

# Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

*...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)*

## Saint Paul District Councils: An Exploration of Current & Promising Evaluation Practices

Prepared in partnership with  
Saint Paul District Councils

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## Executive Summary

The Saint Paul District Councils, established by a City Council resolution in 1975, are a group of autonomous non-profit organizations tasked with increasing community engagement among their communities. Under contract to receive City funds, District Councils must submit annual work plans and report on progress toward outlined goals twice during the year, in addition to various counts regarding participation levels. Recognizing funders' increasing evaluation requirements, District Councils sought more meaningful measures and to develop a shared vision.

Data regarding community values, current evaluation practices, and hopes for new methods was gathered through a survey, stakeholder interviews, and a facilitated group mapping session. Common District Council values guided a literature review of sources regarding relevant theories and techniques.

### Community Values Survey

Responses from District Council staff highlighted shared values and programs. The top three values and programs served to focus the remainder of the project.

Top Values:

1. Unite community and foster relationships.
2. Facilitate cooperation and collaboration.
3. Provide open forum for communication  
Empower residents.

Top Programs:

1. Educate and inform residents.
2. Advocate for community on relevant issues.
3. Provide leadership opportunities to  
residents.

Further analysis highlighted the diversity and unique quality of each District Council; the tension between their values and their daily work; and that defining values is a subjective process, dependent on contextual community factors.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Several stakeholder groups were identified as most pertinent based on their experience with and proximity to District Council requirements and operations.

#### District Council Staff

Staff, primarily Executive Directors, from 16 of the 17 District Councils participated in interviews. Questions aimed to elicit current evaluation beliefs, practices, and future needs. The most prominent, recurring themes heard throughout the interviews were:

- Overall positive attitude toward evaluation, paired with caution and concern;
- Widespread practice of informal evaluation;
- Lack of evaluation framework or criteria;
- Evaluation primarily conducted for accountability purposes;
- Many unaware of the range of evaluation purposes; and
- Desire for more meaningful measures.

#### City Officials

A total of four City officials were recruited from the Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development Department and City Council, with the goal to better understand City expectations of District Councils, current reporting requirements, and the use of evaluation data. Prominent themes from City official interviews included:

- Overall appreciation for District Councils' work;
- Largely indifferent to the type of data collected;
- District Councils ultimately accountable to the public;

- Agreement on the primary purpose; and
- Desire for some standardized procedures.

### Local Foundations

Two representatives from local foundations were interviewed to learn about the expectations of private funders. Highlights from these interviews were:

- They want grantees to succeed;
- Multiple types of data and sources are acceptable; and
- Provide an evaluation framework.

### Minneapolis Neighborhood Program

One City official from the Minneapolis Community Participation Program (CPP) was interviewed to gain an outside perspective of the evaluation of community engagement.

The underlying structure of the Minneapolis CPP program is similar to that of the Saint Paul District Council System; Minneapolis neighborhood organizations are required to submit an annual neighborhood plan outlining goals for the coming year and are later required to report on progress toward those goals. The primary difference between the Minneapolis and Saint Paul programs appears to be how the data is used after it is submitted. The Minneapolis program is using technology to categorize, track, and publicize information.

## Literature Review

Common values and programs identified in the survey served as criteria for selecting relevant sources.

- **Non-profit Evaluation Capacity** – Many non-profit organizations face evaluation barriers, but those who are successful have incorporated evaluation into their organizational culture.
- **Implementing and Measuring Inclusion Practices** – Crucial to District Council success, true inclusiveness must be evaluated and brought into the evaluation approach.
- **Purpose Matters, and There are Many to Consider** – A variety of evaluation approaches exist and serve many purposes, but the users and intent must be identified at the start.
- **Planning for Evaluation** – Practical planning techniques will ensure more meaningful evaluation and its use.
- **Using Available Resources** – In addition to the available free and low-cost resources, such as software and training, District Councils may benefit from pooling funds to hire outside help.

## Conclusion

In order to move toward more meaningful evaluation that offers benefits to them and to their funders, District Councils should consider further exploration into the following areas.

- **Infrastructure** – Prudent infrastructure investments will yield long-term benefits.
  - Strategic Planning and Management Systems
  - Technology
- **Inclusion** – Review current inclusion practices via techniques presented in the literature review and make adjustments to programming or mission statements where necessary.
- **Collaboration** – Capitalize on each other’s expertise through increased sharing of knowledge and work.
- **Explore Available Resources** - Review suggested literature and online resources, and research local experts and training opportunities.

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

Established in 1975 by a City Council resolution, the unique structure of the Saint Paul District Council system incorporates the District Councils into the City of Saint Paul's planning and decision-making process, while simultaneously allowing them autonomy. The resolution was passed based on the belief that "the City has a responsibility to develop a process that will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to communicate with City government, and further that everyone is assured that they will be heard" (District Council System Overview, n.d.). Shortly thereafter, 17 District Councils emerged to become officially recognized by the City. The City's defined mission for the District Council system is to foster community participation through "informed and representative participation of neighborhoods in government and self-help initiatives and to provide a channel for communication with elected officials, City department staff, and other relevant agency representatives." (District Council System Overview, n.d.).

While all 17 District Councils receive funding from the City of Saint Paul General Fund, each is an autonomous 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Allocation of City funds is based on a formula that takes into account the percentage of City-wide population, poverty, non-English speaking residents, and jobs in each District. In Fiscal Year 2014, the total budget for District Council funding was just over \$1.1 million, with disbursements ranging from \$51,873 to \$101,504 (Office of Planning and Economic Development, City of Saint Paul, 2014). Eleven of the seventeen district councils, located in low-income areas, receive a portion of their allocation through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The goal of the CDBG program is to bolster communities in urban areas with a high concentration of low- and moderate-income persons by providing funding for economic, housing, and environmental development projects. To qualify for CDBG funds, District Councils must meet separate eligibility requirements. In addition to the standard contract requirements, district councils receiving CDBG program funds require additional financial and program documentation. All District Councils are free to pursue funding from other sources, such as foundations and private donations.

Currently, the City of Saint Paul requires District Councils to create an annual work plan outlining their goals, events, and programs for the upcoming year. The District Councils must report twice per year on their progress towards stated goals and any challenges that arise. They receive the funds allotted to them through monthly reimbursements, for which they must submit documentation verifying that the expenditures support their community engagement goals. Although not required by the City, the District Councils also complete and submit a form called the "Inclusivity Matrix," (Appendix A) containing demographic information of board members and volunteers, as well as counts related to outreach efforts. The current version is the third rendition of a form created by a group of District Council staff in 2004 to document their outreach efforts when the City designated additional funds specifically for outreach. Some CDBG recipients have additional reporting requirements and are subject occasional financial audits.

No District Council looks exactly like another. District Councils vary in geographic and population size, as well as on a host of demographic factors. For example, as of 2012 the Summit Hill Neighborhood, District 16 has a total population of 6,324 that is 86% white and a median income of \$69,160 (Minnesota Compass, 2014). In contrast, Payne Phalen Neighborhood has a total population of 30,343 that is 36% white and a median income of \$39,840 (Minnesota Compass, 2014). Although they are a group of diverse organizations, District Councils regularly communicate with each other and collaborate on

various projects. District Council staff hold a monthly meeting to share updates, issues, and progress on different initiatives. Staffing levels vary widely, from one to five persons and a combination of full- or part-time. The lead staff person, typically the Executive Director (ED) and/or Community Organizer (CO), typically attend. Some District Councils attend every month, while some only occasionally attend, and others do not participate at all.

It was this ED/CO working group that collectively recognized the increasing importance of evaluation. In addition to rising accountability standards and increasingly more funders requiring organizations to report outcome data, they desired an effective way to measure the impact on their communities. The group proactively decided to take a first step toward developing appropriate and meaningful evaluation practices. They outlined a research project to uncover current evaluation practices and a shared vision for future evaluation goals.

Through an environmental scan of existing evaluation techniques of District Councils, stakeholder interviews, and a literature review, this study aims to answer three research questions:

1. What do District Councils and stakeholders value in public engagement?
2. How do District Councils and stakeholders currently evaluate district council programs and operations?
3. What are promising evaluation practices used by other neighborhood-based civic engagement organizations that might be promising for District Councils?

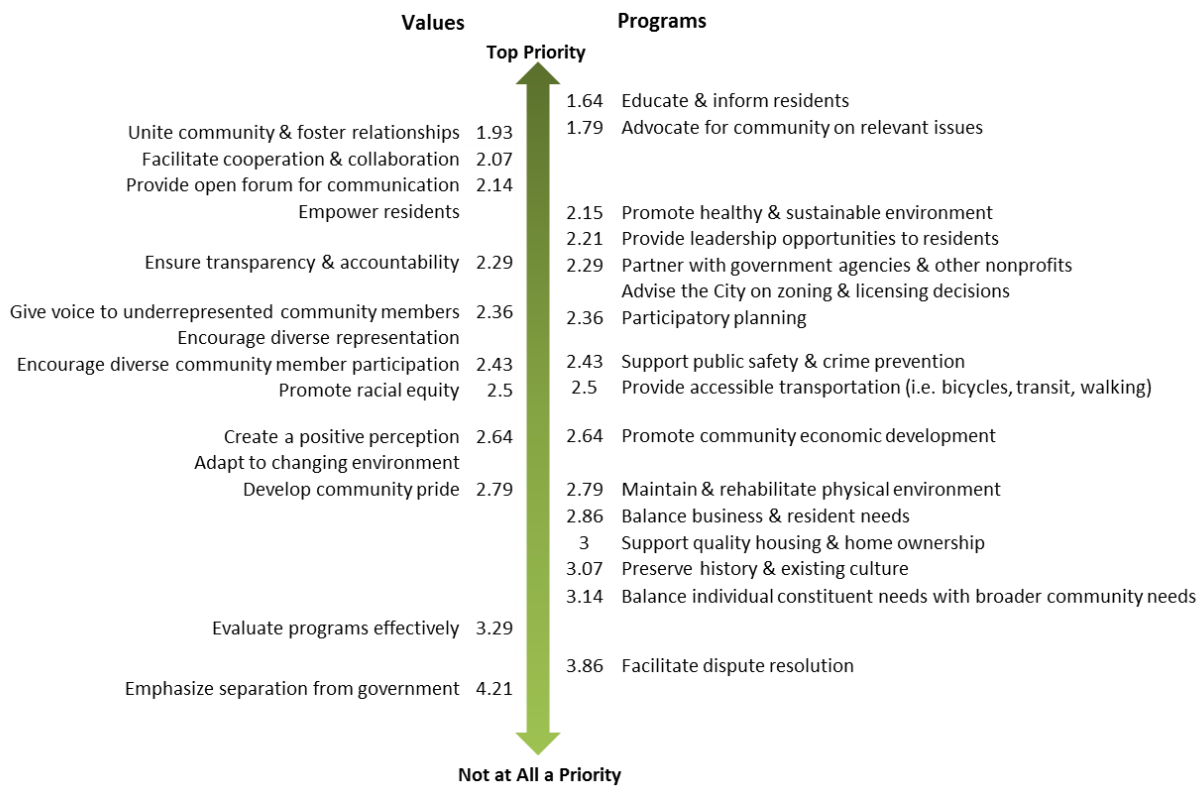
Data collection methods employed in this study included a survey of critical District Council values and programs, face-to-face interviews, and a professionally facilitated group impact mapping session. For more details, please see Appendix B.



## Community Values Survey

Overall, survey results were consistent with expectations and highlighted key focal points for the remainder of the project (Appendix H). Response patterns highlighted several concepts at the core of the District Council system. There were 15 total respondents, but one survey was incomplete and thus removed prior to analysis.

Figure 1. Mean Priority Ratings of Values and Programs



### Values

The highest rated values had mean scores closest to 1, or “top priority,” while the values that were rated as less important had scores closer to 6, or “not at all a priority.” The top three values had very similar mean ratings. The value rated as the highest priority was “unite community and foster relationships,” which was rated as a top priority five times. This broad value is consistent with the underlying theme of all other values found in the District Council literature. The second highest priority, “facilitate cooperation and collaboration,” echoes the first, in that it is based on relationships. Both “provide open forum for communication” and “empower residents” had equal mean scores and came in as the third highest priorities.

Very few of the values listed in the survey were rated as low priorities, indicated by a mean priority rating greater than 3. This finding is consistent with expectations, as all of the statements were derived from the District Councils’ own literature. Only “evaluate programs effectively” and “emphasize separation from government” were considered low priorities by respondents.

Several discrepancies were found between respondents' priority ratings of each value and their top 5 value rankings. For example, "providing an open forum for communication" tied for third highest priority, it was the value most frequently ranked in the District Councils' top 5, more often than "unite community and foster relationships." Several values that received comparatively lower mean priority ratings were just as frequently ranked in respondents' top 5 values as "facilitate cooperation and collaboration."

## **Programs**

The same scale was used for programs, with mean ratings closer to 1 being considered a higher priority. The mean ratings of the top programs were more varied than the means of the top rated values. The highest rated program was "educate and inform residents," which was most frequently rated as a top priority, 8 out of 14 times. The program rated as the second highest priority was "advocate for community on relevant issues," followed by the third highest, "promote healthy and sustainable environment." As with the values, respondents only considered two programs to be low priorities, "balance individual constituent needs with broader community" and "facilitate dispute resolution."

Although "educate and inform residents" was rated as the top priority, "advocate for community on relevant issues" appeared in the top 5 rankings slightly more often. Aside from this minor discrepancy, the top 5 program rankings were very consistent with their corresponding priority ratings.

## **Open-ended Responses**

There were only five responses to the open-ended question, most of which echoed the values listed in the survey. However, two of the responses highlighted District Council efforts in youth advocacy and programming. These responses represent a shift in programming from crime prevention to youth development, an oversight during survey design. Had this been included as an option, a number of District Councils would likely have rated it as a priority in their work.

## **Discussion**

In addition to identifying the District Councils' common and overall most crucial values and programs, the survey also highlighted a few concepts at the core of the District Council system.

## **Each District Council is Unique**

Captured by this survey, and often emphasized by the District Councils themselves, is the diversity of all of the District Councils. On one hand, the survey results did point to values and programs that are important across the board; on the other hand, it is clear that different District Councils have slightly different priorities in terms of values. This is demonstrated by the fact that a majority of the values received ratings anywhere from 1 to 6, with a substantial amount of variation. For instance, the two highest-rated values were marked as a low priority (4) multiple times. This is also true for the programs, though there is slightly less variation.

## **Tension Between Aspirations and Requirements**

Rather than representing inconsistent responses, discrepancies between the different question types more likely represent the tension between District Councils' true values and the type of work they are faced with on a daily basis. For example, when considering the values, they may ultimately wish to build more meaningful relationships among community members, but are required to spend more effort

holding community meetings to discuss urgent matters. In regards to programs, District Councils may hope to proactively inform residents of policy changes, but instead may have to advocate on their behalf for more pressing issues. As small non-profit organizations with limited resources, they are often faced with difficult choices and must handle what is directly in front of them.

### **Defining Values is a Subjective Process**

The fact that there is more variation in the value priority ratings and more discrepancies between the values questions demonstrates that defining values depends more on contextual factors than defining programs. Depending on the history, culture, and demographics of a district, any given value may be defined differently or carry different weight. One district may interpret empowerment as obtaining financial resources and independence, while another district may view empowerment as confidence and skill building. Values can evolve alongside population changes within a district, leading to multiple definitions of a single value or different priorities among subgroups within a district, making prioritizing overall values even more difficult. In contrast, program definitions tend to be much more concrete and are frequently tied directly to funding sources. While there may be multiple ways to educate and inform residents, educating and informing involves the transfer of knowledge, a definition that is much less subjective. Furthermore, funders often make grants based on an organization's clearly defined programming, rather than what an organization claims to value.

Finally, the fact that "effective program evaluation" was rated as a moderately low priority is noteworthy. At first, this may cause one to pause, but in reality, it accurately represents the District Councils' current situation. In fact, the ED/CO working group requested this study because of their struggle to conduct meaningful evaluation and their recognition of its rising importance.

## Stakeholder Interviews

### District Council Staff

A total of 17 District Council staff interviews were conducted, representing 16 of the 17 District Councils. The Executive Director from each of the 16 District Councils was interviewed, and in one case a Community Organizer volunteered to participate. All interviewees were candid, sharing history and contextual information in addition to current beliefs and practices. Below are the recurring themes that emerged from the interview data.

### Overall Positive Attitude Toward Evaluation, Paired With Caution and Concern

In spite of the fact that nearly every single interviewee reported inadequate time, money, or staff to devote to evaluation, all of them appreciated its potential value. Interviewees saw the value as coming from a variety of sources. Some wanted evaluation for introspective purposes, such as creating a learning environment, improving their communication processes, and expanding their perspectives.

*At its core, [evaluation is] being able to prove that you were able to do what you set out to do... Through the community council lens and our work that we do, to me it's more reflective & thoughtful... What are we doing? Is what we're doing working? Are we doing it most effectively? Are we doing it most efficiently? Is there some way we could become more strategic or thoughtful?*

Others sought more practical applications, including determining priorities, setting limits, and staying on track.

*[Evaluation] should help you decide about saying yes to certain things and saying no to other things... When you have a lot of volunteers in an organization it can be easy to choose pet projects as opposed to choosing projects that have an impact on more people.*

While still others felt compelled to justify their existence, protect themselves from criticism, be accountable, and demonstrate their effectiveness.

*I need ammunition to go to the City and other funders and say, 'this is how well we're doing our job now, think of how much better we could be doing if you would provide us with a little more resources'... [It's] also a matter of having compelling things to tell community about the effects their actions have had.*

*I've always been pro-evaluation because there is a kneejerk reaction... to dismiss what we do because they're not aware of what's occurred, so they assumed that nothing occurred.*

The overwhelming concern about increasing evaluation efforts was their lack of resources. Staff explained that they are already working with extremely limited resources and that adding anything to their plates without additional funding would simply be too onerous. This concern was exacerbated by the fear that evaluation is inherently complicated and time consuming. Another common concern was being able to find an appropriate tool, one that would provide meaningful measures, could be customized to meet their varying needs, and would not be used to compare each other. Many also expressed concern that much of their work cannot be quantified and that numbers must be supplemented by qualitative data and/or stories.

.....  
*What I fear is the standardization of evaluation across District Councils because we are such different organizations budgetarily, demographically, and so on and so forth....*

*It's time consuming. It's difficult to come up with good measures. Because it's time consuming and difficult to come up with good measures, it's something that cannot be front and center in our work in the sort of small capacity organization that we are. I'd love to be able to hire a consulting firm...*  
.....

### **Widespread Practice of Informal Evaluation**

All of the represented District Councils are implementing some form of evaluation, though they frequently did not recognize it as evaluation. Quite often an Executive Director would state that they are not currently doing any sort of evaluation, but when probed they would share informal practices of evaluation. Most of the informal evaluation practices they shared were self-reflective reviews of their activities, programs, and/or policies. Examples of informal evaluation practices that staff shared are:

- Reports to the board on both a monthly and annual basis regarding project status, challenges, and successes
- Staff meetings to discuss progress toward goals, challenges, and successes
- Checking in with partner organizations regarding staff performance and project status
- Observing events and meetings to assess the level of participants' engagement
- Post-event debriefings with staff, board members, and/or community members – reflecting on what happened, whether it was successful, what they would do again, and what they would change
- Occasionally tracking progress against work or community plans
- Asking participants for feedback at events, either verbally or in writing, with or without planned questions
- Providing cards at board meetings for community members to report their experience
- Creating a storyboard to display at board meetings or other community events
- Posting questions on Facebook for community members to provide feedback
- Tracking comments on Facebook page to gauge community feelings
- Holding subject specific salons to share knowledge and experience
- Tracking volunteers' engagement

### **Lack of Evaluation Framework or Criteria**

Although all of the District Councils engaged in some sort of evaluative process, rarely was there a framework or written procedures. A handful of the District Councils had written policies and procedures, but most of the time the process was ad hoc or stored in the institutional memory of the organization. Without documentation, sometimes helpful information was falling through the cracks and not being used to make improvements.

.....  
*A lot of stuff gets expressed [in staff and board meetings] and there's no circle back... There isn't a complete cycle of thought, action, and so forth...*  
.....

Many of the newer staff were unaware whether the organization previously engaged in any sort of evaluation and hoped to develop procedures.

*[There is no evaluation] that I'm aware of... I get some feedback, but it's not based on any sort of evaluation... I'm not certain that a great deal of internal evaluation has occurred here in some time... I think that's [due to] the rapid turnover of chairs and fairly rapid turnover of staff.*

Aside from those District Councils who received technical assistance for evaluation from private funders, very few had clear measures or criteria. Many reported using the reflective processes as a way to inform decisions but only had a vague sense of why a program was good or bad. When asked how they knew whether or not a program was successful, they often reported basing judgments on staff's feelings. Sometimes they relied on community members' own motivation to offer feedback. At the same time, some had more organized processes to obtain community feedback or had more concrete examples of success indicators.

*That's a difficult question... part of it is the feel in the neighborhood... Has the neighborhood changed? Does the neighborhood feel different? Does the organization feel different?*

*There are many intangibles to [gauge] the satisfaction levels that people have, like at the end of a meeting when people are chattering and bubbling, and they won't leave, that says they're engaged. When people kind of quickly look at their watch and go home, you know that... it's a different energy. That energy level is hard to gauge with any sort of survey, it's more anecdotal.*

*In leadership development, we know we're successful if we have a more diverse group at our meetings...the leadership that is available begins to think about issues that are relevant in the whole community... It has much more to do with who are the leaders and how much leadership growth happens, and that doesn't necessarily mean longevity on the Council, although it could. They may become leaders in other things, or they may just see themselves as being a much more powerful, active member in their community.*

*That's difficult to say... To me it's usually pretty apparent in the transformation that I see in board members in general, or future board members... It's the people who come upset... reacting about one thing, then learning about all facets and become educated and being able to understand all sides of an issue... I don't really have a measure for that, except... I guess you could see people who come to meeting and then end up applying to be on the board.*

*I think it's difficult... I think it's especially difficult... when you have staff turnover as rapidly as a lot of the organizations do, I think that's a real problem. Being here long enough, I can see the change that has happened over the years. I know the relationships built with people, I know that people call on me when they need help...More self-directed things with the community... would [indicate] real success.*

### **Evaluation Primarily Conducted for Accountability Purposes**

Very few District Councils were engaging in more formal, structured evaluation efforts for themselves. Most of the more formal evaluation was being conducted for private funders, who often provided staff and technical assistance. Interestingly, those District Councils conducting evaluation for funders usually appreciated the process or data that emerged.

With regards to City reporting, nearly every Executive Director felt that the Inclusivity Matrix (see Appendix A) was minimally helpful. There was general concern that there was no consistency in the ways that District Councils track or count the data, making the numbers irrelevant.

*To me, the quantitative in this type of environment is like throwing darts at a dart board, in a way. You can have 10,000 phone calls, but if only one is a high quality phone call, it doesn't matter that you had 10,000 phone calls. There are all kinds of ways you can quantify contact... but that doesn't really mean as much as if you can qualitatively evaluate whether someone was engaged or not.*

Those District Councils receiving CDBG funds are more closely monitored than those only receiving City funds, and are subject to occasional external audits. In addition to the typical counts that other District Councils have to track, a City official periodically conducts both financial and process audits.

*We have program monitoring because we are CDBG recipients... sometimes the City will do a program monitoring visit, it's like an audit but not financial - how are you tracking outcomes, participation, and so forth... Ultimately their goal is to monitor how the money is used and tracked, but it's more for the outcomes are matching the funding source... and we have to show that we have these results.*

At the same time, many interviewees embrace the process of developing and reporting on their work plans. The work plan was frequently reported as being used to track progress toward stated goals and provide a sense of priorities. Some interviewees admitted that they did not put much effort into their work plans because they got no feedback and did not believe anyone looked at it. Some interviewees expressed a desire for the City to provide more structure and define their goals and objectives more clearly, while others use the vagueness as an opportunity to design their own tools.

*It's more our tool that we developed that fits into what they call a work plan. It's our planning device and tool that we use for our evaluation. It developed in conjunction with how can we look at our goals and activities as an organization and still use this to write our work plan for the City... What we do works with what the City wants.*

*Are there some tools and structures we can put into place that will help District Councils be more effective? Is there some sort of framework for a strategic plan? Can there be a workshop about measurement? Providing some tools for the staff and the board to help understand... what the expectation is and how to make that possible... Any other funder would have some goals and objectives they are trying to achieve and your work plan should be written in such a way that would advance those goals and objectives.*

*I can see the benefit of the work plan, of course it's only as valuable as what you plan to do within it, but I think it's a nice, formalized, concrete way of ... tracking [the work of the organization]... In fact, because this is an organization that has a lot of turnover and there's a new people at the helm every year, [the] president keeps track of a smaller version of the work plan that's basically all the logistical stuff that has to happen...*

### **Many Unaware of the Range of Evaluation Approaches and Uses**

When asked what evaluation means to them, many District Council staff were unsure in their responses. Some believed that evaluation was only for accountability purposes, answering the question, "Did you

meet your goals?” A majority of those interviewed described a process that measured effectiveness and considered it to be a quality assurance tool. Several Executive Directors who had previously worked at larger nonprofits were more familiar with the range of evaluation approaches and purposes. The notion that evaluation has to be a rigorous, scientific process seemed to intimidate some of the interviewees, sometimes preventing them from seeking additional funding.

*You can evaluate all you want, but [you have to] ask the community what they think of what you're doing and how you can improve what you're doing... You have to ask the people that you're serving and if they don't think that you're doing a good job then you have to change things.*

*Here at the District Council we play it real safe. Our organization would have to do a lot of work to get up to par for [large] grants.*

*I will not apply for money where I'm going to be spending a ton of time evaluating... That's not the best use of my time*

### **Desire for More Meaningful Measures**

The overall consensus was that numbers have limited value, in that they do not show efforts, quality, or engagement levels. As one Executive Director described, “I use the quantitative as the basis for the story. It's not *the* story, but I use it as the foundation for the story.” However, they had not pursued using new indicators because they did not want to give the City what they do not want or did not think it would be appreciated.

District Council staff offered a number of creative evaluation methods and meaningful success indicators that could potentially be used to better demonstrate their work:

#### Evaluation methods:

- City officials observe events and meetings
- Employ research assistants from local universities
- Ask people how they felt about interactions with District Councils
- Measure people's feelings about District Councils over time
- Conduct city-wide survey regarding people's knowledge and interactions with District Councils
- Submit visual documentation such as photographs and videos
- Analyze alignment of work with stated values
- Request information from community members when they sign-in or register for events to determine who is attending

#### Success Indicators:

- Testimonials from volunteers and participants
- Number of meetings in the community
- Track types of issues, rather than number
- Quality of interactions, rather than number of interactions
- Report efforts to increase diverse representation, rather than counting minorities on the board
- Number of volunteer hours, rather than number of volunteers
- Number of first time participants and volunteers
- Are residents outside of the board involved in decisions regarding programming?
- Number of decisions influenced



## City Officials

Interviews with City officials revealed more details about the City of Saint Paul's expectations of the District Councils, as well as current reporting requirements, and use of the evaluation data.

## Overall Appreciation for District Councils' Work

Everyone interviewed recognized that District Council staff are dedicated and hardworking, in spite of the fact that they face many challenges in their work, including being underfunded. Each City official easily recalled and was genuinely impressed by at least one story about creative ways the District Councils were engaging and including the community. They also believe that the District Councils are underfunded.

*They do a ton of our work and have for years... we really overuse them for notification processes. We give them a ton of responsibility and very little funding for the work that we ask them to do.*

*Community gardens... this is a good example of finding a different way to engage the community... to get people out of their houses. That's a great crime prevention thing [be]cause you know who your neighbors are, you're building community.*

*Years ago there was one group that... would have frost cookies with a cop night. They basically said that cops can't be intimidating when you're asking them to hand you sprinkles... They do all kinds of unique things, and what works in one doesn't work in the other.*

*They do a very good job at advocating for what the residents want to see in their neighborhood. When they've got open space that comes up or a development project that comes in, they do a lot of outreach, public meetings, public hearings, and then they take that and they're down here testifying...*

## Largely Indifferent to Data Collected

Some City officials did not know what District Councils report and explained that the annual reports are reviewed by very few City officials, other than for reimbursement purposes. When asked how the data is used one interviewee stated, "I'm sure it isn't." There was general consensus among the City officials that they only request data because they have to for auditing purposes. In fact, one interviewee said that the City's role is to focus on how the money is spent, rather than the results.

They also shared the sentiment that it would be apparent if the District Councils weren't doing their work, regardless of reporting. They claimed it would be obvious to them for various reasons, such as their level of communication with District Councils, their presence in the planning process, and primarily from public complaints. They did not think that more reporting requirements would be beneficial, especially without additional funding for both sides, but that asking different questions might be.

## District Councils Ultimately Accountable to the Public

As much as the City officials sympathized with the District Councils overwhelming workload, they called attention to the fact that they are operating with taxpayers' money. Moreover, they pointed out that although the work plan and accounting procedures may be tedious, they are public documents required to verify the use of public money. Occasionally, such documents are requested by researchers or constituents who want to know what their District Council is supposed to be doing.

*An average person from the public should be able to read [the] work plan and have a pretty good understanding of what it is you plan to do in the coming year.*

They also believed it was important to recognize that the District Councils are, first and foremost, accountable to everyone in their respective communities. Everyone in the community should be represented in decision-making processes and understand be able to ascertain why some projects are chosen over others.

### **Agreement on Primary Purpose of District Councils**

All four of the City officials consider community engagement to be the primary purpose of the District Council system. Emphasis was given to the importance of reaching underrepresented groups, pointing out that the City approved additional funding in 2004 specifically for outreach purposes.

*[Their job is to] get a voice from their entire citizen population... reach out to typically underrepresented groups... bring the issues to them, find out what their wants are, get them to participate, and bring that back.*

*[Their purpose is to] serve as an intermediary between the City and the people who live in it... It's the whole community, especially those that aren't the usual suspects. It's easy, because it was so long ago and there is staff turnover, for folks to move from that as the primary responsibility*

*It is a casual, convenient way for the public to interact with the City.*

They conceded that not everyone is willing and able to attend public meetings, especially if they do not speak English, or if they feel threatened, but that there should be a way to verify that an effort made to include them. The public should be able to trust that District Councils are reaching out to underrepresented groups and “trying to meet people where they’re at.”

### **Desire for Some Standardized Procedures**

All of the interviewees highly regard the autonomy of each District Council and agree that being separate from the government is what makes them more approachable. Furthermore, due to the unique quality of each District, the flexibility is necessary for them to best reach and serve their communities. However, in every interview the desire for some standardized administrative procedures surfaced. One concern was that the volunteer boards were not adequately trained, and that more consistent training would better prepare them to handle the issues that arise. Another concern was that the variation makes the system less transparent and more difficult to navigate. Another was that a lack of standardization makes it unclear how a District Council determines its mission or sets its agenda.

### **Local Foundations**

The interviews with local foundation representatives shed light on the evaluation and reporting expectations of private funders. While both foundations have different approaches to evaluation, both require that grantees outline intended outcomes upon application and typically require them to report successes and challenges.

### **They Want Grantees to Succeed**

Both foundation representatives clearly expressed their desire for their grantees to flourish throughout the interviews. One of the interviewees expressed this sentiment right away:

*I describe grantees as our community partners, because they are the implementers, they are the organizations that actually help us meet our mission and meet our goals, they are doing the work. For me, it's more of a partnership.*

The other explained that learning about and getting to know local organizations is the most rewarding part of the work:

*Getting to learn what nonprofits are doing in the community... meeting with the people that are doing the work... and having the ability to be able to make a case for a non-profit that fits with our guidelines and mission and make a recommendation to our board about funding... Communicating with the nonprofits and learning more about what they do and finding out how I can help them make their best case to our board.*

They further explained that they work with grantees to fine tune their applications and evaluation plans. They will assist in outlining more targeted outcomes, describing their core competencies, and the unique characteristics that they bring to the table. Acknowledging that different organizations are at different levels of sophistication they try to meet them where they are. They both stated that they are open and willing to talk with applicants and grantees, and continually work with them throughout the term of their grant.

### **Multiple Types of Data and Sources Are Acceptable**

One of the foundations takes a much more qualitative approach to evaluation, while the other prefers a quantitative approach and “change[s] that can be measured.” The more qualitatively focused foundation does occasionally request outputs and quantitative data for certain types of grants, primarily general operations support, or to demonstrate how an organization spends its time. The majority of their evaluation requirements include narratives, descriptions of successes and challenges, as well as observational data. Stories submitted as part of an evaluation are considered to add “huge, huge, *huge*” value. This foundation goes on site visits, asks people in the organization’s community for feedback, and checks in with community partners.

The other foundation only requires evaluation plans for grant requests over \$26,000, but when an evaluation plan is required, they always want to see impact. Whenever possible, they want numerical data that will exemplify impact. Common sources of numerical data are participant surveys, pre- and post- measurements, or simple counts. The program officer pointed out that thinking about evaluation from the beginning of a project will help organizations know the tools they will need and explained that they do not expect highly rigorous evaluations. They also allow space for observational data and encourage stories to supplement quantitative data.

### **Provide Evaluation Framework**

Both foundations have very clear and specific application forms that outline exactly what they are looking for. This forces the grantee to define outcomes at the start and incorporate evaluation into the planning process. Additionally, they both have evaluation frameworks that they provide to the grantee at the beginning of the process. The qualitatively focused foundation has a standard set of questions based on their “What? So what? Now what?” strategic framework. The forms the other foundation

provides include specific questions and tables for the grantee to fill out. Both foundations encourage grantees to ask questions and provide resources and examples.

## Minneapolis Neighborhood Program

In the City of Minneapolis, the counterpart to the City of Saint Paul's District Council system is the Community Participation Program (CPP). The basic underlying structure of the Minneapolis CPP is very similar to that of the Saint Paul District Councils. All of the neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis are autonomous non-profit organizations who contract with the City to receive funding for community engagement efforts. Similar to Saint Paul, the purpose of the program is broadly defined as community participation. The City of Minneapolis further identifies three key areas of focus:

1. Identifying and acting on neighborhood priorities.
2. Influencing City decisions and priorities.
3. Increasing involvement.

There are some differences between the two programs, with the Minneapolis program generally being more complex. For instance, there are a total of 80 neighborhoods in Minneapolis, which are represented by a total of 70 neighborhood organizations. Therefore, on average, each organization is serving a much smaller community compared to the Saint Paul District Councils. The City of Minneapolis also uses a formula to determine the amount of funding for each neighborhood, but their formula weights poverty more heavily than actual population. The Minneapolis funding cycle is 3 years, but neighborhood organizations must still submit an annual neighborhood plan. The funding source for CPP, Tax Incremental Funding (TIF), and its association with the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), impose restrictions that limit eligible expenses to infrastructure projects and excludes things such as food and festivals. Although there were recent changes and cuts to the Minneapolis neighborhood program, from about \$20 million per year to about \$5 million per year, there are currently 17 CPP staff. Some staff specialize in certain issues, such as housing or outreach, while others specialize in working with different communities, such as seniors or Native Americans.

The CPP reporting and evaluation process is also very similar to that of the District Council system. Neighborhood organizations must report on goals outlined in their neighborhood plans. As the District Councils, Minneapolis neighborhood groups are also required to provide counts for things such as meeting attendance, number of people serving on committees, or number of doors knocked on. The Minneapolis representative explained that there is a push to require counts, but acknowledged that the counts do not tell the whole story.

*It's not so much about the counts ... that doesn't really capture the whole story... We go to committee meetings and look at how many people are at the committee meetings... what that doesn't show is the board members out in the community talking to people... they're [having] interesting conversations at coffee houses with the Somali community... they'll have a table at the park or... lemonade stands at the high rise... I'm much more interested in the stories.*

In regards to evaluation and reporting, the primary difference between Minneapolis and Saint Paul appears to be what happens with the data after it is submitted. The City of Minneapolis has a sophisticated database that can pair projects with expenses then track the progress and types of projects on which neighborhoods are spending money. Similarly, stories from the annual reports are categorized by issue or type of work, making the stories more accessible to share. Next, the City compiles an annual report summarizing accomplishments, highlighting best practices, as well as lessons

learned. The report is then posted online and sent to City department leaders, City Council, other select City staff, and all neighborhood organizations. The information is also made available to the public on the City's website. Not only is the report posted, but there is a webpage designated to sharing stories and creative projects, sometimes with photographs or videos.

An additional process the Minneapolis official described as "risk management" involves external audits. Neighborhoods are also subject to several different levels of audits on a rotating basis. The City of Minneapolis contracts with outside auditors to conduct reviews of neighborhoods' finances and governance practices. If any issues are found in the course of an audit, the City works with the organization to correct the problems.

## Group Mapping Session

Following the brief overview, participants jumped right into the impact statement exercise, using the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), a conceptual model developed for community-based organizations and community development work. Discussion between each pair was productive and thoughtful, as were the resulting impact statements and revised community capital definitions (Appendices I1 and I2).

Two pairs slightly modified the definition of their assigned capitals, human capital and civic/political capital. The addition of volunteerism to the human capital definition resonated with the entire group, and reflects the fact that District Councils rely heavily on volunteers and their goal to create a more active community. The modification to the civic/political capital definition was also quite telling. The updated version emphasizes that District Councils do their work through an engaged community; the community, not just a select group of leaders, then works together to influence the distribution of resources and public policy.

The group was impressed with the image resulting from the mind mapping process. Dr. Chazdon explained that the lines bridging the center to the capitals represent their programming. A number of District Council staff commented that it was helpful to have a visual representation of their work and resulting outcomes because it became more tangible. Here, Dr. Chazdon pointed out that presenting such a visual image could be a powerful persuasion tool for funders, as it shows clear links between desired outcomes and programming. Further discussion led to potential measurement techniques related to a number of the impact statements. Different concepts that were discussed were unobtrusive data collection measures, participant observation, stories, interviews, and the importance of a base-line measurement for comparison.

The entire group had very positive feedback during a quick debriefing at the end of the event. Aspects the group reported as particularly helpful were: having an expert guide the process, define terms, and highlight simple ways to gather data; the map helped see the possibilities for evaluation; the lens of CCF; seeing their common goals helped to see where resources could be shared. One Executive Director found the map somewhat daunting, in that the long-term impact statements seemed so ambitious and that it called attention to the fact that they have not been able to tell their story well to funders or community members.

The impact mapping session was successful on several levels. First, it was an opportunity for two City officials to interact with District Council staff as peers in a more casual environment. Together they discussed the goals of District Councils and the struggle in demonstrating their successes. Second, District Council staff learned about CCF, the mind mapping software, and left the event with a tangible product. Many reported that they would use both CCF and the mapping software in the future. Third, the exercise and discussion built support among the group for evaluation. They were able to see its potential value more clearly and learned that it is not always complex.

## Literature Review

The literature review consisted primarily of academic journal articles regarding evaluation theory, frameworks, and methods for neighborhood-based organizations. The top values and programs identified in the Community Values Survey guided the search. Therefore, articles focused on measuring outcomes relevant to those values and programs were considered applicable. A synthesis of the literature resulted in a number of themes particularly relevant to the Saint Paul District Councils.

### Non-profit Evaluation Capacity

In response to the increasing demands on nonprofits, Carman and Fredericks (2010) studied the evaluation capacity of non-profit organizations to determine how much help, if any, nonprofits need. They found that the most commonly reported barrier to evaluation was a lack of time, followed by a lack of funding, expertise, and staff. Data analysis revealed three different levels of evaluation capacity among the non-profits surveyed, ranging from more to less successful. Success was not limited to large organizations; organizations of different sizes, ages, budgets, and service types were found across all three capacity levels. However, the organizations that most successfully implemented evaluation exhibited four common behaviors (p. 95):

- Evaluation and measurement activities are incorporated into their broader management and strategic planning systems.
- Regular reports to their boards include performance information, sometimes with procedures for the board to provide feedback.
- Evaluation and performance data was included in their annual reports, which served as a marketing tool for funders and stakeholders.
- They collect many different types of data and utilize many data collection strategies.

The organizations that struggled more with evaluation share another set of behaviors. Most of these organizations only engaged in evaluation practices under the directive of external bodies, and had mixed feelings about being required to evaluate. Some felt that they did not receive enough direction, while others felt the resulting information was useless to them. Moreover, if staff did present evaluation data, the boards of these organizations rarely digested any evaluation data that was presented to them.

In a separate study specific to community-based organizations in New York State, 89% of community development organizations reported that executive or management staff are responsible for conducting any evaluation efforts, with only 2% having an external evaluator. (Carman, *Evaluation Practice Among Community-Based Organizations: Research Into the Reality*, 2007, p. 70). In regards to funding, 56% of community development organizations used internal operating funds to pay for evaluation and 27% did not spend any money on evaluation.

The challenges faced by the non-profit organizations in the above studies mirror the those of the St. Paul District Councils, none of whom had staff dedicated to evaluation, and only several District Councils received evaluation assistance from outside the organization. While there is room to grow, District Councils make take solace in the fact that their struggles are not unique in the world of non-profit organizations.

## **Implementing and Measuring Inclusion Practices**

Quick and Feldman (2011) explain that the impetus for public engagement sometimes comes from a government that strives to collaborate with communities to best support them, while other times communities must fight for a seat at the table. They believe that a collaborative government is more beneficial for all involved. The Saint Paul District Council system was initially established by a City Council resolution to ensure community participation, which indicates the desire for a more collaborative system. As a system that was created for the purpose of collaboration between the government and communities, inclusion is of the utmost importance.

In the field of community engagement, there is typically concern regarding the way the community defines its identity. “Community of practice” is a term used to define communities that “learn and change through the practices they enact: as long as people are engaged in practices, community is being created, and the character of practices defines the nature of the community” (Quick & Feldman, 2011, p. 273). The identity of these types of communities extends beyond typical boundaries; they continually redefine themselves as they learn and grow through their engagement techniques. Quick and Feldman (2011) differentiate between two types of engagement practices, participation and inclusion. Both are necessary to establish a community of practice, though their research demonstrates that practices to encourage participation are not necessarily inclusive. In order to be inclusive, practices must “build the capacity of the community to implement the decisions and tackle issues... [through] making connections among people, across issues, and over time” (Quick & Feldman, 2011, p. 274). Community members in truly inclusive communities often report approving of and being more satisfied with results. Feldman and Khademian (2007) argue that public managers are constantly faced with decisions regarding the breadth and depth of inclusion, and must be sure to consider the full range of perspectives and stakeholders before making those decisions.

Recognizing the importance of inclusion in community engagement work and the surprising lack of evaluation strategies to measure it, Fraser, Kick, & Williams (2002) propose a “margin research” approach as a broader framework to examine the effects of policies and programs. They believe that while a theory of change is helpful in mapping outcomes and identifying measurable goals, an evaluation framework based solely on the theory of change will “neglect the outcomes that have not been anticipated” (Fraser, Kick, & Williams, 2002, p. 226). Therefore, an evaluation of inclusion must also look outside the theory of change to consider the power dynamics between stakeholders, issues that are forced to the margins, and any unintended consequences of community projects. They further describe this as a shift of focus from content to context.

As an illustration, Fraser, et al. (2002) recount their evaluation of a neighborhood revitalization project in which they interviewed and conducted focus groups with all stakeholders, including residents who were not at the table. Their efforts to uncover the “lived experiences” of all residents reveal that not everyone in a neighborhood feels or responds to development projects in the same manner. Nonprofit sponsors of development projects believed they were including all community members in the planning process, but marginalized community members felt that the organization came into the project with an agenda that did not allow room for many adjustments.

## **Purpose Matters, and There Are Many to Consider**

The concept of utilization-focused evaluation stresses that in order to make the most out of evaluation, one must consider who will use the findings and what the findings will be used for (Patton, Intended Use



of Findings, 1997). Patton (1997) lists numerous types of evaluations, highlights how diverse they are, and asserts that there are three primary purposes that evaluation can serve:

1. Rendering judgments;
2. Facilitating improvements; and/or
3. Generating knowledge.

Judgment-oriented evaluations are summative in nature; they are conducted after the completion of a program to assess its value, resulting in a judgment must be based on clear, predetermined criteria. Improvement-oriented evaluations do not require predetermined criteria, and as the name implies, they aim to increase program effectiveness. Types of improvement-oriented evaluations include formative evaluation, responsive evaluation, quality assurance, and learning organization approaches. Finally, knowledge generating evaluations generally produce reports sharing best practices, policy options, and the experiences of program staff and participants. Examples of knowledge generating evaluations include theory-driven evaluation, implementation evaluation, and synthesis evaluation.

All three primary purposes of evaluation outlined by Patton (1997) have benefits to offer the District Councils, if they establish the purpose in the beginning and plan appropriately. Judgment-oriented evaluation would help District Councils weigh the merits of different programs and determine where their limited resources are best spent. In fact, this approach would be appropriate for those District Councils that expressed interest in using evaluation as a tool to determine their priorities. While almost all of them are engaging in some sort of internal evaluation they are rarely using criteria or values to determine whether a program is worthwhile. Judgment-oriented evaluations may also serve as a way to help them justify their existence, as some staff felt is necessary.

When giving their personal definitions of evaluation, many of the Executive Directors described a process that would increase learning and lead to improvements, making improvement-oriented evaluation particularly relevant, and this point is expanded upon in a later section. Again, informal reflective practices, such as debriefings after an event, are being used to note what went well and what they could do differently, however, what is frequently missing is targeted feedback from community members. Finally, knowledge-generating evaluations would allow District Councils to share successes or lessons learned, with an added benefit of sharing information with the community about their programs.

## **Learning**

In an article about organizational learning, an approach in the realm of improvement-oriented evaluation, Moynihan (2005) describes two types of organizational learning, “single-loop learning” and “double-loop learning,” and their differences. Single-loop learning refers to the type of changes that result from analyzing factors and processes of routine operations with clear goals, such as improved efficiency. In contrast, double-loop learning “occurs when public actors test and change the basic assumptions that underpin their mission and key policies.” (Moynihan, 2005, p. 204) In order for double-loop learning to occur, an organization must create a learning culture that promotes “learning forums” for employees to regularly review information and interpret its significance. Moynihan explains that in the public sector double-loop learning is often stifled by centralized systems, as elected officials make decisions based on public preference rather than organizational data. However, he gives a provocative example of double-loop learning in the Vermont Department of Corrections that resulted in a shift from a punitive corrections system to one founded in the philosophy of restorative justice. When performance and outcome data showed that tougher sentences lead to an increase in negative outcomes for many in the corrections system, the agency pursued alternatives and sought input from

the public and law enforcement experts. In the end, the Department of Corrections adopted new principles and more positive performance measures to better demonstrate their new goals.

Although District Councils are not public agencies, they receive significant funding from the City of Saint Paul and are involved in public planning and policy processes. The fact that they are not entrenched in the bureaucracy of City government grants them more freedom to establish a learning culture that challenges assumptions and engages in double-loop learning. The additional freedom alone is insufficient, there must be a desire to learn couple with an effort to create learning forums in which information is not only disseminated, but analyzed and used for change. The District Council Executive Directors who held more negative attitudes toward evaluation were those who conceptualized it only as an accountability tool. Accepting evaluation as a learning tool would not only lead to benefits for the organization itself, but would likely lead to more successful and sustainable evaluation implementation (Carman & Fredericks, Evaluation Capacity and Nonprofit Organizations, 2010).

### **Organizational Development**

In his guidebook for developmental evaluation, Patton (2011) embraces the concept of double-loop learning. Developmental evaluation is not only a measurement tool to help organizations develop new programs, but also intends to help organizations adapt to their complex, ever-changing environments. His work distinguishes between improvements and developments to stress that changes are not necessarily made in response to inadequacy, that “Change is not necessarily progress. Change is adaptation.” (Patton, Organizational Development and Evaluation, 1999, p. 110)

Development can occur throughout an organization in various ways. One area that seems paramount to the District Councils is demonstrating their commitment to their missions and values in all aspects of their work. Mission-driven evaluation assesses the bigger picture and the ways an organization’s various programs and projects align with and promote the values they subscribe to (Patton, Organizational Development and Evaluation, 1999). A systematic assessment of the alignment of their programs with their mission allows organizations to more clearly communicate the value of their goals to stakeholders.

In the same vein is a values-engaged approach to evaluation, which Hall, Ahn, and Greene (2011) describe as an evaluation process based on inclusion and equity that seeks to determine the extent to which programs promote values that are important to all stakeholders, particularly those that are underserved. One example they provide comes from a value-engaged evaluation of a STEM education program. Rather than measuring the performance of students, evaluators ask students “personal inquiry” questions, such as how well the program worked for them and which aspect of the program was most important for them. This type of feedback is essential for an organization to develop in a way that best serves its constituents.

Developmental evaluation can also lead to skill and capacity building. The use of evaluation processes trains organization staff and decision makers to “think in terms of what’s clear, specific, concrete, and observable” rather than “depend[ing] on vagueness, generalities, and untested beliefs as the basis for action” (Patton, Organizational Development and Evaluation, 1999, p. 108). Leadership development can be fostered through the use of information, as one learns to hold the organization accountable and take action based on meaningful measurements. Patton (1999) delineates seven steps for a systematic reflective practice that improves communication regarding program effectiveness among staff and management (p. 105):

4. Identify the issue or concern;
5. Agree to try something;

6. Agree to observe outcomes;
7. Individuals report back to group;
8. Identify patterns across reports;
9. Decide on next steps;
10. Repeat the process.

Adopting procedures as simple as these steps could increase the likelihood that District Councils' current self-reflective practices lead to action and increase their efficiency. Repeating the process will promote the development by incorporating learning and continuous adaptation into their organizational culture.

## Community Engagement

*The absence of a genuine give and take with communities means that assumptions about the community's problems are never challenged - Leviton, 1994, p. 91*

Referring back to the top three values identified in the Community Values Survey (Appendix H), which focused on building relationships, fostering collaboration, and empowering residents, participatory evaluation is a way for District Councils to simultaneously engage their values and conduct evaluation.

The evaluation literature discusses scenarios in which community participation would contribute to the success of evaluation. First, whether or not a program is considered a success will in part depend on judgments made by participants and community members. Therefore, community context must be considered when attempting to measure the value of a program. Leviton (1994) argues that including community members in the evaluation design process will increase its credibility and buy-in, as evaluation experts often misread communities' needs. Buy-in from the community may increase evaluation sustainability, as their increased commitment may further drive the pursuit of additional resources (p. 91). Later, Leviton (2003) advances this argument through a case study and the Guiding Principles for Evaluators (American Evaluation Association, 1995). Reviewing an evaluation of a proposed program addressing teen sexual risk taking, a controversial topic, she cites instances in which including stakeholders, such as parents and teens, is necessary to work within the evaluation field's standards of practice. For example, the principles of integrity, competency, and responsibility for general public welfare all require an evaluator to understand and balance all stakeholders' interests (pp. 85-86).

Community members can experience other benefits as a result of participating in evaluation. In low-income communities, residents could be hired to assist with data collection (Leviton, Program Theory and Evaluation Theory in Community-based Programs, 1994, p. 91). They could be trained to conduct interviews or administer surveys, which would also give them an opportunity to gain professional experience and build skills. Organizations that are not able to pay community members to help with evaluation can still offer volunteer opportunities, which will still provide skill-building opportunities. In either case, District Councils would be offering leadership opportunities and empowering participants. This approach may also develop an increased sense of volunteerism in the community, an aspect District Council staff added to their definition of human capital.

Youth, in particular, have much to gain from participating in community evaluations. However, the extent of their gains depends on the quality of their participation. Participation is considered to be high quality when "people have some effect on the process, influence a particular decision, or produce a favorable outcome." (Checkoway, 1998 as cited in Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003, p. 22) The

quality of youth participation can be hampered by adults' beliefs that youth are not qualified to participate in research, as well as their own beliefs that adults should be in control. Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2003, p. 23) identify 5 reasons to include youth in evaluation projects:

1. Contributes to the development of legitimate, credible knowledge for social action.
2. Enables youth to exercise their political rights.
3. Allows them to share in the democratization of knowledge and gain information crucial for competent citizenship.
4. Teaches them democratic principles and civic engagement strategies.
5. Improves their social development and self-efficacy.

Checkoway and Schuster (2003) go on to describe several existing programs designed to include young people in community evaluation research. Sometimes, they are recruited to participate in adult-designed projects, but other programs support youth in the implementation of their own research projects.

### **Planning for Evaluation**

Much of the evaluation literature stresses the importance of planning as a first step in evaluation, with considerable emphasis on identifying stakeholders and intended users. Cockerill, Myers, and Allman (2000) created a concise planning guide for community-based evaluation efforts. Their guide includes a set of questions for each of five themes, starting with "the nature and purpose of the evaluation project" (p. 352). This phase of planning involves identifying all stakeholders, their goals and objectives, establishing trust, and working together to create an evaluation agenda. This phase is crucial not only to gain buy-in and ensure credible results, but also to support the goals of building relationships, fostering collaboration, and uniting the community. The remaining themes include research methods and approach, participation and decision-making, conflict and conflict resolution, and the dissemination and use of results.

Seeing as the St. Paul District Councils operate in a political environment, there is potential to use evaluation data to mobilize support, which requires using both technical skills and people skills to manage relationships (Bryson, Patton, & Bowman, 2011). There are a number of simple stakeholder analysis techniques that utilize basic materials, such as flip charts and Post-it© notes, and produce a visual product that maps various aspects from interest levels to power dynamics. Bryson, et al. (2011) developed a guide with instructions for 12 stakeholder analysis techniques and how they relate to evaluation design. Careful consideration is given to different contextual factors and how they may affect stakeholders' interests.

### **Using Available Resources**

"Insourcing" is a term coined by Miller, Kobayashi, and Noble (2006) to describe an evaluation model that combines capacity building with outsourcing, in which the organization learns fundamental evaluation techniques as a professional leads the process. They contend that insourcing is a sustainable evaluation approach for small community-based organizations because it does not demand much additional effort from staff, but achieves more buy-in because staff have more input than they would with an outside evaluator. The central tenet of insourcing is that a group of similar organizations hire one professional evaluator with pooled funds. They note that it "would work particularly well... with CBOs funded under the same initiative... wherein a common set of instruments and data collection protocols, or an evaluation 'toolkit' would be provided to [the] organizations." (Miller, Kobayashi, &

Noble, 2006, p. 87) The evaluator works with all of the organizations to develop a logic model, or theory of change, and potential outcome indicators. Organization staff are then called upon to contribute a minimal amount of time during different phases of the process, such as developing the logic model, simple data collection and entry, and to discuss findings. The evaluator is responsible for designing the evaluation plan, developing data collection tools, and analyzing the results.

They argue that there are a number of benefits to insourcing, to participating organizations and to funders. First, it is more sustainable because rather than staff taking the time to learn and implement all aspects of evaluation, they are able to focus on the work at the core of their mission. At the same time, organization staff still learn the basic principles of evaluation, which makes the results more meaningful to them. Another benefit is that the organizations have access to expertise and actionable data that are of higher quality evaluations than typical low-cost evaluations. Finally, if the organizations are similar in nature, the “evaluation coalition provides evidence about both widespread outcomes of a service area as well as evidence that supports component programs” (Miller, Kobayashi, & Noble, 2006, p. 92). Recall that one result of the group mapping session was that District Councils could better see their similarities and shared goals. In fact, the idea of sharing more resources was suggested by one of the participants.

Various universities and foundations have readily accessible, free evaluation resources on their websites. Many of the available resources are practical and user-friendly. Resources include planning guides, checklists, “evaluation toolkits,” and literature. Some organizations also offer training opportunities or seminars for a fee, though they are often open to the public. Below is an abbreviated list of resources:

- Kansas University – Community Tool Box  
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en>
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits – literature and trainings  
<http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/>
- W.K. Kellogg Evaluation Handbook  
<http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook>
- Xmind Mind Mapping Software  
<http://www.xmind.net/>
- Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI)  
<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/OLPD/MESI/default.html>
- Western Michigan University – The Evaluation Center  
<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/>
- Community Indicators Consortium  
<http://www.communityindicators.net/home>
- University of Wisconsin Extension  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/index.html>

## Conclusion

Murray (2005) accurately labeled the push of evaluation onto non-profits and public agencies as the “accountability movement” (as cited in Carman, 2007, p. 62). Increasing transparency demands typically include data from activities such as performance reviews and financial audits. Consequently, such organizations feel obligated to comply, rather than eager to glean information to help them learn and grow. Interview data revealed that this is the case for the District Councils. In spite of this pressure, nearly all District Councils were hopeful that evaluation could be used to their advantage. In order to move toward this goal, further action is necessary to prepare for the transition into a system that can adequately incorporate and manage new processes. The following are areas for further exploration and suggested next steps.

### Infrastructure

Prudent infrastructure investments, in the form of time and money, yield a high return in the long-run. While spending money on anything other than programming may feel like divergence from their mission, this is not the case. Change can be made incrementally to build organizational capacity for evaluation, and in other areas.

### Strategic Planning and Management Systems

Several District Councils currently have structured, well-organized management systems and procedures, but the majority do not. A lack of structure exacerbates instability due to other challenges, such as limited funding and high staff-turnover. Five of the District Council Executive Directors began working with their respective organizations within the previous six months. Without established procedures some of the new directors were unaware of existing requirements and norms, making it difficult for them to gauge success levels and slowing down the organization. Developing procedures is especially critical until the problem of high staff-turnover is addressed, as structure will help maintain stability by providing a guide for new staff.

The four behaviors of organizations successfully implementing evaluation and using the data identified by Carman and Fredericks (2010) provide insight as to how procedures and structure can benefit an organization. Evaluation and the use of data was incorporated into the culture of the organizations. Strategic plans drove the evaluation design in such a way that data could be used to periodically assess strategic goals. For instance, one organization sets program goals and presents them to the board at the beginning of the fiscal year. At the end of the fiscal year, staff present a formal report to the board including data demonstrating the extent to which goals were met. The board then has 30 days to provide feedback to staff, which was typically in the form of questions about barriers and solutions for the future.

As one District Council Executive Director expressed, great ideas often come out of staff and board conversations, but rarely do those ideas turn into action. With more structure, routine, and written procedures available for reference, those great ideas are more likely to be realized. Such structure does not have to stifle creativity or innovation, but rather provides a channel for it to go through. These steps will better allow an organization to know where they stand and where to make adjustments along the way.

## Technology

Both Carman (2007) and Carman and Fredericks (2010) stressed the importance of investing in infrastructure, particularly technology, to build evaluation capacity. To be sure, many District Councils expressed the desire for better information, resource networks, and technology. Employing technology has the potential to improve general operations, in addition to increasing evaluation capacity.

While some technology can be quite expensive, there are often cost-effective and free versions of software available for different purposes. Some District Councils already have databases, some of which allow them to track helpful indicators, such as community members' involvement. One District Council worked with a student from a local school to build a database. Free online software, such as SurveyMonkey®, is a great way to quickly obtain feedback. Some District Councils are already using such software to send surveys by email or post them to their website and Facebook page. One Executive Director hoped to post quick, one question surveys on the website as a fun way to engage the community and increase website traffic. Today, many programs allow data to be imported and/or exported, making it possible to aggregate data from multiple sources. Small handheld devices, such as tablets, can be used in the field to quickly gather information. Participants can enter their own contact information, anonymously provide demographic information, or respond to surveys at events or meetings. Gathering data in this fashion will save staff the additional step of data entry.

The City of Saint Paul also stands to benefit from additional technology. The Minneapolis CPP leverages technology in a few ways to make the most out of their neighborhood program. Their database allows them to track trends in spending and the progress of neighborhoods' plans. They also have the ability to categorize impact stories submitted by neighborhoods for easy retrieval in the future. Stories are in turn added to the City's CPP annual report and posted on the website, sometimes with pictures and videos, to showcase neighborhood organizations' successes. Both the City and the neighborhood organizations benefit from the use of technology and positive publicity. The City is able to demonstrate effective use of public funds, while the neighborhoods are able to show the positive impact they have on their communities.

## Inclusion

Seeing that the population of Saint Paul and demographics within each district are rapidly changing it is important for the District Council system, and each District Council, to adapt to their changing environments. In nearly every interview the importance and difficulty of reaching underrepresented groups was discussed. Some District Councils reported that they had begun relationships with marginalized groups, but that it would take time to develop trust and increase engagement. Unfortunately, there were some groups that District Councils struggled to reach.

A practical next step may be for District Councils to conduct stakeholder analyses using techniques presented by Bryson, et al. (2011) to reassess who their community members and other stakeholders are. They may not necessarily identify any new groups, but as with the group mapping session, a systematic analysis and the resulting visual may make ways to reach marginalized groups more tangible. The process may help identify outreach practices that do not create truly equal opportunities to participate and in turn try new, potentially more inclusive methods.

If new community members are identified and brought to the table, it may be necessary to revisit their organization's mission and values. They may find that the mission statement needs to represent a broader set of values or that programs need to be adjusted.

## Collaboration

Given the diversity of the District Councils and the type of work they do, the staff themselves hold a wealth of expertise. District Council staff have much to gain from sharing their own experiences and practices with each other. Those that have more advanced technology can share the most helpful programs and features; those that have more sophisticated policies and procedures can share templates and the processes used to develop them; those engaged in more evaluative activities can share how they have incorporated those processes into the organizational culture.

The interview process and group mapping session elicited many creative ideas for evaluation techniques and indicators. As Dr. Chazdon suggested during the mapping session, there is room to refine and build on the map they created. District Councils could work together to create a map representing them as a coalition, or customize the map to fit their own communities more specifically. Additional discussion regarding potential indicators may help District Councils better prepare for grant applications by identifying impacts associated with specific programs. They may also consider revising the “Inclusivity Matrix” with updated indicators that they, and City officials, find more meaningful.

The ED/CO working group has already established a pattern of sharing and collaboration. However, in order to move closer toward their vision of evaluation, they may need to devote extra attention to this issue. The entire ED/CO working group could participate, or they could create a smaller working group, and designate 20 to 30 minutes of every monthly meeting to planning and discussion. For those who wish to learn from each other, more casual gatherings over a meal may be sufficient. Either way, by proceeding in a more collaborative manner, District Councils can learn from each other and divide the work into more manageable steps. As a coalition they may be able to gain more traction from funders, who often appreciate collaborative efforts.

## Explore Available Resources

As previously mentioned, there are many easily accessible resources both online and in the Twin Cities Metro region. Considering that this study was a first step toward developing appropriate and meaningful evaluation practices, it is unlikely that District Councils are ready to choose an evaluation framework. In order to make informed decisions and discuss options with community members, it will be worthwhile to further explore their options. Exploration can begin by reading the available literature and visiting websites. Relevant sources are identified in this report and on websites listed in the literature review. District Councils may find simple tools they can begin to use to enhance their current evaluation practices.

Situated among numerous colleges and universities, there are experts nearby on nearly every subject, including evaluation. The Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI), housed at the University of Minnesota, holds evaluation trainings and events. They also connect organizations with students to provide more cost-effective evaluation services. More information can be found on their website, <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/OLPD/MESI/default.html>. If individual District Councils are not able to hire their own consultants, they may consider pooling their resources, as in the “insourcing” model suggested by Miller, et al. (2006). Sharing the cost may make hiring professionals for consultations or training more feasible.



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## Appendix A – Inclusivity Matrix

The St. Paul District Councils are committed to assuring that all segments of the population are given a chance to participate in decisions that affect our community. Traditionally, communities of color, non-English speakers, tenants, and other groups have not been well represented in the decision-making process of our common civic life. The following questions are designed to help the district councils evaluate how effectively they have reached out to all members of their communities, but especially to these traditionally underrepresented groups.

**Please answer for the past year:** All counts are non-unique. For example, when answering the question about how many people attended committee meetings, if Joe attended 12 committee meetings, the response would be 12. If you don't have exact counts, please give a close estimate.

What percentage of your community is made up of the following:	
Members of communities of color	
Older Adults (65+)	
Non English Speakers	
Tenants	
Other as defined by your district council _____	
According to your bylaws, how many directors constitute a full board?	
How many directors have been on your board the past year (include partial terms)?	
How many directors were members of underrepresented communities?	
How many regular volunteers does your organization have?	
How many volunteers (including board/committee members) were from underrepresented communities?	
How many board and committee meetings did your district hold in the past year?	
How many people attended committee and board meetings?	
How many people came in for appointments or walk-ins?	
How many phone contacts?	
How many emails were sent? Average 2 monthly email blast @ 600 each * 12	
How many emails were received? Average 20 per day*30 days*12 months*2.5 staff	
How many people received mail?	
How many unique website visits did you have?	
How many non-unique website visits did you have?	
How many flyers were distributed by the district council?	
How many newsletters were distributed by the district council? <b><i>We have an article in the monthly St. Paul Voice newspaper, which each household receives monthly.</i></b>	
How many people attended community wide meetings?	
For community meetings and events, please give an estimate of what percentage of attendees were from traditionally underrepresented groups.	
Members of communities of color	
Older Adults (65+)	
Non English Speakers	
Tenants	
Other as defined by your district council _____	

List communities in your district that your organization identified for increased outreach:

List methods of outreach your organization has used to include these communities:

## Appendix B – Research Design

This project consisted of three data collection phases and a mix of data collection techniques. The first phase utilized a survey to learn the District Councils' priorities, in terms of values and programming. The purpose of establishing their priorities was to ensure that the proceeding phases were of maximum relevance. Phase two involved interviews with stakeholders to dive deeper into key values and learn current evaluation practices. Finally, in phase three, District Council and City staff were brought together for a group session to process findings and discuss outcomes. A literature review was conducted to uncover promising evaluation practices and principles for community-based groups with parallel values and programs.

### Community Values Survey

In order to make the research relevant and meaningful to the District Councils, a survey was conducted to establish the common, overall priorities of the District Councils. Those values and programs identified as most crucial served to focus the remainder of the project.

Survey questions were developed using numerous materials, such as: mission statements, vision statements, web sites, and retreat notes. These were reviewed to identify common activities, programs, and values among the District Councils. The resulting list of the most prominent recurring themes was then divided into programs and values. Participants were first asked to rate the priority level of values and programs on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "top priority" and 7 being "not at all a priority," followed by ranking their top 5 values and top 5 priorities (Appendix C). Both types of questions were included to uncover potential discrepancies between what District Councils rate as important values and the work they actually do on a regular basis. Although the materials revealed a variety of values and programs, given their limited resources and funding requirements, it is unlikely that they are able to devote the time and attention they would like to each one. The final question was open-ended so participants could list any values or programs that may have been missed and were not included in the survey.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Although the District Councils are connected to a wide range of stakeholders, the scope of the project the relevant pool of stakeholders to a small subset. As a first step and preliminary information gathering project, those stakeholders closest to District Council operations and requirements were considered most pertinent. Three stakeholder groups were identified to recruit for interviews:

- District Council lead staff, primarily Executive Directors
- City of Saint Paul officials
- Local foundations
- Minneapolis neighborhood program

### District Council Staff Interviews

District Council staff were interviewed to determine their general attitudes toward evaluation, current evaluation practices, and future plans for evaluation.

In order to obtain a variety of perspectives, the goal was to interview staff from at least 12 of the 17 District Councils. To maintain consistency in the level of information provided, the Executive Directors of each District Council were recruited prior to any other staff member. They were recruited both in person and by phone, with an email follow-up when necessary.

A total of 16 of the 17 District Councils participated in the interview phase. All interviews followed a structured interview format, in which the same set of 19 questions were asked. Additionally, several basic definitions were provided to ensure each interviewee had the appropriate background information (Appendix D). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the District Council offices to provide more contextual information and allow for observation data. Interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy of notes and data entry.

### **City of Saint Paul Officials Interviews**

As the primary funder for a majority of the District Councils, City officials apprised of the City's goal in funding the District Councils, reporting expectations, and how the data is used were recruited for interviews.

A total of four city officials were recruited from the Planning and Economic Department and City Council by both phone and email. Officials were selected for interviews based on their experience with the District Council system. Two types of interviews were conducted, one structured group interview and two individual structured interviews. The structured group interview was chosen to elicit richer information from a discussion between two City officials with different experiences. The same set of questions (Appendix E) was asked during each face-to-face interview and the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy.

### **Local Foundation Interviews**

Since more and more by funders are requiring evaluation from grantees, it was prudent to interview local funding sources.

Two local foundations were selected, which are known to collect evaluation data from grantees, and have provided long-term funding to a number of the District Councils. Their prior relationships and knowledge of District Council work were considered to be valuable sources of information. A representative from each foundation was selected and recruited by phone. Structured interviews included questions that sought information regarding evaluation requirements, examples of measures and tools, and examples of organizations that successfully demonstrated impact of work (Appendix F). Interviews took place at their respective offices, followed an identical set of questions, and were audio recorded.

### **Minneapolis Neighborhood Program Interview**

One employee with the City of Minneapolis' Community Participation Program was interviewed to gain an outside perspective and learn about practices other neighborhood groups are using. Although the Minneapolis program consists of much smaller neighborhoods, they are also autonomous organizations that are heavily funded by the City. This interview was unstructured to allow the interviewee to freely explain the evaluation and reporting requirements in the context of the Minneapolis program, with a structured script seen as potentially limiting. Follow-up questions probed for additional details regarding provocative points. The interview was conducted in person at the City office and was audio recorded.

## Group Impact Mapping Session

This group brainstorming session was designed to provide an opportunity for District Council staff to identify their areas of impact, discuss potential indicators for measurement, and begin to develop a theory of change for their work. A well-defined theory of change, or program theory, illuminates the implicit assumptions and beliefs upon which an organization structures its work and hopes to achieve the intended outcomes (Bamberger M. R., 2004). As a community-based research study, community participation was crucial for success. Furthermore, the group session would serve to build support for evaluation among the District Councils and assist in their search for a more meaningful solution.

The Impact Mapping Session was facilitated by Dr. Scott Chazdon, Evaluation and Research Specialist in the Community Vitality Department at the University of Minnesota Extension. Dr. Chazdon was initially approached due to his expertise in Ripple Effect Mapping (REM), a participatory evaluation method used to identify intended and unintended impacts (Hansen Kollock, 2012). Dr. Chazdon designed the session based on the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) and elements of REM, including the appreciative inquiry questions and mind mapping (Appendix G). The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) was used to frame the exercise in a way that would push participants to consider their higher-order goals, rather than their established programming (Jacobs, 2011). Definitions of the capitals were slightly edited to be more applicable to their communities. CCF was chosen to frame the session because the 7 community capitals encompass the entire range of the District Councils' work. Different District Councils approach community engagement in different ways and choose to leverage or develop different community capitals. Furthermore, at the center of CCF is social equity, a value central to the District Councils. For continuity and to establish context, data regarding District Council programming and values collected from the Community Values Survey and the interviews was used to develop appreciative inquiry questions for consideration when drafting impact statements.

The event was well attended, with a total of 14 participants including 10 District Council staff, 2 City officials, and 2 representatives from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Participants were divided into pairs and each pair was assigned a different capital to write short-, mid-, and long-term impact statements. The impact statements were then mapped using the mind mapping software, Xmind. Following the exercise Dr. Chazdon facilitated a discussion regarding potential indicators of impact and data collection methods.

## Appendix C – Community Values Survey

- 1) Below is a list of values that were commonly highlighted in the mission and purpose statements of the St. Paul District Councils.

	How high a priority is each value to your district?						Please rank your district's top 5 values.  Type numbers 1-5 in your top 5 choices.
	Top Priority (1)	High Priority (2)	Moderate Priority (3)	Low Priority (4)	Very Low Priority (5)	Not at all a Priority (6)	
Unite community & foster relationships	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	
Facilitate cooperation & collaboration	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	
Provide open forum for communication	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.	
Develop community pride	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	
Create a positive perception	35.	36.	37.	38.	39.	40.	
Empower residents	41.	42.	43.	44.	45.	46.	
Encourage diverse community member participation	47.	48.	49.	50.	51.	52.	
Give voice to underrepresented community members	53.	54.	55.	56.	57.	58.	
Encourage diverse representation	59.	60.	61.	62.	63.	64.	
Ensure transparency & accountability	65.	66.	67.	68.	69.	70.	
Evaluate programs effectively	71.	72.	73.	74.	75.	76.	
Emphasize separation from government	77.	78.	79.	80.	81.	82.	
Adapt to changing environment	83.	84.	85.	86.	87.	88.	
Promote racial equity	89.	90.	91.	92.	93.	94.	

2) Below is a list of programs and activities that were repeated throughout the mission and purpose statements of the St. Paul District Councils.

	How high a priority is each program to your district?						Please rank your district's top 5 programs.  Type numbers 1-5 in your top 5 choices.
	Top Priority (1)	High Priority (2)	Moderate Priority (3)	Low Priority (4)	Very Low Priority (5)	Not at all a Priority (6)	
Educate & inform residents	95.	96.	97.	98.	99.	100.	
Promote healthy & sustainable environment	101.	102.	103.	104.	105.	106.	
Participatory planning	107.	108.	109.	110.	111.	112.	
Promote community economic development	113.	114.	115.	116.	117.	118.	
Support public safety & crime prevention	119.	120.	121.	122.	123.	124.	
Preserve history & existing culture	125.	126.	127.	128.	129.	130.	
Advocate for community on relevant issues	131.	132.	133.	134.	135.	136.	
Maintain & rehabilitate physical environment	137.	138.	139.	140.	141.	142.	
Provide leadership opportunities to residents	143.	144.	145.	146.	147.	148.	
Partner with government agencies & other nonprofits	149.	150.	151.	152.	153.	154.	
Facilitate dispute resolution	155.	156.	157.	158.	159.	160.	
Balance business & resident needs	161.	162.	163.	164.	165.	166.	
Balance individual constituent needs with broader community needs	167.	168.	169.	170.	171.	172.	
Advise the City on zoning & licensing decisions	173.	174.	175.	176.	177.	178.	
Support quality housing & home ownership	179.	180.	181.	182.	183.	184.	
Provide accessible transportation (i.e. bicycles, transit, walking)	185.	186.	187.	188.	189.	190.	

3) Please list any values, programs, or activities that were not included in the above lists but are important to your district.

4) There will be opportunities for different levels of participation in this project. Are you interested in participating in this project during the summer?

191. Yes

192. No



## Appendix D – District Council Staff Interview Script

### Introduction

As you may know, this project came as a need out of the ED/CO work group. The goal is to determine evaluation practices that different District Councils are currently using, to learn which are most effective, and discover those that may best capture the work that you do.

I will now ask you a series of questions and record your responses. I would like to audio record our conversation in order to ensure accuracy when I review my notes later on. I will delete the recording after I review my notes, and your responses will remain anonymous. Is that okay with you? Okay, let's get started.

	Question	Purpose
1	How long have you been doing community organizing work? How long have you been with your district council?	Introduction & start conversation
2	During your time with the district, what accomplishment(s) are you most proud of?	Insight into important stories to tell, put at ease
3	The results of the survey we sent out indicate that educating & informing community members, advocacy, & providing leadership opportunities to residents are the overall top 3 programs. How do you know that these, or other key programs, are successful?	
4	What does evaluation mean to you?	Gauge interest level, knowledge
5	Which aspects of evaluation are most intriguing to you?	
6	Which aspects of evaluation make you most hesitant?	

Throughout the rest of the interview, I will use a few terms that I would first like to define for you, to be sure we are speaking the same language. **Program evaluation** is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies and programs, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency. Evaluation can take many forms and may be used for many purposes. **Internal evaluation** is used only for stakeholders within the organization, and is typically for purposes of performance management or efficiency. **External evaluation** is reviewed by stakeholders inside and outside of an organization and more often seeks to show outcomes and impact.

7	What techniques is your district using for internal evaluation now?	Determine current practices
8	Which aspects of the internal evaluation you are currently do are most helpful?	
9	What techniques is your district using for external evaluation now?	Determine current practices

<b>10</b>	Which aspects of the external evaluation you are currently do are most helpful?	
<b>11</b>	Do any of your funders currently require you to report evaluation data or outcomes? If so, what do they require? How detailed?	
<b>12</b>	Do you think the data that you report accurately reflects the work you do for the community?	Assess level of buy-in to current process
<b>13</b>	Which aspects of the external evaluation for funders are most helpful to you and your staff?	Where do external & internal interests align?
<b>14</b>	Which aspects are least helpful?	
<b>15</b>	In regards to the work you and your staff do, what do you most want your funders to know about?	
<b>16</b>	There are several goals that your contract with the City requires you to work toward and report on. Do you have any ideas as to what would be a better way to show your district's progress toward these goals?	
<b>17</b>	Aside from additional funding, what additional resources would be most valuable to help you fulfill your district's mission?	Determine areas that evaluation may add value or help improve efficiency
<b>18</b>	What sort of information or feedback from community members and key stakeholders would help you and your staff better serve the needs of your community members?	
<b>19</b>	Is there anything else you'd like to add that we did not discuss?	Wrap-up

## Appendix E – City Stakeholders Interview Script

### Introduction

This project came as a need out of the ED/CO work group. The goal is to determine evaluation practices that different District Councils are currently using, to learn which are most effective, and discover those that may best capture the work that you do.

I will now ask you a series of questions and record your responses. I would like to audio record our conversation in order to ensure accuracy when I review my notes later on. I will delete the recording after I review my notes, and your responses will remain anonymous. Is that okay with you? Okay, let's get started.

	Question	Purpose
1	How long have you worked with the City of St. Paul and with the District Councils?	Introduction, make conversation
2	What accomplishment in your current role, or your work with the District Councils, are you most proud of?	Learn important aspects
3	From your perspective, why does the City of St. Paul fund the District Councils? What are the outcomes that the City hopes to see?	
4	Of all of the work that the District Councils do, which functions do you think are most important?	Learn important aspects
5	What type of data do you currently request from the District Councils?	Current practices
6	What do you do with the data and how is it used?	Purpose of evaluation
7	Of that data, which is most valuable to you in your role?	
8	What information would be valuable to you to help the District Councils fulfill their mission and better serve their residents?	
9	In a survey we sent out to the St. Paul District Council Staff, we found that the top 3 values are: <i>Unite community &amp; foster relationships, Facilitate cooperation &amp; collaboration, &amp; empower residents</i> . Do these values relate closely to your understanding of top district council values? The top programs are: <i>Educate &amp; inform residents, advocacy, provide leadership opportunities</i> . Do these programs relate closely to your understanding of top district council programs? Do you have any suggestions for indicators of success of district council programs?	
10	From your perspective, where do you think the District Councils are doing a good job? How do you know?	Potential indicators, possibly anecdotal
11	From perspective, where do you see opportunities for growth? How do you know?	Potential indicators, possibly anecdotal

## Appendix F – Foundation Interview Script

This project came as a need out of the ED/CO work group. The goal is to determine evaluation practices that different District Councils are currently using, to learn which are most effective, and discover those that may best capture the work that you do.

I will now ask you a series of questions and record your responses. I would like to audio record our conversation in order to ensure accuracy when I review my notes later on. I will delete the recording after I review my notes, and your responses will remain anonymous. Is that okay with you? Okay, let's get started.

	Question	Purpose
1	How long have you worked on the funding side of this work? What do you like most about this work?	Introduction & start conversation
2	Do you require all of your grant recipients to report outcomes or evaluation measures? <i>Why some and not others?</i>	Determine whether certain missions are more measurable
3	In what situations do you prefer to see outcomes or impact?	What to focus on moving forward
4	Do you have a preference for qualitative versus quantitative data? Is your organization comfortable with ambiguous data (that may not be able to point to causal relationships)?	
5	How have organizations effectively used qualitative data or stories?	How to incorporate stories
6	What data do you ask for from the neighborhood-based organizations?	
7	In an article I read about civic engagement, the author categorized the work that organizers do as <i>relational</i> and <i>informational</i> (define). How have you seen other community/civic engagement organizations demonstrate success on <i>relational</i> work? <i>Informational</i> work?	Suggestions for indicators of more difficult to measure goals
8	In a survey we sent out to the St. Paul District Council Staff, we found that the top 3 values are: <i>Unite community &amp; foster relationships, Facilitate cooperation &amp; collaboration, &amp; empower residents</i> . The top programs are: <i>Educate &amp; inform residents, advocacy, provide leadership opportunities</i> . What type of data would you request from organizations with similar missions and programs? Do you have any suggestions for indicators of success?	
9	Think about all of the different organizations you've worked with, can you think of an organization that demonstrates impact well? If so, please explain how.	Concrete example of accurate indicators of long-term impact
10	What are some of the evaluation tools you have?	
11	What do you do with the information you get from the organizations you fund? How do you use the information?	Purpose of evaluation
12	A concern of many organizations is that evaluation data will lead to a reduction in their autonomy (their agendas and priorities will be set for them) or that they will be unfairly compared. How would you address this concern with a community engagement organization?	How they have handled pushback
13	Is there anything we have not discussed that you feel is important and would like to add?	Wrap-up

## Appendix G – Impact Mapping Session Agenda

### I. Introductions and Brief Overview (Noon to 12:15)

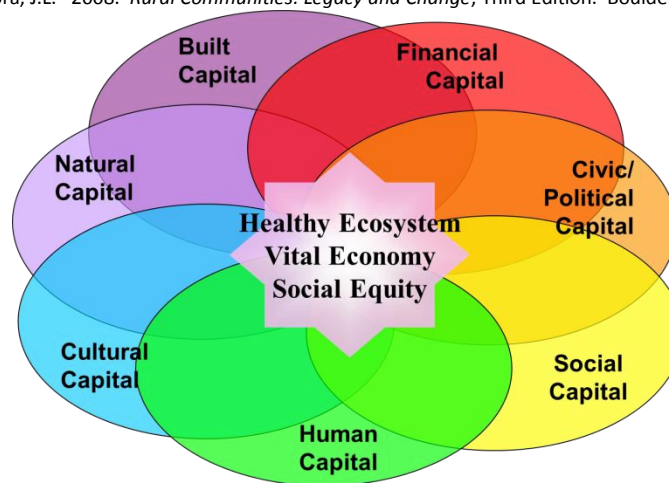
CURA is facilitating this session to encourage St. Paul District Council staff to think creatively about the long-term impacts of their work, and to begin thinking about evaluation strategies for documenting these impacts.

### II. Overview of the Community Capitals Framework (12:15 to 12:25)

The Community Capitals Framework is a conceptual model for evaluating a community's overall capacity for community and economic development. University of Minnesota Extension has used this framework for analysis of the impacts of its programs.

#### The Community Capitals Framework

Adapted from Flora, C.B. And Flora, J.L. 2008. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*, Third Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p. 19.



For our work today, we will begin with the definitions of each domain of impact on the back of this sheet.

### III. Paired Work Writing Impact Statements (12:25 to 1:05)

- Participants will be paired and assigned one or more of the community capitals.
- As a pair, review the definition of your capital and offer any tweaks or improvements that would help the definition resonate with what District Councils do.
- As a pair, write at least three impact statements **related to your assigned capital(s)** using attached format.

### IV. Mapping of Impact Statements (1:05 to 1:35)

Facilitator will use a mind mapping program to map the impact statements as they are reported out by each pair.

### V. Group discussion of next steps (1:35 to 2:00)

Discussion will include potential indicators and measurement/evaluation strategies, and time for participants to ask the facilitator questions.

**Definitions of the Community Capitals – *edited to fit the District Council context***

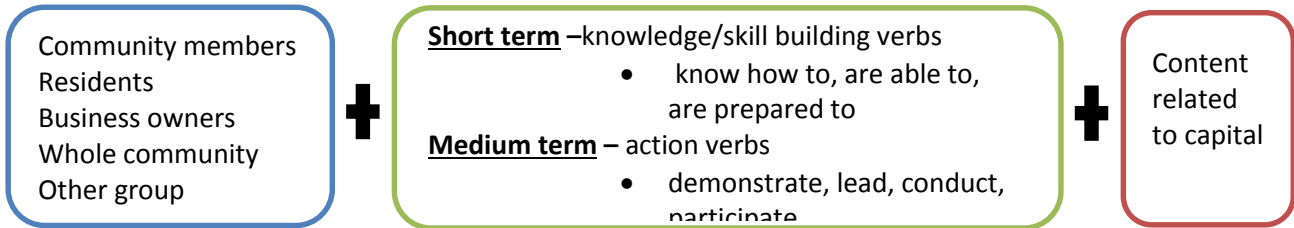
<b>Domains of Community Impacts</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Social capital effects</b>	Strengthened or expanded trust or connections among people, groups and organizations and their resources.
<b>Human capital effects</b>	Changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills among organization or community members. Includes leadership skills.
<b>Cultural effects</b>	Strengthened ability of organizations or communities to support diverse worldviews, and to transmit knowledge of spiritual, cultural heritage, artistic expression and traditions to future generations. Recognize and build on cultural strengths. Systems accepting that there may be different frames.
<b>Financial effects</b>	Increased private and public wealth that is invested in the well-being of organizations, individuals / households, and communities.
<b>Civic/political effects</b>	Increased ability of organizations or communities to mobilize public engagement or influence the distribution of public resources. Community leaders influence policies and distribution of resources.
<b>Built capital effects</b>	Improvement and creation of structures (e.g. housing, retail, etc.) and infrastructures, such as transportation, that contribute to the well-being of organizations, individuals, or communities.
<b>Natural environment effects</b>	Strengthened ability of organizations or communities to provide local food sources, as well as protect landscape, air, water, soil and biodiversity of both plants and animals.

## Impact Statement Exercise

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Assigned Capital \_\_\_\_\_

**Writing impact statements** – Each impact statement should include a group of community members and a description of how they will be changed by the District Council’s actions.



**Short term impact statement** (knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspiration changes)

*Civic capital example . . . Community members know what the District Council does for them.*

**Medium term impact statement** (individual behavior changes)

*Financial capital example . . . Business owners purchase ads in local newsletters or otherwise support programs that benefit local youth.*

**Long term impact statement** (condition change)

*Built capital example . . . Community has access to additional bus lines and bike paths due to improved transportation infrastructure.*

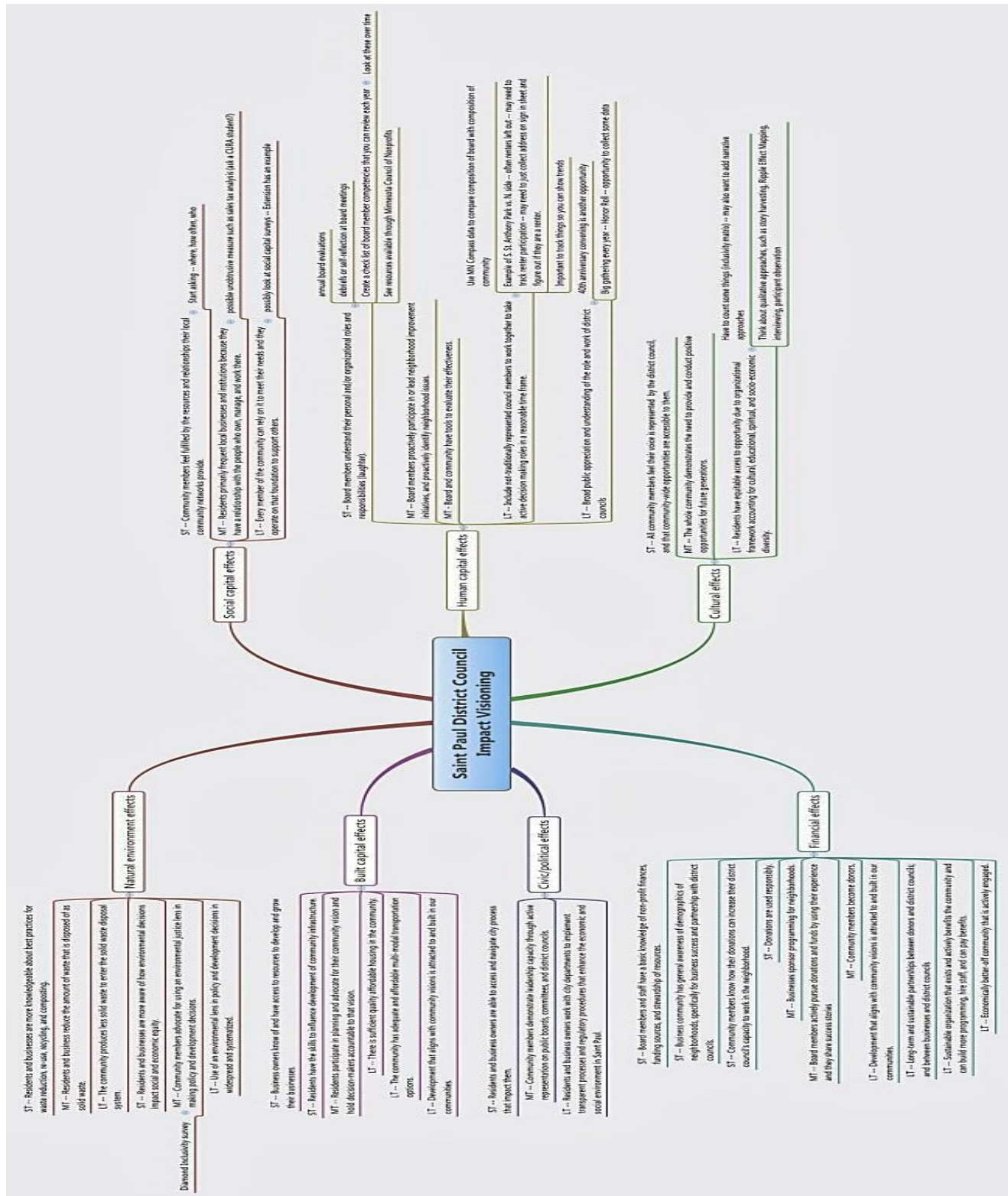
## Appendix H – Community Values Survey Results

1. How high a priority is each value to your district?							Statistics					
	Top Priority 1	High Priority 2	Moderate Priority 3	Low Priority 4	Very Low Priority 5	Not at all a Priority 6	Mean	Min Value	Max Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
Unite community & foster relationships	5	6	2	1	0	0	1.93	1	4	0.84	0.92	14
Facilitate cooperation & collaboration	4	7	1	2	0	0	2.07	1	4	0.99	1	14
Provide open forum for communication	3	6	5	0	0	0	2.14	1	3	0.59	0.77	14
Develop community pride	1	4	6	3	0	0	2.79	1	4	0.8	0.89	14
Create a positive perception	2	4	5	3	0	0	2.64	1	4	1.02	1.01	14
Empower residents	4	7	0	3	0	0	2.14	1	4	1.21	1.1	14
Encourage diverse community member participation	5	4	1	3	0	1	2.43	1	6	2.42	1.55	14
Give voice to underrepresented community members	5	5	1	1	1	1	2.36	1	6	2.55	1.6	14
Encourage diverse representation	4	6	1	2	0	1	2.36	1	6	2.09	1.45	14
Ensure transparency & accountability	4	6	2	1	0	1	2.29	1	6	1.91	1.38	14
Evaluate programs effectively	0	2	8	3	0	1	3.29	2	6	0.99	0.99	14
Emphasize separation from government	0	0	5	5	0	4	4.21	3	6	1.57	1.25	14
Adapt to changing environment	2	5	5	1	0	1	2.64	1	6	1.63	1.28	14
Promote racial equity	5	5	0	2	0	2	2.5	1	6	3.19	1.79	14
2. Please rank your district's top 5 values.							Rank					
	1	2	3	4	5	Frequency in Top 5						
Unite community & foster relationships	2	0	3	1	1	7						
Facilitate cooperation & collaboration	3	2	0	0	0	5						
Provide open forum for communication	1	3	1	3	2	10						
Develop community pride	1	1	1	1	1	5						
Create a positive perception	0	1	2	1	0	4						
Empower residents	2	0	2	0	0	4						
Encourage diverse community member participation	3	0	1	1	0	5						
Give voice to underrepresented community members	0	3	1	0	0	4						
Encourage diverse representation	0	0	0	2	0	2						
Ensure transparency & accountability	1	0	0	0	3	4						
Evaluate programs effectively	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Emphasize separation from government	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Adapt to changing environment	0	2	0	1	2	5						
Promote racial equity	0	1	1	2	3	7						
3. How high a priority is each program to your district?							Statistics					
	Top Priority 1	High Priority 2	Moderate Priority 3	Low Priority 4	Very Low Priority 5	Not at all a Priority 6	Mean	Min Value	Max Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
Educate & inform residents	8	3	3	0	0	0	1.64	1	3	0.71	0.84	14
Promote healthy & sustainable environment	2	7	4	0	0	0	2.15	1	3	0.47	0.69	13
Participatory planning	5	1	7	0	1	0	2.36	1	5	1.48	1.22	14
Promote community economic development	4	4	2	2	1	1	2.64	1	6	2.55	1.6	14
Support public safety & crime prevention	3	5	4	1	1	0	2.43	1	5	1.34	1.16	14
Preserve history & existing culture	1	3	6	2	2	0	3.07	1	5	1.3	1.14	14
Advocate for community on relevant issues	7	4	2	1	0	0	1.79	1	4	0.95	0.97	14
Maintain & rehabilitate physical environment	1	4	7	1	1	0	2.79	1	5	0.95	0.97	14
Provide leadership opportunities to residents	4	6	3	0	0	1	2.21	1	6	1.72	1.31	14
Partner with government agencies & other nonpr	4	5	4	0	0	1	2.29	1	6	1.76	1.33	14
Facilitate dispute resolution	0	0	8	2	2	2	3.86	3	6	1.36	1.17	14
Balance business & resident needs	2	4	4	2	2	0	2.86	1	5	1.67	1.29	14
Balance individual constituent needs with broader community needs	0	3	8	1	2	0	3.14	2	5	0.9	0.95	14
Advise the City on zoning & licensing decisions	3	6	4	0	1	0	2.29	1	5	1.14	1.07	14
Support quality housing & home ownership	2	3	4	3	2	0	3	1	5	1.69	1.3	14
Provide accessible transportation (i.e. bicycles, tra	3	3	7	0	1	0	2.5	1	5	1.19	1.09	14



4. Please rank your district's top 5 programs.						
	Rank					
	1	2	3	4	5	Frequency in Top 5
Educate & inform residents	4	1	1	1	1	8
Promote healthy & sustainable environment	0	2	0	1	1	4
Participatory planning	1	1	1	0	2	5
Promote community economic development	1	1	1	1	1	5
Support public safety & crime prevention	1	1	1	1	1	5
Preserve history & existing culture	0	1	0	0	1	2
Advocate for community on relevant issues	2	2	3	3	0	10
Maintain & rehabilitate physical environment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Provide leadership opportunities to residents	2	1	1	1	1	6
Partner with government agencies & other nonpr	1	1	1	2	1	6
Facilitate dispute resolution	0	0	0	0	0	0
Balance business & resident needs	0	0	1	0	1	2
Balance individual constituent needs with broader	0	0	0	0	0	0
Advise the City on zoning & licensing decisions	1	1	2	1	0	5
Support quality housing & home ownership	0	0	0	1	1	2
Provide accessible transportation (i.e. bicycles, tra	1	0	0	1	1	3
5. Please list any values, programs, or activities that were not included in the above lists but are important to your district.						
providing opportunities for the youth within our community and St Paul in general. Looks like a lot of programs but they are hard to find out about and access. We are not teaching our children community service give youth a voice						
give youth a voice						
Getting feedback from our residents making sure that were on the right track's inner equitability and inclusivity						
Our current mission: to advance equity and enhance quality of life through partnerships and community engagement. To create a neighborhood free of systemic and institutional inequities. We defined "equity" as "a value that champions just and fair inclusion so that all neighbors reach their full potential regardless of class, ethnicity, race, culture, sexuality or faith.						
Encourage commercial and residential investment Build a unified community that respects and celebrates its diversity Engage new communities in the opportunities to lead in the neighborhood Respect and acknowledge the strengths of tradition while embracing new neighbors and change						
Total Responses	5					
6. There will be opportunities for different levels of participation in this project. Are you interested in participating in this project during the summer?						
Answer	Frequency					
Yes	9					
No	7					

# Appendix I1 - Impact Vision Map



## Excel Format

### Social capital effects

ST -- Community members feel fulfilled by the resources and relationships their local community networks provide.

Start asking -- where, how often, who

MT -- Residents primarily frequent local businesses and institutions because they have a relationship with the people who own, manage, and work there.

possible unobtrusive measure such as sales tax analysis (ask a CURA student?)

LT -- Every member of the community can rely on it to meet their needs and they operate on that foundation to support others.

possibly look at social capital surveys -- Extension has an example

### Human capital effects

ST -- Board members understand their personal and/or organizational roles and responsibilities (laughter).

annual board evaluations

debriefs or self-reflection at board meetings

Create a check list of board member competencies to review each year

Look at these over time

See resources available through Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

MT -- Board members proactively participate in or lead neighborhood improvement initiatives, and proactively identify neighborhood issues.

MT - Board and community have tools to evaluate their effectiveness.

LT -- Include not-traditionally represented council members to work together to take active decision making roles in a reasonable time frame.

Use MN Compass data to compare composition of board with composition of community

Example of S. St. Anthony Park vs. N. side -- often renters left out -- may need to track renter participation -- may need to just collect address on sign in sheet and figure out if they are a renter.

Important to track things so you can show trends

LT -- Broad public appreciation and understanding of the role and work of district councils

40th anniversary convening is another opportunity

Big gathering every year -- Honor Roll -- opportunity to collect some data

### Cultural effects

ST -- All community members feel their voice is represented by the district council, and that community-wide opportunities are accessible to them.

MT -- The whole community demonstrates the need to provide and conduct positive opportunities for future generations.

LT -- Residents have equitable access to opportunity due to organizational framework accounting for cultural, educational, spiritual, and socio-economic diversity.

Have to count some things (inclusivity matrix) -- may also want to add narrative approaches

Think about qualitative approaches, such as story harvesting, Ripple Effect Mapping, interviewing, participant observation

### Financial effects

ST -- Board members and staff have a basic knowledge of non-profit finances, funding sources, and stewardship of resources.

ST -- Business community has general awareness of demographics of neighborhoods, specifically for business success and partnership with district councils.

ST -- Community members know how their donations can increase their district council's capacity to work in the neighborhood.

ST -- Donations are used responsibly.

MT -- Businesses sponsor programming for neighborhoods.

MT -- Board members actively pursue donations and funds by using their experience and they share success stories

MT -- Community members become donors.

LT -- Development aligned with community visions is attracted to and built in our communities.

LT -- Long-term and sustainable partnerships between donors and district councils; and between businesses and district councils

LT -- Sustainable organization that exists and actively benefits the community and can build more programming, hire staff, and can pay benefits.

LT -- Economically better-off community that is actively engaged.

#### Civic/political effects

ST -- Residents and business owners are able to access and navigate city process that impact them.

MT -- Community members demonstrate leadership capacity through active representation on public boards, committees, and district councils.

LT -- Residents and business owners work with city departments to implement transparent processes and regulatory procedures that enhance the economic and social environment in Saint Paul.

#### Built capital effects

ST -- Business owners know of and have access to resources to develop and grow their businesses.

ST -- Residents have the skills to influence development of community infrastructure.

MT -- Residents participate in planning and advocate for their community vision and hold decision-makers accountable to that vision.

LT -- There is sufficient quality affordable housing in the community.

LT -- The community has adequate and affordable multi-modal transportation options.

LT -- Development that aligns with community visions is attracted to and built in our communities.

#### Natural environment effects

ST -- Residents and businesses are more knowledgeable about best practices for waste reduction, re-use, recycling, and composting.

MT -- Residents and business reduce the amount of waste that is disposed of as solid waste.

LT -- The community produces less solid waste to enter the solid waste disposal system.

ST -- Residents and businesses are more aware of how environmental decisions impact social and economic equity.

MT -- Community members advocate for using an environmental justice lens in making policy and development decisions.

#### Diamond Inclusivity survey

LT -- Use of an environmental lens in policy and development decisions is widespread and systematized.

## Appendix I2 – Revised Community Capital Definitions

<b>Domains of Community Impacts</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Social capital effects</b>	Strengthened or expanded trust or connections among people, groups and organizations and their resources.
<b>Human capital effects</b>	Changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills among organization or community members. Includes leadership skills and volunteerism.
<b>Cultural effects</b>	Strengthened ability of organizations or communities to support diverse worldviews, and to transmit knowledge of spiritual, cultural heritage, artistic expression and traditions to future generations. Recognize and build on cultural strengths. Systems accepting that there may be different frames.
<b>Financial effects</b>	Increased private and public wealth that is invested in the well-being of organizations, individuals / households, and communities.
<b>Civic/political effects</b>	Increased ability of organizations or communities to mobilize public engagement to influence public policy and the distribution of public resources.
<b>Built capital effects</b>	Improvement and creation of structures (e.g. housing, retail, etc.) and infrastructures, such as transportation, that contribute to the well-being of organizations, individuals, or communities.
<b>Natural environment effects</b>	Strengthened ability of organizations or communities to provide local food sources, as well as protect landscape, air, water, soil and biodiversity of both plants and animals.