



Nexus Community Partners

Building more powerful and engaged communities

As Payne Lake Community Partners (PLCP) moves towards its sixth year of full operation, we are providing a summary of its results (see timeline). The summer of 2009 represents a watershed in PLCP's development. It has now moved from an experimental initiative to an established revitalization project. This new phase is best symbolized by its new name, Nexus, representing its work connecting people and institutions throughout the Twin Cities in new ways to promote sustainable and equitable revitalization.

New Focus and Niche

Over the past five years, PLCP has promoted an alternative notion of community revitalization comprised of both hard bricks and mortar and the softer human and social capital development. Nexus represents a new phase in PLCP's development focus squarely on building human and social capital assets in socially isolated, low-income communities that have the region's highest concentrations of poverty and disadvantage. Its hope is that this new focus helps the region better address the [persistent gaps in socio-economic outcomes especially faced by immigrant and communities of color](#).

Goals and Strategy

Nexus has two primary focus areas: community engagement and wealth creation. Working with its partners, Nexus attempts to involve socially isolated people in self- and community improvement. It also supports programs that help low-income people improve their wealth status. It believes that engagement and asset-building, along with other tools such as organizing and outreach, are keys to sustainable development that reduces disparities between people of color and broader society.

Nexus' engagement goals include increasing the diversity of community revitalization; strengthen mutually supportive support networks and a sense of shared identity among residents; coordinate work of community revitalization partners; and build the community building field.

Its asset-building goals involve increasing homeownership, wealth, career advancement and jobs, entrepreneurship, and comprehensive revitalization with a focus on low-income people of color.

Nexus' work is guided by a three-year workplan. It is achieving all of its workplan

goals. This report focuses on whether these activities are promoting desired Nexus' goals, outcomes and impacts.

Community Investments

From inception, Nexus has invested \$5,974,489 in Twin Cities community revitalization focused on strengthening community engagement and asset building. Investments have primarily included grants and, to a much lesser extent, loans and contracts. It is able to quickly identify a community issue, create and test a pilot to address unmet need or opportunity; and "get the money out the door" relatively quickly. Nexus has been a major conduit for largely national community revitalization funding, leveraging \$11,017,215 in funding from national foundations, most of which did not previously fund the region's development. However, Nexus staff contributes more than financial investments.

Staff has also contributed significant thought leadership and time to develop partnerships and coach start-up projects that it has incubated. Nexus is developing a system to better quantify its in-kind community revitalization investments. Nexus has

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hired two new program officers and an administrative assistant, which has greatly strengthened its ability to implement its growing program.

Program Participation

Nexus and its partners have been quite prolific and thousands of residents have participated in their programs and initiatives (see reverse for some key outputs measures). What is most important to know about Nexus' outputs is that increasingly, especially over the past two years, it has refined its community building techniques and helped its key partners integrate them into their work. For example, Employer Solutions, a key partner in Nexus' workforce development efforts, now considers engagement—the systematic and deliberate involvement of clients in needs and asset identification, program planning, and governance; and coordination with other service providers—a key enhancement to its work. Other partners who have both contributed to Nexus' development and adopted components of its engagement strategy include Twin Cities Local Initiative Support Corporation, Neighborhood

Development Corporation and the Homeownership Center. It will take multiple years to more conclusively determine whether this engaged revitalization strategy produces more sustainable, equitable community outcomes and impacts, but early signs are promising (see below).

Nexus' Program Outcomes: The Numbers and Beyond

Nexus just established its three core initiatives last year—The Eastside Community Engagement Program, Successful Homeownership, Center for Working Families last year, although they each have existed for two years as pilot programs. Current data suggest that about 6% of the residents receiving support from a Nexus-funded program became homeowners in the past two years. And about 18% of those received career coaching or job placement support as well. These programs are relatively new and grantees are still collecting outcomes data for its programs. It will be important to track whether performance improves as programs mature.

But the outcome indicators (see reverse) cannot tell Nexus' full story. A key

outcome, not fully represented in the numbers, has been strengthening the development of immigrant-led community development corporations (CDCs) as the first and primary core operating support funders for African Development Corporation (ADC) and Latino Economic Development Corporation (LEDC). Before ADC and LEDC were funded, there are no CDCs representing or with expertise in the region's African and Latino immigrant communities. Both of these organizations have now "graduated" to the LISC core operating support program where, for the last five years, Nexus funded their participation. ADC and LEDC are the most notable case examples of Nexus' identifying a community need. We are still tracking ADC's and LEDC's outcomes and it will be interesting to see if Nexus' and LISC's investments in them have impacted African and Latino immigrant community outcomes.

Nexus, in collaboration with NDC, has also increased the capacity of community-based organizations to engage in commercial development, most notably through the support of Global Market partners, ADC, LEDC and the Cultural

Wellness Center (CWC). Through its consistent and ongoing support of CWC and Casa de Esperanza (Casa) as well as convening other community builders, Nexus has also strengthened the general organizational capacity of community-based organizations specializing in engaging socially isolated communities of color. It is also building the community building field in the Twin Cities.

Nexus is also recognized and cited by many partners as a "mini-think tank" for community revitalization. Its model of cross-sector convening to incubate, scale-up and spin-off promising projects to address new or unaddressed community needs, has influenced, for example, the [Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and Learning Network](#).

Emerging Community Impacts

[Data from almost seven community change indicators collected and analyzed with the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota](#) suggests that Payne and Lake have better homeownership, employment and income levels than comparable Twin Cities neighborhoods. However, there are several limitations to this possible conclusion. The

data, although reported last year, are, from one to two years old at this point. The Great Recession has likely changed the indicators for Nexus target areas and comparison communities. Furthermore, even if the data were current, it will be difficult to definitively determine whether Nexus investments cause the changes—positive or negative—that we see in its communities. We will track impact indicators again in 2011, which should provide a basis for a more informed picture of Nexus' impact.

A Future in the Making Today

Nexus has made notable contributions to community revitalization at a critical juncture in the Twin Cities' history. It has become a pipeline for developing community capacity of the region's newest and most social isolated members; and provides a forum to coordinate intermediaries and civic leaders to creatively respond to communities' changing needs. Its various funding programs suggest good promise for scaling and extending community revitalization capacity by engaging those most in need in its development. With a focus on community building, it has progressed in defining its niche and potential value added; strengthened its staff

capacity; and promoted the acceptance and development of community building in the broader field.

Despite these accomplishments, to maximize its outcomes and impact, Nexus should continue its progress in the following areas:

- Develop and implement a grant reporting and evaluation system, including cultivating grantees' capacity to report outcomes.
- Balance the interest in developing new initiatives and expanding to new areas, concentrating staff efforts on managing established programs to maximize outcomes.
- Further define and refine its niche with a focus on building community capacity; strengthening assets; as well as philanthropy's capacity for community building/engagement funding.
- Strengthen its strategic involvement in policy reform efforts that would help expand opportunity for disadvantaged Twin Cities residents, especially in the post-recession period.

Contact Jackie Copeland-Carson, Nexus' Evaluation Consultant, for more information at jcc@copelandcarson.net.

NOTE: You may click on blue text for links to more information.

Nexus Development Timeline

Nexus developed in six distinct stages culminating in a mission focused on community building and engagement.



2003
Pre-planning
 (PLCP Conceptual Model Developed)

2004 - 2005
Planning
 (First Grants to Plan Initial Programs. Evaluation of Planning Process)

2006
Pilot Testing
 (Pilot Programs focused on Corridor Revitalization, Ethnic CDCs, etc. Program Development Evaluated)

2007
Strategic Re-Positioning
 (New Executive Director, Community Engagement Model Developed, Program Process Evaluated)

2008
Full Program Implementation & Scale-up
 (Core Programs Developed, Mid-point Impact Assessment, Outputs Tracked)

2009
Nexus
 (New Community Building Focus, Logic Model Initiated, Program Outcomes Evaluated)

Nexus: A Snapshot of Results from 2003-2009

A major outcome of 2009 is that PLCP completed the process of fully operationalizing its programs, including developing an initial logic model to track its results. This chart tracks many of PLCP's results, although it is still developing its strategy for quantifying some of them. And impact indicators will be updated in 2011. See the reverse for qualitative information about PLCP's results.

PLCP/Nexus Focus Area

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building neighborhood-based capacity

GOALS

- Include diverse residents in the community improvement process, activities and institutions
- Strengthen the ties of mutual support (social networks) and affinity (shared sense of future and identity) among community residents
- Promote coordination among community partners to scale and expand Community Development impact
- Build the Community Engagement field

INVESTMENTS

\$1,947,282

Grants	Contracts	Other Project-Related Expenses
\$1,659,523	\$258,350	\$29,409

Key investment examples include:

- Grants to **Casa de Esperanza**, the **Cultural Wellness Center (CWC)**, **Hope Community**, and **Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC)** for their community engagement and community outreach projects;
- Grants and contracts to **Project for Pride in Living (PPL)**, **East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC)**, and other organizations for PLCP's Technology Initiatives, including the Twin Cities Beehive project and Communities Connect Through Technology Project;
- A grant to **Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI)** for an Investment Summit;
- Contracts for research and development of Community Engagement models.

OUTPUTS

ALL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Total # of people organized/engaged in community engagement/community-improvement activities	11,228
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TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

# computers distributed	74
# families who received internet service during the project	67

CORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CE) PARTNERS

Total # of organizations participating in the Core CE group	7
# of meetings of the Core CE group	9
# of organizations attending at least 75% of meetings	5
Average attendance of organizations at Core CE group meetings	64%

OUTCOMES: To be tracked starting in 2010

PLCP/Nexus Focus Area

ASSET BUILDING

To expand, scale-up and sustain community wealth creation and development

GOALS

- Homeownership
- Wealth Creation - Financial literacy/counseling
- Workforce - Career advancement & job search
- Entrepreneurship - Business startup & retention
- Comprehensive Community Development Pilots

INVESTMENTS

\$4,027,207

Grants	Contracts	Other Project-Related Expenses
\$3,636,005	\$386,930	\$4,272

Key investment examples include:

- Grants to **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS)** and **Project for Pride in Living (PPL)** for the St. Paul and Minneapolis **Centers for Working Families**;
- Grants to **African Development Center (ADC)** and **Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC)** to support their work as ethnically-based CDCs;
- Grants to **Community Neighborhood Housing Services (CNHS)**, **Cultural Wellness Center (CWC)**, and **Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA)** to provide culturally-based services to prospective and existing homeowners;
- Grants and contracts to numerous partners to develop new financing tools to increase homeownership opportunities, such as **Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services** to create a pool of affordability financing funds;
- Grants and contracts to **Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)** for the Midtown Global Market, supporting second-stage businesses, and commercial real estate projects.

OUTPUTS

HOMEOWNERSHIP

Total # persons receiving housing-related assistance	3,773		
# persons receiving pre-ownership education & counseling	1,994	# new homeowners	429

CENTERS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

# persons who enrolled in the Minneapolis & St. Paul CWFs	429	Outcomes to be tracked starting in 2010
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WORKFORCE

# persons who received career advancement coaching	252	# persons who successfully found new jobs	45
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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

# persons or businesses who received entrepreneurial training or assistance	2,836	# new businesses PLCP grantees helped to start	71
# businesses who received assistance with commercial acquisitions	29	Outcomes to be tracked starting in 2010	
# of business loans originated	229		
Total amount of business loans originated	\$6,484,012		