NNIPCamp St. Louis, April 2, 2014

Session 4 – Cross-Site Partnerships

Led by Michael Barndt – Milwaukee

Notes by Maia Woluchem

Present: Monique Baptiste-Good, Maia Woluchem, Todd Clausen, Michael Bardnt, Kerri Campbell, Leah Hendey, Eleanor Tutt, Bob Gradeck, Liza Morehead, Charlie Bruner, Timothy Bray, Michael Schramm, Alaina Harkness, Daniel O’Neil, Leah Hendey, Eleanor Tutt, Catherine Wilson

Barndt: Grows out of two interests. First, we picture a partner who has comprehensive data for everything in that city. Portland is our ideal model for this but it doesn't fit everyone. We’re moving to a point where there are several cities with multiple partners and they all have a relationship direct to NNIP. In the process of building out an NNIP site, every organization has decided to other city relationships to make their data work whole. So there's the single partner role or the double-triple model. Triple is like Neighborhood Nexus in Atlanta. For others, we target other key organizations in the community and we try to keep them in the loop but we aren't sure about how the others get tied into the national communities.

So two questions: How do ensure that the second tier partners get to be strengthened too? In Milwaukee, we’re about to get two or three other organizations and it's in our interest to do that. Meaning that one of the problems in cities that have a lot going on is that you have to draw together enough of the synergy that something real happens. We're feeling like we need to consolidate some functions by different organizations to create an new model that involves the college but also community planning or other hybrids. How do you get strong working relationship but with more than one organization? That’s one of the reason we brought a bunch of Milwaukee people to this conference; so some other people can be interested in all the stuff we do. Some other questions: How do we put it together and get it to really matter to the comprehensive character of the NNIP partnerships?

Bray: Struggle is that the hybrid model is totally fluid. We work with our United Way—they came to the founders roundtable in DC, and it's difficult to articulate because the relationship changes.

Bardnt: There's partners that tier out, and there are partners you count on. Cleveland, do you have a relationship with other organizations? What do you connect with to get to the neighborhood?

Schramm: We work through community development intermediaries and the city directly or through intermediaries. Also work with social service providers through their human service and education groups. Because we’re so large, I’m not certain exactly how that gets done. So having a diverse organization leads to sending lots of partners to these meetings or having confusion.

Barndt: So what kind of people do you engage with to knock on doors and do some functions since your group is at the university? Are there orgs that work together to fulfill that role or just one organization?

Harkness: Also cross-functional. Some people aren't the person who should be contacted in a request. In Chicago we really had this problem. Urban came in to do a scan and we may need a new group to do this in other cities

O’Neil: Now there's pain because organizations can’t do all of these things. For us, there's the Chicago School of Data that picks up where that report left off and does a census of everyone doing the work. And when you construe it that widely, we expand the frame of what we're thinking and it includes civic actors. The report tried to make the frame bigger. There are people in some organizations that engage with municipalities about their laws but they don't consider that to be a problem. Our frame is so small and tight.

Bruner: Lots of the first gen NNIP ideas were hub and spokes model and we thought that other entities weren't sophisticated users of their own data. Over time we want the schools too hold their own data. We’re now moving away from hub and spokes to having data analysis and use. You want to create and support the users and that changes the role from being the hub to being a network manager and fostering that. How do you link those up and try to get capacity for data analysis and use with those people who are the holders of the data? Often means that the NNIP entity is more of a manager of that. One of the things that happens if you are a manger is that the data holders are the most interested. Then you get *those* people to the meeting and you are an efficient broker.

Hendey: Doing the webcasting helps this too. We have to be proactive about spreading those resources.

Bray: We’ll do those three things in different ways. I wonder if a node map is important. In some cities, the nodes are different than others. But looking at the network analysis might give new cities ideas about not being the Boston Foundation or how to get into this silo that seems really isolated. To have a map of cities that have a good hold on those areas would be good.

Hendey: First step in joining NNIP—Maybe you should build out what your connections are for a self-check. We're working on this for the next summer.

(Unknown from Newark): Challenge for us is, who owns it? Who owns the work and who gets funded for it? Really it should be about why we don't share the work. No one entity can do all of it, even the university. If there was a share among that, it's really frustrating when everyone’s in the struggle between who is going do the work.

Baptiste-Good: Hinges on the third question. Who's going to fund? On the philanthropic side, we're largely clueless about how to facilitate a collaborative effort versus an ownership effort. Have to think about how not to make it worse by fueling local competition. If we can figure out how philanthropy can fuel collaboration and spark these types of partnerships that would be most helpful.

Barndt: Several of us are thinking about our future role in Milwaukee. Maybe we go for a collaborative that is funded as a collaborative. It will be inappropriate to have anything less than explicit roles. The notion of a common collaborative is important and as well as the question of the data consortium. What kind of consortiums are going around your communities around building the wealth?

Schramm: Fled ACS consortium through the other university in town; it failed. After a year of working together, it just fell apart. Everyone has different objectives and not everyone is super trustful of each other. It's hard.

Hendey: Even challenging in Atlanta. Tough to iron out foreign agreements with them, now do funding work? Do they get funded equally?

Barndt: Things that work?

Bray: Here's an organization with a legal structure that gets around these things somewhat. The local Big Brothers and Big Sisters called the Phoenix House created a separate 501c3, the vehicle by which money moves back and forth is managed. It's all legally specified. They share their donor list with each other under the guise of collaboration but it needed lots of trust. It’s been about four years and now they have a policy that dictates what kind of money they use and have to clear it with donor officers housed with the other partners. But it's process documentation that governs everything. Creating their own separate corporate entity was the only thing that worked. Having an MOU was not going to work for them. So maybe legal documents are the way to go. I don't know that it's the right answer.

(Unknown from Newark): But that's true collective impact. That something that legally came together for a goal and that's a push for getting more funding.

O’Neil: One of the reasons why there's the competition is that the structures are not conducive to quickness. There's too much staff and there's nothing holding us back. Is really project based. And it’s the general ethics and the position of real power then. If you get money to give to someone else then you have to really be honest. Leveraging chaos means being smaller and flexible. MOU is a part of the problem. When you become a single house of data, structurally, there's an issue there. When everything is able to go to one place, it's a problem. To get confidential data to an approved list of partners in a safe…

Hendey: In a lot of places, it's important to not process the same data file a million times.

Barndt: One of the options is to house lots of things within the university. I start with the premise that it may not be a good idea here. IF It were to happen, how would I, in helping a university become a major partner, create the environment that ensured community access and support and focus on some of the less lucrative non research kind of activities?  How do you think your efforts are protected from other functions of the university?

Bray: Universities are not naturally organized to do anything fast or anything that doesn't have an r squared value. We can demonstrate value of being on the grounds and that's a function for the university. They like us because were the local face of the university and faculty members don't have that connection.  So we structure ourselves for the university.

Schramm: The only thing you get out of them is software licensing but they get all the research administration people, for our department.

Bray: Major challenge is getting university's infrastructure to adapt to support the fluidity that you need. But the advantage is…

Barndt: Experience has been faculty research first. So the notion that there’s some bridge building coalition building and research skills as well, maybe you get a better package if you have a set of organizations each with strengths.

Bray: Emory is part of Neighborhood Nexus. So from the university's infrastructural need, this creating of a separate entity inside of the university that isn't a faculty members spare time, the administrative function of working in the neighborhoods, needs a separate thing. Schools of public health are fantastic place for this. They get this concept of going into the neighborhood that an economics department might not grab onto. Or advantage is because it's trying to be named as a tier one university and so we play the role of being the front door.

Tutt: We're talking about an organization that can do the door knocking. On a staff level, with all the groups we work with, all the community engagement staff people are always the first to get cut.

Wilson: At United Way, we’re using our small community impact staff. You have to have those people. Even if the community engagement director gets cut, I still have to go do that work. No one is above anybody else and that's what it takes to get that done. You may not have the luxury of having three people but that's how it works.

Tutt: I don't want to create a hierarchy of positions, but…

Hendey: It's on the scale. The people within those organizations have certain skills, or the skills on the organization side are really important

Bardnt: One of the interesting things about early NNIP is the mix of skills all in one person. You could talk tech, research and policy, and community organizing. It created a demand for a person who is capable of integrating all of those things. How do you train someone to become that?

Wilson: You find someone with that kind of diverse experience. Instead of pigeon holing people into one thing, you may end up with someone like that.

Bardnt: What can NNIP do for the network to get to some of this next tier in cities?

(Unknown Chicago alumna): Help founders think about what they can do to help build capacity for the funding. Workshop to turn program into one that can grow that capacity to get people more skills?

Bardnt: Resources that are national. Staff need to get out to old communities in addition to new communities.