anyone on the #15 bus, but I’ve thought about it. That is THE bus.”

Having someone who is known and respected in the community helped a lot, says resident panelist Kelly Ediz. “I know a lot of those people wouldn’t have been there if it wasn’t for her.”

“It helps to know a lot of people. That’s one of the advantages of living and working in the neighborhood. I’d sit on the bus and overhear a conversation and think I should keep certain people in mind.”

—Chè Madyun

“The main criteria I set up initially was to reach people who were not yet engaged and to expand to Greater Dudley,” Madyun recalls. “She went to a lot of meetings to identify people.

When she talked with people she asked them four questions. One was what work they did for pay. The second was what ways they were involved in the community. The third was whether they had an interest in a small grants program like the one being envisioned. The fourth was whether they knew anyone who would be interested.

Madyun tried to recruit a group of people who would reflect the diverse cultures in Greater Dudley — Latino, European-American, Haitian, Cape Verdean and African-American. She also tried to get a mix of ages and genders.

> Train and educate both the residents who make the grant decisions and those who get the grants.

If a resident-driven small grants program is to really help jumpstart a transformation process in a particular community, the residents who lead it need to go through a training and education process.

“Training people locally is important,” says Holt, who did the initial training of Boston’s resident panel. “The small grants are not really the most important part of the process. As

much as it is a grant-making program, it’s a local leadership development process.”

First residents need to understand the context of the small grants, which is that it is part of a broader community change effort. Yates says the panelists have done this very well. “They have scoring systems. They have all kinds of things they have instituted that will give weight to those things that are deemed to be connected to this larger agenda.”

Then residents need to learn more about “techniques for doing community-level decision-making,” Holt believes. “They learn how to develop a perspective that goes beyond their own personal one, a perspective about what’s better for the whole neighborhood.”

People have also learned the importance of compromise and consensus building in decision-making, Yates believes. Kelly Ediz says that her fellow residents were very open-minded. “We were able to have very honest conversations about the grants that allowed us to feel free enough to express our feelings. Nobody was trying to shut anybody else down.”

Ultimately, Holt believes, the training can and needs to be done by residents themselves. “I try to demystify things so people understand that they can do the things I’m doing. There’s been a core group of people who have stuck with it and been willing to teach other people what they’ve learned.” Long-term resident panelists now train new resident panelists to participate in the decision-making process.

“Initially we as a group made a list of items. We prioritized and rearranged, took some items off and turned them into our mission. They became the guiding principles. These principles became the way the panel evaluated proposals.”

—Kelly Ediz

Indeed, Denver Making Connections feels so strongly about the importance of training that it has tied its small grants program to a formal, 10-week training program called the Social Justice Institute. Both panelists and potential grantees must go through this training.

The people who get the grants in Boston do not have to go through such a formal training. However, both Madyun and Yates believe that one lesson they’ve learned is that the residents getting the small grants do need *some* training.

“This is especially true in relation to the budgeting process,” Madyun says. “For many this is their first time applying for this kind of thing. They have lots of questions about filling out the short application. A lot of times I walk them through the process.”

Developing the budget is often the piece that requires the most help. In a few applications, when resident panelists have thought the budgets were under- or over-inflated, they have done their own research on costs to help the panel make the best decisions.

“Those who get grants also need help with reporting,” Madyun says. “Over time, resident panelists have required detailed reporting from grantees.” Riley Foundation Administrative Manager, Nancy Saunders, helps grantees fulfill these reporting requirements.

> Work together to come up with criteria

Madyun started by pulling together residents into a focus group “to figure out the themes and guidelines for family strengthening.”

“Initially we as a group made a list of items,” recounts resident panelist Kelly Ediz. “We prioritized and rearranged, took some items off and turned them into our mission/requirements for the grants. They became the guiding principles. These principles became the way the panel evaluated proposals.”

“Chè tried hard to establish a climate of openness among panel members. A current panelist says Madyun was successful. “I learned that my views are just as important as someone else who probably has more experience in life. Bringing those ideas together benefits the community.”

The resident panels have also been very clear about not allowing cronyism. “I think residents detest those kinds of decision-making processes so much that they have gone out of their way to not let that stuff come in,” Yates says.

Interestingly, to keep friends and neighbors from lobbying them to support their personal projects, the panel members decided to remain anonymous.

“From what I’ve seen,” Yates adds, “this decision-making process has really developed a high level of integrity, honesty and purposefulness to it.”

“If you’re going to give people power, then let them have it. You have to learn how to let people ask their questions and not be led — no leading the witness.”

—Chè Madyun

> **Work at getting the word out.**

The biggest problem early on in Boston was that nearly all the applications came from nonprofit organizations. Madyun says that the resident panel told her that, “you’ve got to dig deeper.” She says now that this was the hard part, but that “we did it.”

Madyun put out flyers and announcements with a big emphasis on reaching residents and neighborhood associations. She mailed them to neighborhood associations and neighborhood newspapers, and she left flyers and brochures in barber shops, beauty salons, Laundromats, health centers, etc. She also attended community meetings to distribute information.

Unfortunately, there are greater needs than the fund can meet. Many applications could not be funded under the guidelines because they came from people outside the neighborhood, they came from agencies not individuals, they asked for money to start up a business or they asked for money to pay an individual family’s rent. The fund uses these grant requests, even though they are not funded, to document a broader sense of community needs. These needs are reported to the larger Boston Making Connections initiative.

Boston now runs information sessions to clarify what the fund is seeking and they have “helped a great deal,” Madyun reports. “This last round, the applications that came in from applicants who had been to the info sessions were stronger.”

> **Provide good staff support and technical assistance.**

Madyun was critical to Boston’s success not only because she knew a lot of residents but also because of how she worked with the resident panelists. “She’s strong and good at laying down the law,” says Ediz. “But at the same time she is very laid back and welcomes open and useful conversation.”

Madyun made sure the panel “had a place to meet, a comfortable space, privacy and a good environment for the sessions.” Because Madyun was working only part-time, she says another staff person, Rahiel Bernard, was invaluable at “pulling together the logistical pieces” and acting as the “glue.” Bernard also brings financial expertise to the project.

Perhaps most important, Madyun walked her talk: she worked hard at not telling the panelists what to do. “If you’re going to give people power, then let them have it,” Madyun says. “You have to learn how to let people ask their questions and not be led — no leading the witness.”

Outside technical assistance has also been critical, Yates believes. “Along with giving residents the opportunity to make decisions, we ought to be open to the notion that technical assistance is very important.” For example, in addition to training residents, Keith Holt has provided assistance to Madyun as the staff for the fund, bringing a broad perspective of how small grants funds have worked across the country.

2003 Recipients

Annapolis Neighborhood Eye Civic Association **\$2,585**
Dorchester, MA

Support for a Saturday Program for Youth that will serve youth living on Annapolis, Sumner, Bakersfield and Mayfield Streets. The program serves youth ages 10-12 and engages them in arts and crafts, reading and field trips.

Mt. Pleasant Tot Lot **\$3,000**
Roxbury, MA

Continued support for the Tot Lot that serves 30 children and their families by providing a safe place for children to play and engages the parents in activities with their children and each other.

The Peace Project **\$4,000**
Dorchester, MA

Support for a project that will use the talents of young people to bring together residents who live and work in the Uphams Corner area to learn about different types of violence, what is being done about it, and how to prevent it.

Radio "Nha-Terra" **\$5,000**
Dorchester, MA

Continued support for this weekly, ethnic radio program that brings crucial information on civic, political, economic and social matters to the Cape Verdean community in Boston.

St. Patrick's Youth Soccer Program **\$4,000**
Roxbury, MA

Continued support for the soccer program that serves children living in the neighborhoods of Roxbury and North Dorchester. The program consists of three teams serving three different age groups: a co-ed team of children under 8; a co-ed team of children under 10; and a boys-only team under 14.

Youth On The Move In Roxbury **\$5,000**
Roxbury, MA

Continued support for three activities: Youth Leadership Conference (this will mark the fourth such conference); counselors for the Mt. Pleasant Tot Lot Summer Program; and the Resident Stipend for an adult who assists YOTMIR members as they perform twice-monthly clean-ups of Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Forest and Vine Streets.

Emory's Senior Citizens Fishing Expedition **\$2,600**
Roxbury, MA

Support for a program that will provide four fishing trips to a group of 12 senior citizens. Prior to the fishing trips, there will be four training sessions that will focus on the proper use of fishing equipment.

Journal for You **\$920**
Dorchester, MA

Support for monthly workshops that facilitate youth, young adults and women groups to practice the various methods of using Journal Writing and Meditation. The workshops are designed to empower young girls and women to gain a greater self-esteem and self-confidence.

Bobby Mendes Peace Legacy **\$4,470**
Dorchester, MA

Continued support for the Anti-Violence Peace Initiative that involves four activities: Annual Parent's and Children's Walk for Peace; "Christmas with Bobby"



Nia Imani (left) started Sisterhood on the Move to mentor young girls living in Roxbury and Dorchester.

(party for neighborhood children and their families); Support for Survivors of Victims of Homicides (counseling as well as the creation and distribution of purple peace ribbons that are personalized buttons with images of people lost to violence); and Special Report Card Lunches (a special lunch for children who bring home good report cards).

Mt. Pleasant Tot Lot **\$4,500**
Dorchester, MA

Support for two programs for families: Quilting/Sewing Class and the Life Saver Project, which will teach families how to prevent injuries.

Project E.D.I.E. **\$3,922**
Roxbury, MA

Continued support.

2002 Recipients

Cape Verdean Community Task Force **\$5,000**
Roxbury, MA

Support for the Single Parent Support Group. Workshops for single parents discussing various topics related to parenting.

Eastman/Elder Streets Crime Watch **\$4,668**
Dorchester, MA

Support for Crime Watch Peer Leaders to organize activities for the children living in the neighborhood Groom/Humphrey Street.

Neighborhood Association **\$2,600**
Dorchester, MA

Support for twice yearly neighborhood clean-up followed by an afternoon block party on Groom Street.

Grove Hall Mother's Club **\$5,000**
Dorchester, MA

Support for community organizing events and free enrichment programs for community residents. Events include Family Fun Nights, six weeks of art lessons and a weekly sewing group.

Bobby Mendes Peace Legacy **\$3,287**
Dorchester, MA

Support for the Annual Peace Walk, "Christmas with Bobby", bi-monthly dinners with parents and children and other peace programming throughout the year.

Mt. Pleasant Tot Lot **\$5,000**
Roxbury, MA

Support for summer program for 38 children.

Project E.D.I.E. **\$3,346**
Roxbury, MA

Support for this resident-driven tenant awareness program located in the Marcus Garvey Garden Apartments. It offers tenant education through a speaker series, community organizing and the forming of a Resident Council to represent the MGG residents.

Radio "Nha-Terra" **\$5,000**
Dorchester, MA
(See page 17.)

Sisterhood On The Move, Inc. **\$4,500**
Roxbury, MA

Support for "Rites of Passage" workshops for young African-American girls ages 12–17.

St. Patrick's Youth Soccer Program **\$3,000**
Roxbury, MA
(See page 17.)

Take Two For You **\$3,505**
Dorchester, MA

Support for a weekend retreat for 10–12 women from the Grove Hall/Dudley/Uphams Corner neighborhoods at Walden in upstate New York. The retreat is meant to facilitate a network and support system among community women, and provide an opportunity for personal growth.

Titans Baseball Club **\$4,000**
Roxbury, MA

Support for a baseball league for approximately 100 Roxbury and Dorchester youth ages 13–18.

Youth On the Move **\$5,000**
Roxbury, MA
(See page 17.)

2001 Recipients

Cape Verdean Community Task Force **\$4,300**
Roxbury, MA

Support for the continuation of programs: Information/Referrals, Fuel Assistance, Computer Training, Citizenship Classes, ESL Classes and Community Outreach.

Celia Ayala Y Su Ballet Folklorico Cultural **\$5,000**
Roxbury, MA

Support for workshops, classes and concerts that showcase the culture and values of the Puerto Rican society.

City-Wide Outreach Ministry **\$4,000**
Boston, MA

Support for workshops for mothers who are being released from prison. Workshops focus on parenting skills, child-parent communication skills, and job hunting counseling and job training.

Cottage Brook Apartments Tenant Organization **\$5,000**
Dorchester, MA

Support for improvements at the Leyland Street Playground: new swings, sand and gates, etc.

Victor Figuerua **\$4,500**
Roxbury, MA

Continued support for the Roxbury Titans Baseball Club.

Huckins Street Block Club **\$2,000**
Roxbury, MA

Support for the design and construction of a community market garden on a DNI Land Trust parcel at Huckins & Dennis Streets. Neighborhood residents will operate, use and sell produce at farmer's markets.

Intimate, Touch of Hope **\$3,000**
Dorchester, MA

Support to provide clinical and spiritual support to cancer survivors and their families through community forums, counseling and referrals to hospitals, plus sessions to educate men and women on the early detection signs of cancer.



Resident of a HUD senior housing project in which Project E.D.I.E. works.

Ms. Grace's Homeschool \$4,000

Dorchester, MA

Support for door-to-door transportation for children who are enrolled in the school and light meals for the parents who attend the Parent Training Sessions.

Murray Hill Drum and Bugle Corps \$4,000

Roxbury, MA

Support for bus transportation services for the Corps to accept an invitation to participate in the 2001 Black Shriners' Convention.

Parent's Management, Inc. \$5,000

Roxbury, MA

Support for the eight-week Saturday program for youth aged 9–16 that introduces the youth to the sport of basketball while teaching the participants positive methods of dealing with stress, how to increase their self-esteem and problem-solving skills.

Reggie Lewis Dance Ensemble \$3,000

Roxbury, MA

Support for the 5th Annual Dance Concert that will include class instruction, costumes, ticket printing, programs, flyers, posters, and advertising in various area newspapers.

Youth On The Move \$5,000

Roxbury, MA

(See page 17.)

2000 Recipients

A Whole Village of Mothers and Children \$4,000

Dorchester, MA

Support for workshops that will engage young children, teen adolescents, mature and senior adults for the purpose of cultivating and enhancing the parenting, home-making, social, and interpersonal skills of all participants.

Credo por las Misioneritas \$1,050

Dorchester, MA

Support for classes and workshops for young girls that focus on life skills.

Mount Pleasant Tot Lot \$5,000

Roxbury, MA

(See page 17.)

Murray Hill Drum and Bugle Corps \$4,524

Roxbury, MA

Support to replace old, outdated and inadequate instruments.

Vine Street Community Center Council \$2,530

Roxbury, MA

Support for a series of workshops that informed community residents about specific health and wellness issues that directly affect their families.



The practice of residents playing a key role in developments affecting their community is reflected in this playground at Roxbury's Emerson School. It was funded by the city's Playground Initiative, which allows residents and parents to design their neighborhood playgrounds.

**Warren Gardens Resident Association/
Youth In Transition \$4,728**

Roxbury, MA

Support for an eight-week summer camp for girls aged 9–16 that focuses on building self-esteem and self-confidence.

Youth Newspaper and Internship Program \$5,000

Dorchester, MA

Support for a youth-run newspaper and paid internship program for youth aged 12–18. The program will allow local businesses to support youth through on-going job skills training and employ youth to operate a community newspaper.

Youth On The Move \$2,450

Roxbury, MA

(See page 17.)

Youth On The Move/Mount Pleasant Tot Lot \$480

Roxbury, MA

Support for stipends to youth members who served as counselors at the Mount Pleasant Tot Lot during the summer.

Youth Substance Abuse Task Force \$2,000

Roxbury, MA

Support for workshops and gender-specific 'rights of passage' groups that will try and bridge the intergenerational gaps in the lives of adolescents and their families.

The Diarist Project

This is one of a series of stories and reflections about the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections Initiative. They come through The Diarist Project, a new approach the foundation is using to learn from its efforts to strengthen families and transform struggling neighborhoods.

Diarists work to capture strategies and insights of the people who are leading the neighborhood transformation work. In Making Connections, the diarist works most closely with the Casey staff person who leads the work in each city, the "Site Team Leader."

This publication was written by Tim Saasta, diarist to Boston Site Team Leader Garland Yates and coordinator of the Diarist Project. Several interviews were done by Kirsten Alexander, former Communications Coordinator for Boston Making Connections.

Making Connections is a Casey Foundation initiative to support work that demonstrates the simple premise that kids thrive when their families are strong and their communities supportive. What began in 1999 as a demonstration project in selected neighborhoods in 22 cities is now an intricate network of people and groups committed to making strong families and neighborhoods their highest priorities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org) works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. Its primary mission is to foster public policies, human service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.



Members of the St. Patrick Youth Soccer program.

Photos by Mary Ann Dolcemascolo except pages 9 and 17 (Kirsten Alexander).

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