



Knight Foundation Supports Positive Youth Development

Author

Wellsys Corporation
December 1, 2006

Commissioned by

Julie E. Tarr, Ph.D., Director of Evaluation, tarr@knightfdn.org
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Abstract

Knight Foundation funded 39 grants in eight communities that focused on positive outcomes for youth. To aid understanding of these grants for future decision-making, Knight Foundation engaged Wellsys Corporation to conduct this assessment for the period 2005-2007. Programs that had the greatest success and possibility for sustainability were connected to many community partners, offering joint services in some cases.

Communities

Akron, Ohio; Bradenton, Fla.; Columbia, S.C.; Columbus, Ga.; Fort Wayne, Ind.;
Macon, Ga.; Milledgeville, Ga.; Palm Beach County, Fla.;

**JOHN S. AND JAMES L.
KNIGHT FOUNDATION**

YOUTH CLUSTER ASSESSMENT

**ANNUAL REPORT
DECEMBER 2006**



This document was prepared by Wellsys Corporation.

Wellsys Corporation

3783 Presidential Parkway, Suite 113
Atlanta, Georgia
30340-9998

770-455-0928
770-455-0929 (fax)
800-293-7322

www.wellsyscorp.com
wellsys@wellsyscorp.com

Navigating directions for people and
systems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	Methodology.....	3
III.	Grants and Grantees Overview.....	4
IV.	Community Connections and Learning.....	15
V.	Assessment Findings and Results.....	21
VI.	Systems Change.....	35
VII.	Considerations for the Knight Foundation.....	39
VIII.	Next Steps.....	43

I. INTRODUCTION



The Youth Cluster Assessment includes a group of grants focused on positive outcomes for youth that the Knight Foundation has funded across eight communities. These communities include: Akron, Ohio; Bradenton, Florida; Columbia, South Carolina; Columbus, Georgia; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Macon, Georgia; Milledgeville, Georgia and Palm Beach, Florida. Among the eight Knight communities, thirty-nine grantees are currently included in the 2006 Youth Cluster Assessment.

This three-year initiative began in 2005 and was implemented to aid Knights' understanding of these grants as a cluster and to inform its perspectives, considerations, and grant making decisions. The Knight Foundation engaged Wellsys Corporation to conduct this assessment for the period 2005-2007. Wellsys Corporation's 2005 work resulted in the 2005 Youth Cluster Baseline View Report.

The 2005 Youth Cluster Baseline View Report provided an initial perspective of grantees related to funding priorities, target populations, strategy activities, expected outcomes, and evaluation activities. It also described the themes within and across the communities in these areas. Initially, the 2006 focus was to further describe and understand these investments and to facilitate shared learning for the grantees and for the Knight Foundation program directors in these communities. In May, the Knight Foundation shifted the cluster assessment emphasis to utilization by its own leadership and board:

- ❖ to inform program improvement and program development,
- ❖ to inform grant making decisions and investments, and
- ❖ to know if the youth cluster grant making was successful

This 2006 report primarily focuses on an aggregate view of grantees, community level perspectives and systems change. Three levels of analysis are provided in this cluster assessment: grantee, program, and community. For purposes of this report, these terms are defined as follows:

- ❖ A **grantee** is an organization that was directly awarded a grant by the Knight Foundation.
- ❖ A **program** is a combination of strategies and/or activities implemented by one or more organizations that individually or collectively are actual grantees. In some instances, the program is more limited in scope, e.g. a specific arts based after school program focused on theatre. In other situations, it comprises a group of individual programs which are unified by a common purpose, a shared population focus, and a shared framework. The strategies are interconnected, the activities are coordinated, and the program is viewed as a single program with a single identity, e.g. a Boys and Girls Club program (involving the combination of activities provided by the Club) or a broader "initiative."

Report Sections

- *Methodology*
- *Grants and Grantees Overview*
- *Community Connections and Learning*
- *Assessment Findings and Results*
- *Systems Change*
- *Considerations for Knight Foundation*
- *Next Steps*

- ❖ A **community** is a geographic place in which the grantee or program/initiative is based. Typically in the eight cities of this youth cluster, the community is an area focused around one or more schools and/or a specific area of the city. Though the city as a whole was not the initial focus, in some instances the program is expanding into a broader community area.

The report is organized in the following sections:

- ❖ **Methodology** – Describes the data collection methods and who participated in the assessment.
- ❖ **Grants and Grantees Overview** - Describes the focus in each community, the grantees and their interrelationships, and highlights of the programs.
- ❖ **Community Connections and Learning** - Provides a summary of activities intended to promote connections and learning among grantees, as well as two charts which can inform additional connections between grantees.
- ❖ **Assessment Findings and Results** – Describes the analytical framework, the themes identified (related to setbacks and challenges, lessons learned, and success factors), and best practices identified across all programs.
- ❖ **Systems Change** – Describes the instances of systems change identified within the cluster.
- ❖ **Considerations for Knight Foundation** – Provides insights, observations, and recommendations for Knight consideration in improving its grant making effectiveness.
- ❖ **Next Steps** – suggests topics for further Knight exploration and ways to further communicate with Program Directors about the cluster assessment findings.

A separate Report Supplement provides:

- ❖ **Information about grantees** – A chart of grantees lists each grantee, their grant start date and term. An individual profile of each grantee provides information about their target population, program components, staff and volunteers, and participants.
- ❖ **Data collection protocols** – the forms and guides used in data collection
- ❖ **Cross-community learning and connections** – Includes a descriptive contact list for grantees and other documents developed for their use.
- ❖ **Reference material** – includes supplemental documents referenced in the report.

II. METHODOLOGY

Methods

- *43 grantee interviews*
- *Conducted during visits and by phone*
- *Obtained program information forms*
- *Interviewed program directors*
- *Reviewed grant proposals and reports*

The primary data collection methods used for this 2006 assessment were document reviews and interviews/discussions. A total of thirty-nine personal interviews were conducted primarily during community visits by Wellsys consultants (four telephone interviews were conducted with individuals not available during the community visits). Grantees were provided documentation of the information to be collected during the interviews. It was suggested that the grantees prepare some of the factual information (e.g. number of participants, program cycle) prior to the interviews, so that the interview time could be spent more to discuss their experiences and perceptions. Following is a summary of each primary data collection method and its application.

1. Document Reviews: The documents reviewed included grant proposals and grant reports, as provided by Knight Foundation. In addition, grantee representatives were asked to complete a Program Information Form which captured basic program information, target numbers to be served and projected outcomes.
2. Interviews/Discussions: Program grantees were interviewed during community visits to collect information and develop insights about the program and their experiences (e.g., challenges, successes, results, lessons learned, and hopes/expectations for the future) and about their relationships and interactions with key stakeholders and other grantees. Also during community visits, the grantee evaluation plans and implementation and their reported findings were discussed. Program directors were interviewed by telephone to obtain community level perspectives about priorities, strategies, grantee interrelationships, use of local evaluation findings, and grant contributions to achieving the Community Partners Programs' goals and objectives and to civic health in their communities. The Director of the Community Partners Program was interviewed by telephone about her perspectives on the youth cluster investments and their contribution to achieving Community Partners Program goals.

Data collection tools - including the Program Information Form, the Grantee Interview Guide and the Program Director Interview Guide - are provided in the Report Supplement.

These methods were designed to support the initial priority of cross community connections and learning. The later Knight emphasis on grantee accomplishments and results was addressed within this same design. However, additional methods would further support a results focus and will be considered for future work.

III. GRANTS AND GRANTEE OVERVIEW

Across these eight communities the scope and complexity of grantees, programs activities and strategies vary significantly. Some are intentionally collaborative, yet focused on a small target population (e.g. an individual school). In another, a host of grantees was asked to focus on one geographical location, but their work is conducted in rather individual ways. In yet other communities where the investments were much smaller, grantees, while focused on providing programming in a particular school, have not been able to create the level of infrastructure and collaboration that is seen in other communities.

The following sections provide community and program level perspectives within the youth cluster. The focus is not on individual grantees, so unless a program is based with only one grantee, individual grantee highlights are not provided. To understand the similarities and differences among the community investments and individual grantees, refer to the Report Supplement for a chart of all grantees included in this cluster and an individual profile of each grantee.

Akron, Ohio

The youth development investment in Akron is centered on Perkins Activity Central (PAC), an after school and out of school time initiative connected to the Simon Perkins Middle School. The initiative was master planned and includes the school system, the school, eleven community organizations, two local universities and a marketing firm as partners. While all organizations are direct Knight Foundation grantees, they operate within the single framework of the PAC model that has a central vision and mission and that sets policies and procedures for the entire group. It is also expected that the grantees will seek ways to collaborate with one another. In other words, the entire initiative is intended to and does operate as an intentional system, not as individual pieces.

The administrative infrastructure of PAC includes not only a coordinator employed by the school system, but it also employs school personnel who assist with tasks such as transportation, recordkeeping and security. Additionally, PAC has produced uniform and branded documents for use by all participating organizations (e.g. enrollment forms, permission forms, brochures, etc). Not only do agencies providing out-of-school time programming rely heavily on this administrative support and infrastructure, the program is also perceived as being "one" program due to the attention to the whole.

PAC is well connected to Simon Perkins Middle School and realizes significant support from the school. For example, the PAC Coordinator is known as the "principal" of the after school program, PAC announcements are integrated with the in-school announcements, and after school organization representatives are often found on site connecting with teachers to raise awareness for their programs. Because of this approach, the initiative is seamlessly integrated with the school and, due to the coordinator's role, is strategically positioned within the school system.

Akron, Ohio

PAC Program

- ❖ *Program integrated seamlessly with school*
- ❖ *Highly developed infrastructure supports system of providers*
- ❖ *Provides continuum and flexibility of activities*
- ❖ *Using providers from community ensures relevance*
- ❖ *Expects providers to collaborate with each other*
- ❖ *Programming provided for parents, guardians, and grandparents*
- ❖ *Bridge programs create continuum of*

The particular grouping of grantees is intentional. The PAC Coordinator identified early in PAC development the following four emphases for programming: 1. academic enrichment; 2. health and wellness; 3. visual, media and performing arts; and 4. sports and fitness. Much attention has been paid to achieving a balance of after school programming in these areas. Within these areas, programming is provided for students and families, including parents, siblings, grandparents and other guardians. Additionally, over the term of the grant, PAC has identified grass roots organizations operating in the Simon Perkins neighborhood that show potential for making a difference with students. These organizations are selected and given a "mini-grant" to become a short term PAC provider. Examples of these include Because He Cares, Inc. an organization providing drama and theatre arts and Destiny Academy, which provides a digital photography program.

Across the providers, students are exposed to a rich variety of creative programming including extended exposure to historical sites, golf, classical music, technology, mythological storytelling and African drumming, gender specific programming, and traditional youth development programming as provided by organizations such as the Girl Scouts and the Boys and Girls Club. Families have the opportunity to engage in supportive programming aimed at enhancing communication between parents/guardians and their children.

PAC programming is offered each day of the week and on Saturday; a mix of providers allows for students to choose a variety of options. For example, students may attend one program two days a week and another program one day a week. While this approach provides students many varied opportunities, it requires significant coordination, organization and communication among providers and with the school. The above noted administrative infrastructure is crucial to making this approach work day in and day out.

In addition to the after school programming, PAC has created a broader cross school continuum. This is accomplished by offering summer programming aimed at acclimating incoming students to the school and the after school program. Another integral component, which is held during after school hours, is the high school bridge program for 8th graders.

Highlights about the Akron PAC program include:

- ❖ PAC is integrated with the school in a seamless manner and is strategically positioned with the school system as a whole.
- ❖ PAC's highly developed infrastructure has allowed for the development and maintenance of a dynamic system of providers and the emergence of a unified brand for the after school programming.
- ❖ PAC provides a variety, breadth, continuum and flexibility of after school activities and family support programs.

Bradenton, Florida

- ❖ *Manatee County Family YMCA – redeveloping program using new model; hopes to continue both morning and afternoon component*
- ❖ *Big Brothers Big Sisters – offers both in school program (Choices) and mentoring program; all students in Choices can sign up for a Big Brother or Sister*
- ❖ *Boys and Girls Club – employs teachers from school; program integrated into daily life of school; technology program resulted in national and world level awards*
- ❖ *Volunteer Services of Manatee County – provided opportunities from both schools to participate in volunteer projects*

- ❖ PAC has enlisted providers who are part of the community to ensure program relevance and a sense of community with program participants and families.
- ❖ PAC expects that its providers will operate in a collaborative way with other providers. Opportunities are sought to aid providers in capitalizing on strengths or minimizing challenges.
- ❖ Students have opportunities to help sustain their after school programming.
- ❖ Programming is provided for parents, guardians and grandparents.
- ❖ Bridge programs for rising 6th and 9th graders and a scholarship program for high school seniors help to create a continuum of opportunities and support the after school programming.

Bradenton, Florida

The youth development investment in Bradenton is centered on three organizations providing programming in two middle schools: Harlee and Johnson. These organizations include the Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County, Manatee County Family YMCA and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast. Originally, a fourth organization, Volunteer Services of Manatee County, was also included before its grant expired. It should also be noted that the grant to the Manatee County Family YMCA has also expired, but at the request of the program director, they have continued to be a part of the cluster assessment as they have maintained their involvement in after school programming at Johnson Middle School.

The work of the organizations is enhanced by informal coordination offered through an employee of the Volunteer Services. This staff member originally was employed at one of the other grantee organizations at the time the grants were made, but shifted her employment shortly thereafter. As a result her role is not funded by Knight and is, therefore, less formalized.

Big Brothers Big Sisters and Volunteer Services of Manatee County have provided services at both Harlee and Johnson Middle Schools. Boys and Girls Club manage the after school program at Harlee and the YMCA is responsible for the program at Johnson. While some coordination has been in place, these agencies have each operated their own programs. Recently, the agencies have collaborated to develop a new model for after school programming in Bradenton. The model includes five components: 1) every student will be connected to a caring adult; 2) parent education; 3) real life 101 which acquaints students with issues that will impact their present and future; 4) vision casting; and 5) high school transition.

Highlights about these providers include:

- ❖ Manatee County Family YMCA is redeveloping its program for the 2006-2007 school year to relate to the model noted above. In the past their program has included both a morning and an afternoon component and they hope to continue this approach.
- ❖ Big Brothers Big Sisters offers both an in school program (Choices) and the mentoring program for which they are best known. "Choices" is a small group curriculum for students who are referred for academic and social issues and those at risk of dropping out. It is an eight week course and students attend once per week. In the course students are engaged in discussions about values and decision making, career awareness and communication, as well as other related topics. In addition, all students have the opportunity to sign up for a Big Brother or Sister. Students on a waiting list are invited to activities offered by BBBS. A strong connection to the business community supports mentor recruitment.
- ❖ Unique to the Boys and Girls Club approach is employing teachers from the school to both coordinate and lead the after school programs. The after school program is integrated into the daily life of the school and receives substantial in-kind support from the school. For example, upon enrollment at the school, students also receive an enrollment form for the Boys and Girls Club. Announcements for the Boys and Girls Club program are made in concert with in-school announcements and the after school program is allowed use of the entire school facility as needed. The program in technology has resulted in impressive student awards at the national and world levels. Their summer program includes a hands-on career camp.
- ❖ Although this grant has ended it is worth noting that Volunteer Services of Manatee County operates Manateens, the largest locally based youth volunteer program in the country. During the term of its grant, Manateens provided opportunities for students from both schools to participate in volunteer projects.

Columbia, South Carolina

The youth development investment in Columbia is centered on after school programming for middle school students, originally in three middle schools, (Alcorn, Gibbes and Perry) and for the 2006-2007 academic year, in two middle schools (Gibbes and Sanders). The program was originally designed to supplement the school system's after school program for students requiring remediation. Students received remedial support three days a week and were offered arts based activities provided by community organizations on the remaining two school days. A school based coordinator was positioned in each of the three schools to support communication and connection with the grantee providers.

During spring 2006, through the work of a school system initiated task force, this model was redesigned, and the new model is currently

Columbia, South Carolina

- ❖ *EdVenture Children's Museum Program – focuses on leadership and exposure to new things; emphasizes student input to programming*
- ❖ *Trustus Theater – offers drama program with exposure to artistic and production components*
- ❖ *Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens – Junior Master Gardener program used to develop garden at school*
- ❖ *Columbia Museum of Art – arts curriculum matched to state standards for arts education*

being implemented. Recognizing the importance of the principal's commitment to after school programming, schools were invited to apply to receive the after school services. Two schools were chosen to receive services. Site coordinators were replaced with lead teachers who meet weekly with their respective principal. In addition, those 6th grade students not receiving remediation were to be the focus for this programming. Also, students were not to be assigned to one organization for the entire school year, but would have the opportunity to experience one in the fall and another in the spring.

After school providers include two museums, a theatre and the zoo and gardens. Although it was not originally planned that these providers would collaborate, representatives have begun to recognize the value in designing joint projects and thereby exposing students to more sites than the one to which they are assigned. Because all programs are housed on site (at the organization location), students and their families have an opportunity to be exposed to these cultural institutions over an extended time.

Highlights about these providers include:

- ❖ EdVenture Children's Museum program has a focus on leadership and providing students an opportunity to dream and be exposed to things they believe they can never do (e.g. a particular career). There is a strong emphasis on student input to programming.
- ❖ Trustus Theatre offers a drama program where students were exposed to basic acting, guest artists, set design, playwriting and play production.
- ❖ Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens offers a Junior Master Gardener program where students had the opportunity to develop a perennial garden at the school.
- ❖ Columbia Museum of Art developed an arts curriculum matched to the state standards for arts education with a focus on photography and garden design. Students made cameras, photographed the gardens near the museum and converted their photographs into note cards. Students at the museum and the zoo collaborated in developing the perennial garden at the school. University art students provided staff support for the program.

Columbus, Georgia

The youth development investment in Columbus is centered on Marshall Middle School. The grantee is the Pastoral Institute an organization that collaborates with churches, community organizations and businesses to ease the suffering and facilitate the growth and well being of all persons. Its role is primarily as a fiscal agent. Five organizations, sub-grantees of the Pastoral Institute, collaborated to provide after school and summer programming for 6th-8th grade students. A grant to the school system allows for the employment of a school based "Community Services Coordinator" who provides both in school support to students, as well as convening after school providers for the purpose of supporting them as they coordinate their activities. A shared leadership model is in place and the agencies have consistently operated on a consensus basis. In addition to

Columbus, Georgia

Marshall Middle School Program

- ❖ *Five providers offer variety of programming*
- ❖ *School coordinator supports school and program*
- ❖ *Support for the whole child is a focus*
- ❖ *Agencies share unique shared leadership and consensus model*
- ❖ *Students choose agency that best fits for them*
- ❖ *A sense of family exists among providers, participants, and families*
- ❖ *Additional programming provided to all students at the school*
- ❖ *Have a vision to expand to other middle schools*
- ❖ *Junior Achievement – provides economics education program in school*

the after school program, Junior Achievement offers an economic education class taught during school.

The after school program, Marshall Movers, is offered by the Columbus Community Center, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Girls, Inc., Columbus Urban League and the A. J. McClung YMCA. All but the YMCA's program is offered at the individual agency sites. Students are given the opportunity to choose which site they would like to attend and typically stay with that site for the duration of the school year. While some common activities are implemented (e.g. a kick off event and a finale event), the agencies generally operate their own program separately. During this past year, short term programs were identified which could be implemented at each site (e.g. a health education program) and the agencies experimented with sharing this common program. The summer program duration varies depending on the agency, and in the past has included many opportunities for field trips.

Highlights about the Marshall Middle School Program include:

- ❖ The five providers offer a variety of opportunities for students including: life skills, recreation, drama, field trips and gender specific programming for girls.
- ❖ The school coordinator position housed in the school provides support to both administrators, teachers and after school staff.
- ❖ Support for the whole child is evidenced in an number of ways, for example by the provision of basic needs items and school supplies, flexible scheduling so students can participate in school sponsored activities (e.g. sports) without jeopardizing their place in Marshall Movers, and a strong commitment to connect and communicate with parents.
- ❖ Unique to this collaboration, the agencies share leadership and operate on a consensus model. The agencies each recognize the strength of the combination of their programs.
- ❖ A variety of programming provides students with the opportunity to choose the agency that fits best for them.
- ❖ A sense of family exists among providers, participants and their families; student and parents talk about Marshall Mover staff in familial terms and see their role as that of extended family.
- ❖ Additional programming is provided to all students at the school, not just those who are participating in after school.
- ❖ In communicating the need for and progress of Marshall Movers, staff have made linkages to identified critical community needs and after school's impact on economic development.
- ❖ The organizations have a vision to expand out of school time programming to other middle schools in Columbus.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

- ❖ *Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne – leveraging shared focus on arts as a catalyst for community transformation; providing technical assistance and capacity building*
- ❖ *Euell A. Wilson Center – provides variety of after school programming; has strong relationship with school; retired teachers provide tutoring assistance*
- ❖ *Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble – teaches dance and drumming; focuses on “raising a community”; students experience elders as “surrogate parents”*
- ❖ *Foundation for Music and Arts in Elementary Education (FAME) – offers arts-based summer camp; grant funding supports scholarships for disadvantaged students*
- ❖ *Unity Performing Arts Foundation – exposes students to “soulful” art forms; music is conduit for positive youth development; maintains strong connection to the school*
- ❖ *Old Fort YMCA of Fort Wayne – offers violin lessons for students; teachers recruited from city’s Philharmonic Orchestra; philosophy for all staff to create nurturing environment*

Fort Wayne, Indiana

The youth development investment in Fort Wayne is centered on providing additional opportunities for exposure to the arts for youth residing in the southeast section of the city. Of the six grantees, five provide services directly to youth. The sixth is a foundation that conducted an assessment to identify strategies to incorporate grass roots arts organizations working in southeast Fort Wayne into the mainstream arts community. While some of the organizations are aware of one another, the cluster assessment was the impetus for their being brought together for the first time. Therefore, these organizations have been working independently and only share a common geographical focus. In all organizations, arts education is used for youth development purposes - to teach life skills, team building, leadership as well as developing real skill in music, dance, and other art forms

Highlights of these providers include:

- ❖ Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne understands the power of a shared focus on art to be a catalyst for community transformation. With the goal of creating a more inclusive arts community in Fort Wayne, they engaged in a number of trust building activities with a diverse group of arts organizations in southeast Fort Wayne. Moving forward they will be developing a diverse advisory committee and providing technical assistance and capacity building to identified arts organizations.
- ❖ The Euell A. Wilson Center provides a variety of after school programming including visual arts, dance, gender specific life skills, tutorial support, career development and recreation. The arts programming is seen as a conduit to emphasize positive youth development. A strong relationship with the school is in place, including sharing of information such as grades and behavior. Retired teachers provide tutoring assistance to students after school. They have had success with parent attendance at student recitals.
- ❖ The Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble, while externally is focused on teaching dance and drumming is internally focused on “raising a community”. Through this highly relational, family oriented program, students not only receive training in the arts and academic support, but also experience elders in the group as “surrogate parents”. Additionally, the program requires student participation each weekend for seven hours. “Peer teaching” or allowing students to have a voice in the direction of the group is a fundamental tenet of the model.
- ❖ The Foundation for Music and Arts in Elementary Education offers an arts-based summer camp, utilizing local school teachers and visiting artists from around the world. Knight Foundation funding allows disadvantaged students to receive scholarships to attend camp. Key to this program is evaluating students based on their desire and interest in the arts as opposed to the desire of their parent for them to be included.

- ❖ The Unity Performing Arts Foundation is focused on exposing students to “soulful” art forms. While music is the conduit, this program is strongly attuned to positive youth development. Opportunities for developing character and leadership are embedded in the program model. For example, youth lead the first half hour of choir practice, take attendance, and recite the mission statement. A dress code is enforced and basic courtesy and respect are expected. A strong connection to the school exists and students who require additional academic support are excused from choir practice to meet with a tutor. Strong parental participation is required.
- ❖ Old Fort YMCA of Fort Wayne offers violin lessons through the support of the Knight Foundation. Teachers are recruited from the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Orchestra with specific focus on those who can relate to all students. Other key success factors at the YMCA are the attitude that it takes all staff to create a welcoming, nurturing environment and their policy that no student under the age of 14 can be removed from a program at the YMCA.

Macon, Georgia

The youth development investment in Macon is centered on reducing teen pregnancy. Although other programs with this focus are funded by Knight Foundation in Macon, two have been included in this cluster – Students Together Against Negative Decisions (STAND) conducted by Mercer University and the Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia program at the Teen Parent Center. These programs operate independently of each other and focus on different target populations.

Highlights about these providers include:

- ❖ Mercer’s STAND is a Peer training program. A survey is used to identify youth opinion leaders in the community. These leaders are then trained to influence peers in the areas of teen sexuality. The program has a strong leadership development component and utilizes student leaders who are graduates from previous programs.
- ❖ Key to STAND’s approach is to go to communities where they are invited and have an insider on the team to facilitate relationships, as the program can be a tough sell to students and parents.
- ❖ The Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia Program at the Teen Parent Center has a high success rate of high school graduation, girls going on to higher education and no repeat pregnancies among participants.
- ❖ The program is highly integrated with the public school program (e.g. Girl Scout field trips have occurred during the school day; joint planning with school principal). The program is very popular with students and as a result the school system attempted to restrict participation in the program for those students whose school time behavior was deemed unacceptable. However, the Girl Scouts administration disagreed with this policy. Due to its program quality and high regard for it at the school, it was able to keep this restriction from being implemented.
- ❖ Focus is not on pregnancy or parenting. The program uses the standard Girl Scout material and thus is able to encourage girls to focus on their ongoing development as a young person.

Macon, Georgia

- ❖ *STAND - trains youth opinion leaders to influence peers in areas of teen sexuality; go to communities where invited and have insider to facilitate relationships*
- ❖ *Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia – program at Teen Parent Center highly integrated with school; high success rate of graduation, continuing higher education and no repeat pregnancies*

Milledgeville, Georgia

High Achievers Program

- ❖ *Strong connection exists between school and program staffs*
- ❖ *Program staffs serve as advocates for students and model behavior for parents*
- ❖ *Has developed attention in community and new ambassadors for program*
- ❖ *Mentor program exposes students to local college campus*
- ❖ *Parents experience increased sense of belonging to community and importance of education*
- ❖ *Focusing on how program can transform community approach to youth development*

Milledgeville, Georgia

The youth development investment in Milledgeville is centered on the High Achievers program which is based on the Children's Aid Society/Carrera model for reducing teen pregnancy. The program has a cohort of 30 students who began during their 6th grade year and will remain in the program through high school graduation. The program, which requires parent participation, has seven components: educational support, career awareness and job club, lifetime individual sports, self expression in the arts, comprehensive medical and dental services, mental health services and family life and sex education.

- ❖ Student participants' improvements are impacting the larger school environment.
- ❖ There is a strong connection between school and program staff that serves as advocates for students and model this behavior for parents. Program staff also intentionally nurtures strong relationships with teachers.
- ❖ Parents have indicated they have an increased sense of belonging in the community and increased understanding of the importance of education.
- ❖ A mentor program is exposing students to the local college campus.
- ❖ While the Knight grant is an investment in the participating students, there is a focus on how the program will transform the community. They are making linkages with other grant funded programs and capitalizing on other community events to connect the program to the community and talk about how youth development work is conducted in Milledgeville.
- ❖ The program has garnered attention in the community and new ambassadors for the program are speaking up. For example, the high school principal has offered support even though there are no students in the program who attend the high school. (The principal realizes that these more successful students now in middle school will be coming to the high school and provide a positive influence there.) Following a visit to the local power company by the High Achievers, employees there were so impressed by the students that they have committed to ongoing engagement with the group.

Palm Beach, Florida

- ❖ *PRIME TIME – intermediary with after school program providers; conducts quality improvement program; self assessment and staff coaching/support for providers; engaging community to embrace after school programming as its own*
- ❖ *Center for Creative Education – using professional artists for after school arts programming; teaching artists how to teach; establishing standards for program support*
- ❖ *Children Services Council – Beacon Centers – two centers utilize partnership model with schools, community organizations and advisory council; target whole family and year-round support*
- ❖ *Children Services Council – Mentoring Program – focused on increasing number of mentors of color and number of mentoring programs that meet standards*
- ❖ *City of Riviera Beach – conducts Academic Summer Camp; result of inter-local agreement between city and school; school and city staffs plan, recruit and implement program*
- ❖ *Junior Achievement – provides economics education program in school; classroom experience enhanced by real world approach; participation provides businesses opportunities for employee development*

Palm Beach, Florida

The youth development investment in Palm Beach is centered on a variety of programs benefiting students, families and youth serving organizations located in or serving the City of Riviera Beach, a section of northwest West Palm Beach and the Glades (Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay). While some of these organizations do connect as a result of the content or geographical location of their work, the initiative is not designed as a collaborative effort. The intent of the investments in Palm Beach was to impact a particular geographic region with a host of initiatives all focused on improving outcomes for youth and families in that area. The Palm Beach investment is a wrap around initiative addressing many system components - providers, families, students, and schools.

Highlights from these providers include:

- ❖ *PRIME TIME – Working as an intermediary, PRIME TIME has created a quality improvement program for after school programs. The program includes a self assessment followed by support from the PRIME TIME staff to address issues of quality identified in their self assessment. Clear that its role is an intermediary, Prime Time has developed partnerships with other community organizations that have a role to play in improving the quality of after school program. A key strategy is engaging the community to embrace this issue – after school programming for its youth - as the community’s issue. In addition to the strategic partnerships, PRIME TIME has engaged a marketing professional to help raise community awareness about after school programming.*
- ❖ *Center for Creative Education – Using a group of professional artists recruited to provide after school arts programming, the Center for Creative Education has been able to raise the quality of arts based programming in schools in the identified geographical area. A key success factor is the Center’s commitment to teaching the artists how to “teach”. In fact, a current initiative is developing a teaching institute in conjunction with a local educational institution. The program has been so successful that it has been able to influence the quality of after school programming by establishing standards which schools must meet in order to support the program.*
- ❖ *Children’s Services Council – Beacon Centers – Two centers have been established in two middle schools. The Beacon Center model is based on a partnership between schools, community organizations and an advisory council. The target population is the whole family and academic, social, recreational, cultural and economic development activities are offered year round. Success factors for these Beacon Centers include giving youth a voice in the program, focusing on the entire family (not just the child and parent(s)), hiring full time staff to ensure longevity in the relationships with the school, community and families and taking recruitment out of the school and into the community.*

- ❖ Children Services Council – Mentoring Program – This program has as its goal to increase the number of mentors of color in the designated geographical area. A key strategy to meet this goal was redesigning their marketing materials to be more relevant to the minority population. Additionally, the program seeks to increase the number of mentoring programs in the area that meet the standards set by the Children’s Services Council for mentoring programs. This would serve to bring these informal or previously unknown programs and their mentor populations into the larger mentoring population. Trust building is a key activity with these mentor groups.
- ❖ City of Riviera Beach – Academic Summer Camp for Middle School Students – This program is the result of an inter-local agreement between the city and the school district. Sometime after the school district decided they would stop summer school, they offered to provide support if the city would take on a summer program. The principals have key staff members who work with the program, and several city departments are involved with planning, recruitment and implementation. Their key strategies are a) recruiting through schools, churches, and government communications (e.g. in water bill), b) combining required academics with other activities, c) requiring activity sponsors to be certified, d) using junior counselors (most who participated in the camp), and e) having an open school policy for parents to come in at any time and having a parent’s night to engage them.
- ❖ Junior Achievement (JA) – JA contracts with the school system to provide its economics education program in the identified geographical area. JA’s strength lies in its ability to create strategic partnerships with the business community. Recruiting over 2,900 volunteers per year, primarily from the business community, students’ classroom experience is enhanced by the real world approach of these business person volunteers. These partnerships, however, are not just about business persons volunteering to teach the JA curriculum. They are also viewed as benefiting the businesses as these experiences provide opportunities for employee development. Additionally, JA has a keen eye for identifying strategic opportunities as exemplified by a recently developed employability training program to address the need for construction workers in the Palm Beach area.

IV. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND LEARNING

A primary objective for the 2006 youth cluster assessment was to facilitate cross community connections and learning among grantees. The strategies used to achieve this objective were:

- ❖ learning more details about each grantee in the cluster
- ❖ identifying characteristics or issues of each that would inform making matches and connections
- ❖ creating opportunities for grantees to learn about and interact with each other
- ❖ developing ways to make information accessible to grantees

Four methods were used to support these strategies –individual grantee interviews, information sharing and discussions at After School Alliance convenings, topic focused conference calls, and dissemination of documents through the online community (and other sources).

During the individual grantee interviews, the grantees were asked what topics would be of use to them, and with what formats learning might best occur. The following list represents a synopsis of the topics grantees indicated would be of interest:

1. Student issues: This included focal areas such as special needs students and resources related to dealing with developmental issues with youth. Some were also interested in exploring a possible student exchange across communities.
2. Parent Issues: Increasing parent engagement and involvement was the single most prevalent topic that grantees wanted to learn more about.
3. Staff Issues: The staff related issues included recruitment, retention and staff development. Several also suggested exploring a possible staff exchange across communities.
4. Program Issues: There were many aspects to the program issues of interest including:
 - a. creative and innovative programming ideas
 - b. student retention best practices
 - c. funding
 - d. evaluation
 - e. opportunities for collaboration across communities
 - f. opportunities to share program philosophy
 - g. learning about "a day in the life of" a particular program
 - h. sharing publications produced by other grantees
5. Community issues: Grantees expressed interest in better connecting with the faith-based and business communities, volunteer recruitment, community development and community awareness.

Also during these individual grantee interviews, Wellsys consultants made specific recommendations for connections with other grantees, as seemed appropriate. Contact names and phone numbers were provided to grantees for connection with another grantee(s) that Wellsys believed might be able to provide helpful perspective or practices.

Connections and learning

- ❖ *important topics and formats for learning identified*
- ❖ *recommended connections identified*
- ❖ *community highlights provided and shared with participants*
- ❖ *topic focused conference calls conducted*
- ❖ *information for identifying connections provided*

Wellsys and the After School Alliance have collaborated to enhance cross community learning by co-facilitating cross community conference calls and through Wellsys' sharing of community highlights at the Alliance's bi-annual convenings

Secondly, Wellsys participated in the After School Alliance meetings in May and October. At both conferences, Wellsys presented highlights from each community visit and facilitated a question and answer session for the grantees to connect and learn from one another.

Thirdly, Wellsys collaborated with the After School Alliance to develop the idea of a cross community conference call. Using the list of topics noted above, Wellsys and the After School Alliance prioritized topics and planned a series of calls in which grantees could participate. In August, Wellsys co-facilitated, with the After School Alliance, the first of these cross community conference calls on the topic of "Engaging Businesses in your After School Programming". On this call, Wellsys identified two grantees who had indicated particular success or creativity in engaging businesses or business persons in their programming. Representatives from these grantees provided information about their approaches and answered questions from their peers. Additionally, the After School Alliance identified Donna Klein of Corporate Voices for Working Families to serve as a guest speaker. Ms. Klein shared with the group a variety of available resources which may serve useful to grantees as they attempt to engage businesses. Finally, grantees were provided an opportunity to ask questions or make comments about what had been presented. (A summary of this call is provided in the Report Supplement.) Two additional cross community conference calls are scheduled for November and January. The November call will focus on engaging and working with the faith based community; the January call will focus on parent involvement and leadership.

Wellsys Corporation developed several documents to facilitate the cross community connections and learning including a Community Contact List (with a synopsis of each grant's purpose and contact information) and two Grantee Highlights documents (each describing four communities and its grantees). Wellsys has and will continue to inform grantees about cluster assessment findings through the After School Alliance online community.

Opportunities for Grantee Connections

In continuing the effort to enable grantees to make the most of their status as a Knight grantee within the youth development cluster, provided below are charts which identify topical areas which may be of interest to grantees across the communities. A grantee may use this section to identify other grantees that are operating in an area in which they have an interest in learning or further developing their own work. This section may also be useful to program directors that are considering grant investments and would benefit from the opportunity to discuss a topic with an organization that is providing a similar program or exercising a certain approach. These groupings may also suggest opportunities for sub-groups of grantees to connect around common needs or interests. (See Report Supplement for the Grantee Community Contact List)

Grant Content and Site	
Visual Arts	Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County Columbia Museum of Art Foundation for Music and Arts in Education Center for Creative Education
Music	Alchemy, Inc. Greater Akron Musical Association Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County Unity Performing Arts Foundation Old Fort YMCA of Fort Wayne Children's Services Council – Beacon Center
Drama	Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County Trustus Theater Pastoral Institute (Columbus Urban League)
Dance	Three Rivers Jenbe Collective
Other	PRIME TIME of Palm Beach County – Resource Library of program models and tools
Museum Based	Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens Western Reserve Historical Society (Hale Farm) Columbia Museum of Art EdVenture Children's Museum
Mentoring	Project GRAD Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast Children's Services Council – Mentoring Program
Economic Education	Junior Achievement of Georgia Children's Services Council – Beacon Centers Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches
For the Family	Caring Communities of Summit County Greenleaf Family Center Georgia College and State University Children's Services Council – Beacon Center
Gender Specific - Boys	Alchemy, Inc.
Gender Specific - Girls	Child Guidance and Family Solutions Western Reserve Girl Scouts Council Girls, Inc. Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia
Sports and Recreation	First Tee of Akron Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County Columbus Parks and Recreation Department A J McClung YMCA Georgia College and State University (High Achievers)
Science and Technology	University of Akron Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County EdVenture Children's Museum Riverbanks Zoo Society
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia Mercer University Georgia College and State University (High Achievers)

Grant Content and Site	
Youth Leadership	Boys and Girls Club of Summit County Child Guidance and Family Solutions Greenleaf Family Center Western Reserve Girl Scouts Council EdVenture Children’s Museum Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble Unity Performing Arts Foundation Mercer University (STAND) Children’s Services Council – Beacon Center
Parent Involvement Emphasis/Requirement	Greenleaf Family Center Unity Performing Arts Foundation Georgia College & State University (High Achievers) Children’s Services Council- Beacon Center
Engagement of Business Community	Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County EdVenture Children’s Museum Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches
Volunteer Recruitment	Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast Children’s Services Council – Mentoring Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches
Transition Programs	Project GRAD – Bridge to Graduation
Support for School Teachers	University of Akron
School and City Government Partnership	Columbus Parks and Recreation Department City of Riviera Beach Summer Camp

Notable Grantee Practices and Approaches

During the interview process with grantees, Wellsys learned more details about grantee programs and approaches. The following table documents unique grantee practices and highlights about which other grantees may find it useful to learn more. Some of these practices and programs are addressed in a later section on best practices.

Notable Grantee Practices and Approaches		
Community	Grantee	Description
Akron	Akron Public Schools	Commitment of the school system, role of the coordinator, PAC infrastructure, connection to the local school, PAC branding
	Alchemy, Inc.	Use of mythological storytelling and African drumming; gender specific programming; use of journals; connection to renowned scholars
	Boys and Girls Club of Summit County	Development of an after school council; flexibility of established programming
	Caring Communities of Summit County	Engaging and supporting custodial grandparents
	Child Guidance and Family Solutions	Gender specific programming; creative programming in raising self esteem and including parents; youth have a voice in planning activities
	First Tee of Akron	Program that combines identified students with those from other geographical and socio-economic backgrounds; curriculum which combines sports instruction with life skills and values, engaging the board with the program
	Greater Akron Musical Association	Exposure of students to orchestra instruments and individual instruction from symphony professionals
	Greenleaf Family Center	School based program for the entire family (parents and siblings)
	Project GRAD	Bridge Program for rising 9 th graders; mentor program; scholarship program for graduating seniors
	Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens	Ongoing student interaction at historical site
	University of Akron	Use of LEGO Mindstorm robot program; chess program; use of college campus; lunchtime sessions at the school; providing technology training and resources for teachers
	Western Reserve Girl's Scout Council	Use of service projects, field trips, and student led fundraising
	Western Reserve Historical Society	Ongoing student interaction at Hale Farm and Village; use of dramatic reenactment
	Bradenton	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Boys and Girls Club		Connection with the school, variety of programming and choices students have, technology component and its success, summer career camp
Manatee Family YMCA		New model for after school programming; before school programming
Volunteer Services of Manatee County		Manateens – the nation's largest youth volunteer organization
Columbia	Columbia Museum of Art	Use of college and graduate level art students; ongoing student engagement with the museum itself
	EdVenture Children's Museum	Use of students to plan their program; use of external role models; creative projects
	Richland One School District	Use of task force to reinvent program, use of school selection process
	Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens	Past year - Jr. Master Gardener program housed at the Zoo; current year - emphasis on habitat gardening

Notable Grantee Practices and Approaches		
	Trustus Theater	Comprehensive drama program
Columbus	Muscogee County School District	Attention to whole child's need including basic needs items and school supplies, writing program with the local newspaper; role of the Coordinator of Community Services
	Pastoral Institute and sub grantees	Shared leadership model, collaborative approach
	Junior Achievement	Job Shadow Day at a local business
Fort Wayne	Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne	The arts as catalyst for community transformation, building trust with community organizations, conducting needs assessments
	Euell Wilson Center	Recruitment strategies, student needs assessment
	Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble	Commitment required of youth, bi-cultural learning, trips to Africa, family support; program philosophy of "raising a community"
	Foundation for Music and Art in Elementary Education	Visiting artists program
	Unity Performing Arts Foundation	Leadership of youth, parent involvement, academic support, data collection system
	Old Fort YMCA	Individual violin instruction from symphony professionals; commitment to youth and their families
Macon	Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia	Youth development work with pregnant and parenting teens; building trusting relationships with school
	Mercer University (STAND)	Research based teen pregnancy prevention program; identification and use of opinion leaders; gaining trust in community
Milledgeville	GCSU	Comprehensive youth development model, use of initiative as catalyst for community change
Palm Beach	Center for Creative Education	After school arts program utilizing professional artists; institute for teachers; setting standards for after school programming at local schools
	Children's Services Council – Mentoring Program	Standards for mentoring programs, recruiting mentors and use of authentic marketing materials, building relationships with the faith based community
	Children's Services Council – Beacon Centers	Broad Community Development – after school, family support and economic development programs; youth leadership
	City of Riviera Beach	Summer academic camp requiring academic components and providing a choice of other recreational and enrichment activities. Inter-local agreement between city government and school district to support the program.
	Junior Achievement	Contracting with the school system, program development to attract business partners and meet identified community needs; volunteer development
	PRIME TIME	Quality improvement for after school programs, engaging the community in addressing an identified issue; library of arts curriculum including supplies for use by after school programming

V. ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND RESULTS

A primary intent of the assessment was to identify and understand several things about and from the cluster. Answers to these questions were sought:

- What challenges or setbacks have been experienced?
- What lessons have been learned, the successes and the failures?
- What factors contributed to their successes?
- What practices are notable or exemplary?
- What can be learned from these grantee's approaches and experiences?
- What is useful to and should be considered by other practitioners?

Sections A-G following describe the findings relative to these questions. The sections are organized as follows:

- ❖ First, the analytical framework is described – it is a systems view.
- ❖ Then collective findings are addressed. These were identified across the cluster relative to youth, parents/families, schools, and grantee organizations – each level within the system. These findings reflect the themes identified across the grantees through consultant interviews and their grant reports. The typical or common challenges, lessons learned, success factors, and results are described. An assessment of best practices for each program/initiative is developed using research-based best practices consultants have identified.
- ❖ The types of systems changes which were identified as occurring in the communities are described and examples are presented.

A. Systems View – An Analytical Framework

The overarching framework for analysis is a systems view. It is critical to understand that the youth who are the focus of each Knight Foundation grant are not being served by the grantee organization alone. They are being served by a system. Following is the systems framework the consultants developed to guide and inform their analysis.

- ❖ A system "is a group of interacting, interrelated or independent components that form a complex and unified whole." (W.K. Kellogg Foundation Youth and Education Integrating Principles, www.wkkfn.org, November 2006).
- ❖ The youth-serving systems in this cluster are comprised of the following levels
- ❖ youth at the center, the primary focus
- ❖ parents/families (or caregivers) and other individuals that wrap around the youth and that interact with them and

A systems view framework was used to analyze findings about youth, parents/families, schools, and grantee organizations across the cluster.

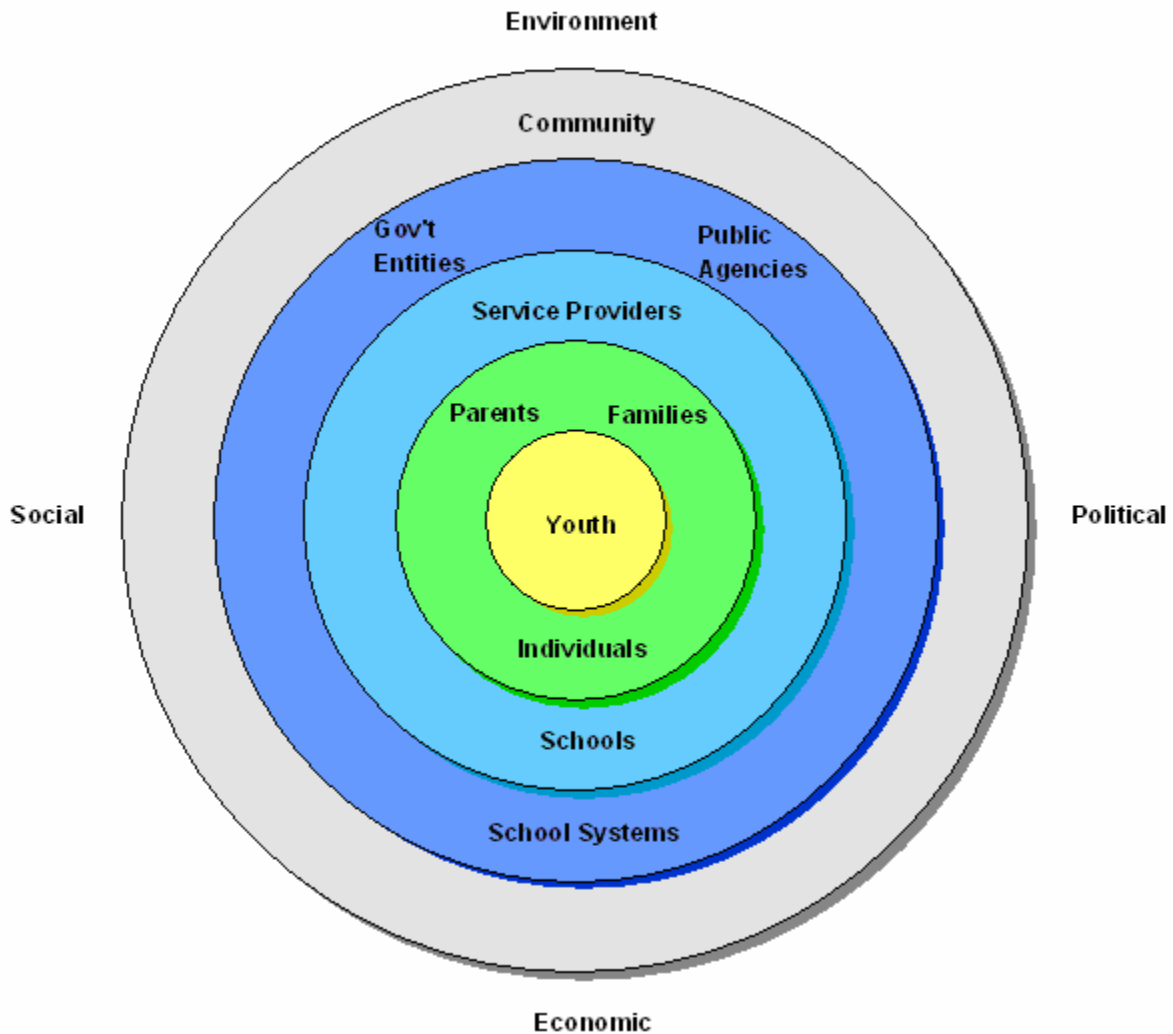
Research based best practices for after school were used to assess each program. Notable exemplars for best practices were identified.

Youth are served by a system – parents/families, service providers, schools, government, and others – not by a single grantee organization alone.

- ❖ with schools and service providers and school systems, public agencies, government entities, and others.

In combination, these levels form the community system. The Bronfenbrenner Ecosystemic Model was adapted as a construct for understanding these youth-serving systems and these interrelationships. Following is a depiction of the resulting Youth-Serving System model.

Youth-Focused System - An Ecosystemic Model



*At the **United Performing Arts Foundation** Choir in Ft. Wayne, the youth lead the first half hour of practice; they take attendance, recite the mission, share accomplishments and applaud one another.*

*At the **Pahokee Beacon Center** in Palm Beach County teens expressed a need for part time employment. A Counselor in Training program was established and older teens are now employed in the after school program.*

The community system and each of the levels and entities within it are a part of, are influenced by, and interact with each other and with factors in the broader environment - economic, political, social, and others. Interactions and relationships occur within and across these levels.

This framework guided the consultants' analysis to focus on each entity/level within the system and on the interactions and relationships between them.

B. Findings About Youth

This youth cluster of grants primarily serves middle school youth, although some programs also serve high school youth. Most youth live in community areas with high levels of poverty and generally attend underperforming schools. Therefore, their opportunities for exposure to enriching activities and academic support are limited and dependent on programs which are subsidized. Across grantees the following themes emerged in relation to challenges, success factors and lessons learned:

1. Poor student attendance was identified as a primary challenge for after school providers. Factors contributing to poor student attendance include poor grades, behavior, participation in other school related activities, standardized testing and difficult family situations. Keeping students interested over the program term also proved challenging.
2. To combat these issues, grantees incorporated the practices of engaging students in planning their activities, providing a variety of program options and allowing students to choose the options that most interested them.
3. Program providers reported observing many positive changes in personal development in areas such as social skills, confidence, creativity, behavior, self esteem, knowledge, exposure, relationships, long term thinking, a sense of ownership and pride in the program, leadership and decision making.
4. Additionally, providers reported positive changes in school related outcomes such as improved grades, success in academic competitions and an increase in overall interest in school.

By and large the grantees in this cluster are providing a variety of engaging activities and provide students an opportunity to choose the activities in which they are interested. As a result, grantees are observing positive changes in youth development and academic improvement.

*At the **Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble** in Ft. Wayne, they employ a case manager that troubleshoots family situations and intervenes in crisis situations.*

*At the **Beacon Centers in Palm Beach County**, staff are committed to reaching parents by getting out of the center and meeting parents where they may be.*

C. Findings About Parents and Families

While the primary focus in the youth cluster of grants is students, most grantees wish to have meaningful connections with parents, primarily to encourage parental support of their youth. Four of the grantees provide direct services to parents and/or guardians, either as a stand alone program, or because parental involvement is required if their student is participating.

1. Across communities and grantees, parent engagement was identified as a significant challenge. Parent involvement was hindered due to difficult family situations (e.g. illness, incarceration) and the difficulty of achieving trust of parents sometimes because they had a bad experience with the school when they were a student.
2. Difficult family situations suggest that family support needs to be attended to if programs are going to successfully engage parents. On one hand, clear expectations of parents must be communicated and conversely, programs must be able to offer support or refer to support, parents who have overwhelming needs which may prohibit them from being fully engaged with their children.
3. Additionally, a lack of parent trust which is directly related to a previous experience with the school points to the need to a strong and open partnership between after school providers and school administration.
4. Regardless of these issues, many programs did experience success in getting parents to attend events, especially events where their student was performing, and saw increased buy in of parents and an increased sense of belonging by parents who did participate.

An overwhelming majority of grantees indicated that improving parent engagement was a significant need in enhancing the effectiveness of their programming. Providing access to additional expertise in this area is a focus of an upcoming cross community conference call. Additionally, improving support to families, many of whom are impoverished will be critical in enhancing parent involvement.

D. Findings About Grantees

All but two of the thirty-nine grantees in the youth cluster are service providers, serving youth through youth development based programming. Most of their programs and initiatives incorporate after school programs, though a few incorporate out-of school time (e.g. Saturdays or summer time) activities or during school time activities. These grantee organizations include small community-based organizations, traditional youth serving organizations, schools and school systems, and others.

There are three interrelated domains to consider with these grantees – the organization entities themselves, the programming they provide, and their relationships with others. The organization mission drives the programming an organization chooses to provide. The organization capacity – leadership, staff, resources, infrastructure, practices, policies, etc. significantly impacts how the programming is implemented. Relationships with others can contribute to program implementation, success, and sustainability. The setbacks/challenges, lessons learned, success factors and accomplishments identified are related to each of these three areas and crossover between them.

Organization

1. Staffing was a recurring factor addressed by grantees, both as the source of challenges and as being instrumental for success. Program delays were experienced related to staff hiring or turnover and personal situations of staff. Retaining part-time staff was a challenge as was an increased need for volunteers. Staff development was viewed as important and a factor affecting the quality of staff and staff retention. Pay was also identified as a contributing factor to quality and retention of staff. The longevity of program staff was important for having consistency in program delivery and for sustaining relationships with youth participants and their parents.
2. The quality, background and expertise of staff were key to the success of these programs. Programs need to have enough “dedicated” staff to ensure continuity and consistency of relationships with students. Having full-time staff is key to accomplishing this. Program staff must know how to engage students, and have a holistic, developmental mindset in working with them. They understand that they are not just providing child care. The organization philosophy can affect these perspectives, for example, it is useful where the view is that all staff are important whether they work directly with the after school program or not. Such organizations understand that the organization as a system supports the program and affects the participants.
3. Dealing with paperwork and collecting data (both basic program data, such as attendance, and evaluation data) were often a challenge, particularly for organizations that relied on paper-based manual systems. Their infrastructure would limit or enhance whether they could consistently collect the needed data across all program components and then compile and organize the documentation and data to be accessible for staff.

The Old Fort YMCA in Ft. Wayne maintains a customer service centered philosophy that expects all staff to see every person as a customer; that they would not have a job if it wasn't for them. For example they have a policy of not expelling or suspending any child under fourteen.

The 2005-2006 program schedule for Perkins Activity Central in Akron identifies 22 programs for participants including three grade levels, parents and families. Program schedules allow for students to select different programs that occur on different days of the week.

4. Though many programs conducted program evaluations (at least some data collection about or from their youth) or had external evaluators, many found that the evaluations were not as helpful as they had hoped. This was due to varying factors including a) if the evaluation was designed to answer the most important questions program staff had, b) if the data they collected could be readily compiled and analyzed, c) if evaluation findings developed by others were presented in non-technical layman's terms, or d) if the evaluation findings were actionable, i.e., did the program staff know how to use them.

Programming

1. Program challenges and setbacks were most often related to logistics and infrastructure. Scheduling students across multiple activities or between different program providers was often difficult to manage. Planning, coordination, and communication within staff and with others involved, such as school partners, were key factors to success. Effective scheduling itself was not sufficient. To ensure their safety, it was critical for programs to be able to track where students actually were. Without consistent scheduling, tracking/monitoring and communications, program staff could not effectively manage their programs.
2. Starting slow and not trying to do everything at once was a lesson learned by many grantees. When trying to implement the program with every component active and in place right away, staff could be overwhelmed. This often contributed to logistics and routines not being well established, and program quality would suffer.
3. Offering a variety of activities was a clear success factor for programs. In considering activities, it was important that the activities be age appropriate and fit the students that were sought to participate. This requires that some staff members really know and understand the student population they are serving. Field trips were an important part of the activity mix, as they provided exposure to and awareness about new things and places (some literally in the students' own neighborhood). These contributed to expanding student perspectives about themselves and others.
4. Programming flexibility was also a factor in enabling the program to reach different students, to encourage attendance, and to give them the opportunity to access the variety of activities available. Though increased variety and choice increased the task of scheduling, the payoff was in sustained participation, i.e. retention.

5. Where a variety of activities were available, it was important to allow youth some choice in what they participated in, as well as to allow them to do more than one type of activity (during same school term or over different terms). This contributed to their ownership and engagement with the program.
6. Another activity-related success factor was to keep groups small or to establish subgroups within the larger participant group. This afforded the youth a better sense of individual and personal connection to the program and helped the programs manage larger numbers of students.
7. A special challenge involved “experts” who were brought in to teach the youth something. These experts might be artists, musicians, business people, etc. Some grantees have learned that these experts must be able to teach. They understand that knowing how to do something does not mean that you know how to help someone else learn to do so.

Relationships

1. Partnering with other providers helped the programs to increase the activity options available for their participants. This was accomplished in different ways where another organization a) delivered its activity or program component at the grantee site, b) provided a staff member or volunteer to assist with an activity, c) provided its own site as a field trip destination, or d) referred the grantee to other resources in the community.
2. Consistent communication and coordination with these partnering organizations helped the grantee organizations to align their expectations, practices and policies for implementing activities and to deal with problems or situations that arose.
3. In many other ways, relationships are key to program and organization success. These relationships are at different levels, with peer organizations, with different systems, etc. Grantees were most successful when they took their programs where they were invited; where there was an insider (i.e. a prior relationship) to pave the way. Successful grantees also recognized that they do not have all of the expertise and so were motivated to seek out partnerships.
4. In the broader community, these relationships contribute in part to the organization’s credibility within the community. Visibility and credibility with/within the community was also a success factor. These could be enhanced by marketing materials that communicated authentically and in relevant ways to their audiences or stakeholders. Consistent program branding helps others to recognize program based relationships between

*The organizations supporting the **Marshall Movers Program** in Columbus have sustained a shared leadership approach for their collaborative that maintains consistent communication and coordination of individual program activities.*

*Through effective relationships, **Junior Achievement of the Sun Coast** in Palm Beach has recruited nearly three thousand business community volunteers in support of their in-school programs.*

organizations and contribute to recognition by others.

5. For successful after school programs, the single most important relationship is the one with the school where their youth are based. Whether the program activities are conducted at the school or at the organization's site, this relationship requires special attention. Perspectives about the relationship with school are provided in the next section "Findings About Schools".
6. Collaboration was an important area of program accomplishments. The accomplishments included increasing the degree of collaboration – from basic communication and cooperation to coordination of practices, joint planning, and sharing resources. Collaboration occurred between program providers, between providers and schools, and between providers and businesses and others in the community. Through collaborative relationships, some programs developed outside advocates for programming and strategic alliances for program support.
7. The most important program accomplishments involved expansion and sustainability of the program and increased grant awards from other sources. Often these were the result of increased or wider program exposure and support within (and even outside) the local community.

The two remaining grantees are intermediaries and their clients are youth-serving organizations. One program provider also implements a strategy to support other providers. These organizations address two primary areas – organization capacity/development and program quality/improvement. Though their target groups are different – mentoring programs, arts-based youth programs, and generally out-of-school time programs – several themes were identified related to challenges, lessons learned and success factors.

1. Building trust is a common challenge of these grantees. Finding the program providers and/or getting them to come in was a challenge. Providers may initially view them as a threat (e.g. to steal their thunder or to judge them) or view that they are in competition with the other providers who have been engaged. Persistence helped in overcoming this challenge, for example continuing to meet with organizations (even four or five times) until they were convinced that engagement would be helpful, not detrimental. Having diverse representation from the community involved also contributed to building trust.

At the PAC Program in Akron, teacher coffees are held to facilitate relationships and information sharing between teachers and after school providers.

2. Relationships are key to success for these intermediaries. Relationships are the pathway to building trust. Having staff who are from and recognized in the local community were a significant asset. Staff members would consistently be out in the community and interacting with the people there. They became more familiar, and this visibility helped develop relationships, which also helped the intermediaries to be more effective in their own work.
3. Maintaining a supportive not judging posture was important to success. An example of this was in a shift from conducting organization assessments to having organizations assess themselves. Also, emphasizing improvement, not rating organizations contributed to a non-punitive perception. Identifying what organizations wanted and needed and then addressing those things contributed to their credibility.
4. The intermediary organization results included an increased diversity of providers engaged (that could contribute to an increased diversity of communities participating and being served) and increases in program quality by the providers.

The grantee related factors are multi-dimensional and complex. It is clear that program providers must attend to their internal system and to external relationships as consistently as they typically do to program specific issues. Given their importance, developing proactive strategies for these areas in program planning will better position their programs for success.

F. Findings About Schools

Across grantees connection with the local school(s) is a focus. The level of connection, however, varies across communities. In some communities, grantees share ownership of a program with the school and in others basic awareness and cooperation exists. The greater the extent of this relationship, the more likely the program will be effective, especially in laying a foundation for academic success.

Without a doubt, providers learned that they must have the support of the principal and school; where this support was not in place the greater the challenge in coordinating and communicating about the after school program existed and the less the program was able to operate effectively. In some cases, programs were reformatted to ensure school support. Laying a foundation for a supportive partnership would include engaging the school in the beginning of program planning and aligning around issues such as:

To ensure school commitment, the Richland One School District invited schools interested in hosting after school programs to an orientation session where expectations for host schools were communicated. Following these exploratory conversations the district chose the schools to be included.

What are the needs of the school with regard to after school programming?

1. What is the purpose of after school programming including specific goals and objectives?
2. What policies, standards and protocols need to be agreed upon? What are the logistics around transportation, food service, safety and scheduling which need to be attended to?
3. What communication patterns need to be established?
4. Who are the staff that will be responsible for operating the after school program? What support and or connection are required with school staff and for what purposes?
5. Which students are eligible for after school? Will they be ineligible if they exhibit certain behaviors during school time, or experience academic challenges?

Grantees report that schools have benefited from the after school programs in the areas of improving the professional development of teachers, improving student and teacher interactions, and changing the perception of the school in the community. A clear and aligned partnership with the school, established in the beginning stages of program planning, increases the likelihood that school and grantees alike will realize greater effectiveness and benefit.

G. Best Practices

Best Practice describes a prevention strategy or activity shown to be effective in reducing risk or promoting positive behavior via program evaluation research. Effective best practice strategies are not necessarily those which have been used the most, gained the most popularity, been around the longest, or been exchanged among the greatest number of programs. Instead, Best Practices are carefully selected and coordinated techniques that have demonstrated direct connections to desired results (Peter, N.; 2002. *Outcomes and Research in Out-of-School Time Program Design*. Best Practice Institute. Philadelphia, PA.).

Two factors presented a challenge in assessing which grantees or programs are strongest, should be invested in, and/or are using best practices. First, is the array of different types of programs, with differences in intent, scope, dosage, etc. Second, is that a detailed, common, systematic set of data is not available from which to conduct a detailed evaluation of their practices. Also given these factors, an analytic framework was developed for conducting a high level assessment. This framework utilized six research based best practices for after school programs.

Six Best Practices for After School Programs

1. *Caring and nurturing relationships*
2. *Engaging activities*
3. *High expectations*
4. *Opportunities for contributions*
5. *Continuity*
6. *Integration into school and other family support systems in community*

The best practice strategies utilized in this analysis were developed in research by Belle (Belle, D. n.d.. *Best Practices for Quality in After School Programs*. Boston University 2002.) and Vandell (Vandell, D.L., 2002, *Study of Promising After-School Programs*. Wisconsin Center for Education Research.). This research suggests that effective and successful After School Programs must incorporate the following best practice strategies:

1. Caring and nurturing relationships – programming that allows youth to find opportunities to build quality relationships with peers and at least one adult.
2. Engaging activities – activities that are experienced based, interesting, and challenging
3. High expectations - Programming focused on participant strengths and assets creates an environment with high expectations. Does the program build the whole child and not just address a problem the child is perceived as having?
4. Opportunities for contributions. Programming that allows participants to govern and shape the program. Are there opportunities in the program to contribute to the wider community?
5. Continuity. Programming that allows participants to find relationships, engaging activities, high expectations and opportunities for contributions on a continuing basis.
6. Integration of comprehensive after-school programs into the regular school program and other family support systems within the community - can yield positive outcomes for students and their families. (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.)

These best practice strategies are more limited than, though consistent with, best practice strategies research has associated with youth development programs and out-of-school-time programs.

Information available for each program was utilized to rate each with respect to the six best practice strategies, using the following ratings:

- N = There was no evidence of the best practice strategy
- Y = There was some evidence of the best practice strategy (whether a little or a lot)
- ★ = Utilization/incorporation of the best practice strategy was notable, i.e. was well developed, seemed quite strong, and would be a good exemplar for others

Though two of the programs are not considered as after school (since the activities occur during the school day), where a best practice strategy was considered applicable, a rating was made. An NA (not applicable) indication was applied where appropriate. Three of the programs involve intermediary services and supports, and so the after school best practice strategies were considered not applicable. Following is a matrix that provides the ratings for each of the youth cluster programs.

Knight Foundation Youth Cluster Programs/Initiatives - Summary Assessment of Best Practices

Program	Best Practice Strategies					
	Caring/Nurturing Relationships	Engaging Activities	High Expectations	Opportunities for Contributions	Continuity	Integration in Other Systems
Akron						
Perkins Activity Central	Y	★	Y	Y	★	★
Bradenton						
Big Brothers Big Sisters - 2 programs	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Boys and Girls Club	Y	★	Y	Y	Y	★
YMCA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Columbia						
Richland One After School Program*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Columbus						
Marshall Movers Program (including school)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Junior Achievement**	NA	N	NA	NA	NA	N
Fort Wayne						
Arts United***	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Euell A. Wilson Center	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Three Rivers Jenbe Ensemble	★	Y	★	Y	Y	N
FAME Summer Camp	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Unity Performing Arts Foundation	Y	Y	★	★	Y	Y
Old Fort YMCA	★	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Milledgeville						
High Achievers Program	★	★	★	Y	★	Y
Palm Beach						
Center for Creative Education	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	★
Children's Services Council - Mentoring Programs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Children's Services Council - Beacon Centers****	Y	Y	★	Y	★	★
City of Riviera Beach - Summer Camp	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Junior Achievement**	NA	Y	NA	NA	NA	Y
PRIME TIME***	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Notes: *Program in transition to new arrangement. **Not an after school program - integrated in instruction. ***An intermediary with after school program providers. ****After school component part of broader community development framework/model

Cluster Grant Making Successes

- *Best practice strategies used*
- *linking and relationships enhancing results*
- *opportunities accessible for underserved youth*
- *grants are a catalyst for broader changes and benefits*

Across the twenty programs assessed:

- ❖ All incorporated and fostered caring and nurturing relationships and engaging activities.
- ❖ All but one combined an environment of high expectations with approaches to build the whole child.
- ❖ Nearly all had some component that allowed the participants to shape the program; in most cases this was via participant feedback, e.g. a satisfaction survey or input regarding selected activities. Fewer had specific opportunities for youth to contribute to the wider community. Most of those were programs with a performance component (e.g. music or theatre) that brought participants into the community.
- ❖ All provided for these practices on a continuing basis, minimally over the course of a school term and, in many instances, for multiple school terms.
- ❖ Most had some level of integration into the regular school program, though only a few did so extensively. A few of these also integrated somewhat with family support systems within the community.

One of the Knight Foundation's priority questions for this assessment is whether their grant making was successful. The types of successes identified in these findings include:

- ❖ All programs incorporate most, if not all, of the best practice strategies.
- ❖ Grantees are linking with each other, developing relationships, and finding ways to enhance what they do and better serve their communities.
- ❖ Many underserved youth are accessing development and enrichment opportunities and relationships with caring adults
- ❖ Programs and activities are becoming a catalyst for something broader than their initial intent. This is reflected in the examples of systems changes described in the next section.

VI. SYSTEMS CHANGE

Though systems change was not a focus for assessment, clear examples were identified, involving multiple entities aligning and adjusting their vision, strategies, resources, practices and programming.

The Center for Creative Education is leveraging what they have learned to increase and improve the local system's capacity to provide quality arts programming for youth.

This section focuses on change in the youth-serving systems considered in these communities. Systems change was not an intentional focus of this youth cluster assessment. However, as grantees were interviewed and information gathered patterns were identified and insights developed that were considered important for Knight Foundation's understanding and consideration. Attention to this focus was heightened as Wellsys began to learn about Knight Foundation's emphasis on "transformation." It is suggested that transformation may reflect the extreme end or area of a systems change continuum. Therefore, insights about where and how systems change is occurring, whether intended or not, would be useful for Knight Foundation.

To guide the assessment of systems change within this cluster, the system definition and youth-serving Eco-systemic model established in an earlier section were utilized. Additionally, it is understood that "The underlying nature of change is that it is an ongoing, dynamic and evolving process driven by negative, neutral, or positive forces" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation Youth and Education Integrating Principles, www.wkkf.org, 2006). Systems change, as considered for this youth cluster assessment focuses on:

- ❖ The changes initiated or catalyzed by individual programs and involving more than one component of the youth-serving system.
- ❖ Changes in one or more areas - vision, strategy, leadership resources, practices, policies, and programming/services.
- ❖ How components of the system serving youth (i.e. parents, schools, service providers, community organizations, etc.) change to better align with one another to improve or expand youth programming and to achieve greater results for youth

The cluster assessment was not designed to address systems change within each of the programs and communities, i.e. to systematically gather appropriate data across all cluster grantees. Consequently, Wellsys chose to describe clear examples which have been identified. (More intentional data collection may be planned for Year 3 of the cluster assessment, should this preliminary view prove useful to Knight.)

Through this youth cluster assessment, several instances of systems changes were identified. Some are in an early forming or potential stage, some are rather well developed, and others are in between. Some are on a smaller scale, involving fewer system components or focused on a smaller population. Some are on a larger scale, involving many more system components or focused on a wider population. Following are examples of the most evident systems changes developing or occurring within these community systems.

A. Schools and Service Providers – The Center for Creative Education (CCE) in Palm Beach conducts arts-based after school programs for middle-school children in Palm Beach communities. CCE restructured its approach in 2006 and expanded its scope to systemic change. Based on years of experience, they have pulled out from programs to underfunded and underdeveloped groups. They are clear about what works in their after school programs and the external factors required to make

Perkins Activity Central is engaged in all aspects of systems change – involving more than one component of the system; changes in vision, strategy, leadership, resources, practices, policies, and programming/services from what was provided in the past; and total realignment of system components to improve and expand youth programming.

Milledgeville's High Achievers Program has become a catalyst for bringing together different parts of Milledgeville's community to develop a shared approach for better serving their youth.

them work. They are leveraging what they have learned to increase and improve the local system's capacity to provide quality arts programming for youth. Their strategies include:

1. Conducting fewer programs – allows for more time and contributes to greater impact for each program
2. Establishing program support requirements and expectations of program sites, including schools – ensures that the leadership and environment will be conducive to a successful program.
3. Creating an institute where artists can come and be trained to teach (part of a new arts center building) – increases the quality of artist instructors
4. Paying artists for training with a proper wage, supplies, travel reimbursements – helps attract quality people to training
5. Creating a certificate program for artist instructors – contributes to quality standards and increases the pool of quality artist instructors

- B. School Systems, Public Agencies, Government Entities – Perkins Activity Central (PAC) of Simon Perkins Middle School in Akron is an after school and out-of-school time initiative. The PAC program utilized a systems based approach from its inception. Planning for the initiative involved the Knight Foundation Program Director, the school system (especially the superintendent), the school, the PAC coordinator, and others. The program now involves eleven community organizations and two local universities. The vision was not to simply implement after school programming, but to establish an integrated system for youth programming within this middle school. This required a change in how these entities might typically work with each other. It also required changes in the school's structure, staffing and operations.

All of the partners work within the single framework of the Perkins Activity Central model. The PAC Coordinator is known as the "principal" of after school; PAC announcements are integrated with the in-school announcements and after school providers are often on site connecting with teachers. The result is a seamless integration with the school. With PAC's initial success, the Akron Program Director and school superintendent, with others, are developing plans for implementing the PAC model at another school in the district. All aspects of systems change – involving more than one component of the system; changes in vision, strategy, leadership, resources, practices, policies, and programming/services from what was provided in the past; and total realignment of system components to improve and expand youth programming.

- C. Community

1. Milledgeville High Achievers Program has replicated the Carrera/Children's Aid Society teen pregnancy prevention program (a long-term holistic intervention) for a single cohort of youth. The Carrera program is widely recognized as a research based effective model for teen pregnancy prevention, and the High Achievers Program has worked to implement that model with fidelity. As their program's effectiveness is becoming known in the Milledgeville community, additional parts of the community are becoming engaged with them and providing support. For example,

Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne's vision is for the arts to be a catalyst for community change.

Over time, PRIME TIME is positively impacting multiple levels of the youth serving system in Palm Beach.

the high school principal has offered much support, recognizing that his school will benefit from these students as they matriculate to the high school.

Georgia College & State University (the Knight Foundation grantee) has begun leveraging awareness about the program to gain support for sustainability and to explore how the program can be expanded to serve more youth in the community. Members of the community are realizing that the broader needs of youth in Milledgeville would be well served with access to this type of programming. Plans are underway to convene all after school providers in Milledgeville to create momentum for youth development in their community. What began as a program to serve thirty youth has become a catalyst for bringing together different parts of Milledgeville's community to develop a shared approach for better serving their youth.

2. Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne is working to create a more inclusive arts community in Fort Wayne. Their vision is for the arts to be a catalyst for community change, as it provides a language and means to talk that builds commonalities across diverse people, organizations, and community segments. Through their planning grant funded needs assessment, they identified support needs of groups that produce cultural opportunities for youth, especially those working in underserved communities. Through that process they met with many small groups, learned of many others, and began to build trust and relationships.

Their youth-focused grant will involve developing a diverse advisory committee and providing technical assistance and capacity building to identified arts organizations. Their intent is that the community system will change in multiple ways including:

- ❖ Organizations previously unknown to each other interact with each other and develop relationships.
- ❖ Linkages form between the diverse arts segments, such as an integrated arts calendar, cross promotion of events, etc.
- ❖ Diverse community residents become aware of and increase their support for the broader, diverse organizations in Fort Wayne
- ❖ Recognition of Fort Wayne's larger and diverse arts community draws more people from outside of the city to local performances and events, contributing to local economic development.

3. PRIME TIME of Palm Beach is focused on the capacity and quality of the youth-serving system. Their quality improvement program for after school programs provides self-assessment and support resources to address quality issues. Through partnerships they are linking with other community organizations involved in improving after school program quality. Beyond their intermediary role with program providers, they are developing strategies to engage the

community to “own” the issue of after school programming for its youth. These include strategic partnerships, community-wide marketing on behalf of after school programs, and events such as Lights On After School.

Over time, multiple levels of the youth serving system in Palm Beach are being positively impacted:

- ❖ Increased quality of after school programs
- ❖ Increased number and stability of program providers
- ❖ Increased relationships and linkages between providers
- ❖ Increased community awareness and support of the importance of after school programs
- ❖ Increased community priorities and resources to support after school programs
- ❖ Improved outcomes for more youth

VII. CONSIDERATIONS FOR KNIGHT FOUNDATION

Effective leaders often go beyond the general expectations of a grant due to their ability to understand and use the grant as a catalyst for even greater change or impact.

The cluster assessment provided opportunities for Wellsys to be engaged with many parts of the Knight Foundation system. Connection with youth, grantees, community advisors, program directors, and other Knight staff afforded an outsider's perspective on how the system is functioning on a number of levels. This section seeks to provide insights, observations, and recommendations that may be useful for Knight staff to consider and discuss as it works toward improving the outcomes of its grant making. These insights and observations are grouped in the following categories: grantee leadership, evaluation and institutional learning, the program director's role and Knight's role in sustainability of community initiatives and partnerships.

Grantee Leadership

Across communities and grantees, a common success factor is leadership at the grantee or program level. Initiatives where there is strong, empowered and well positioned leadership develop and operate more organized programs, initiate and maintain sustainable relationships (both internal and external), impact systems more broadly, and create and communicate the initiative's vision more effectively. Less effective leadership in a best case scenario may result in successful completion of the grant (i.e. deliverables are met, but the grant has not served to further long term work in the identified area), and in worst case scenario may result in program failure (i.e. some or all deliverables are not met). Conversely, effective leaders often go beyond the general expectations of a grant due to their ability to understand and use the grant as a catalyst for even greater change or impact. Examples of each of these scenarios can be found in this youth cluster. Effective leadership was identified by all program directors interviewed as a critical component to initiative success.

Therefore, it is suggested that Knight consider its grant making as an investment in leadership and as such, develop ways in the grant making process to assess the likelihood that an organization's leader is well positioned and exhibits the skills noted above. Contingency plans should be discussed so that if an identified leader discontinues their direction of a project, the organization well understands Knight's expectation for their replacement. In some cases, it may be advisable to engage the organization's board of directors in the grant making process so these expectations are supported throughout the term of the grant.

Ongoing support of leadership in the form of specific leadership development opportunities is also suggested. This has occurred to some extent through the engagement of the After School Alliance which has provided opportunities for grantee and program leaders to engage with the larger after school community and expand their resource base in the area of after school programming. Program directors may also have a role in nurturing of leadership in their local communities and further discussion on formalizing this is recommended.

Developing an evaluation approach which includes an accountability policy is crucial in protecting Knight's investments in its communities.

Evaluation and Institutional Learning

Knight Foundation is in the process of defining its understanding of the role and purpose of evaluation. Having named a Director of Evaluation at the beginning of 2006, it is clear that the foundation is committed to establishing an effective evaluation approach. It is hoped that the following considerations, in the areas of evaluation communication, grantee reporting, accountability structure, and internal learning will provide opportunity for further reflection on and refinement of the Foundation's thinking about evaluation.

An effective evaluation approach begins with a well defined vision and supporting goals. Communicating the vision and goals to grantees, along with the supporting evaluation approach as a part of the grant making process will serve to help grantees understand Knight's desired outcomes and, in turn, will help grantees determine how their mission and vision fits with Knight's and the evaluation approach they will need to be able to sustain. It is crucial for Knight to outline these expectations up front so that grantees can consider requirements for data collection and reporting during the development of their proposal. Evaluation often requires capacity which is not readily available and, as such, needs to be included in the grant budget. In many cases, Knight has provided a grant to an outside evaluator, but this does not address the grantee's need for additional capacity to support data collection and management or adjust program schedules to allot time for evaluation activities.

Developing an overall evaluation approach will result in revision of grant reporting requirements to include capturing basic process data and matching results to activities in a rigorous fashion. The current grant reporting form and process is not being used in a way that provides opportunities for Knight to determine whether deliverables are being met or outcomes attained. This issue points to the larger issue of Knight's structure for ensuring grantee accountability to their contract. In some youth cluster communities a lack of formalized structure for how grantees are held accountable has been observed. This void has resulted in these situations either being ignored or dealt with in ways that are less than productive for Knight, the community and the grantee. Developing an evaluation approach which includes an accountability policy is crucial in protecting Knight's investments in its communities.

An effective evaluation approach also requires providing opportunities for internal learning on an ongoing basis. Providing opportunities for program directors to routinely and systematically learn from one another and from the external evaluations which are conducted is a crucial component of internal learning. While the youth cluster assessment has allowed opportunities for grantees to learn from one another, this philosophy also needs to be internalized so that program directors have time and space to learn best practices, share lessons learned and assist each other in strategizing around issues based on their experience. Additionally, this individual learning should become "collective" by the creation of an institutional knowledge base which can be accessed by all Knight Foundation staff members and shared externally where appropriate.

Providing opportunities for program directors to routinely and systematically learn from one another and from the external evaluations which are conducted is a crucial component of internal learning.

One factor to the success of grant making in a community appears to be related to the Program director's individual history with the community and system within which they are working.

"Community capital" is the community and institutional knowledge and relationships that long time program directors can leverage for more effective grant making.

Grantees express concern about the expectation of sustainability and how to achieve it.

Program Director's Role

During the last year at Knight, the title of that Knight Foundation staff member assigned to an individual community as Knight's local representative changed from program officer to program director. It is the consultants' understanding that this is intended to reflect a position that is seen as a community leader who is connected to the power structures in each community. As the understanding of the position continues to transition during this time the following considerations may be helpful. Another contributing factor to the consultant observations in this area is related to the turnover of program directors in several of the cluster communities during this year. This turnover is disruptive to the community initiatives, although it appears that attempts were made for successful transitions.

One factor to the success of grant making in a community appears to be related to the Program director's individual history with the community and system within which they are working. Those who are embedded into a community because they have lived and worked there for an extended time are able to leverage their community and institutional knowledge and relationships to support a program's success. This "community capital" allows the program director to conduct more insightful grant making, to engage with the initiative in a less formalized way and also creates a different foundation for accountability. These program directors appear to provide more consistent communication regarding the initiative's vision and Knight's expectations. This involvement can take the form of coaching and mentoring leadership, working behind the scenes to assist in problem solving and opening doors, and taking care that the original vision is sustained. While program directors without this same level of "community capital" are not unsuccessful, they must work harder at creating liaisons and initiating change and generally have less "clout" in a community. These deficits can impact the long term success of an initiative and make it more difficult for program directors to keep grantees on track.

In general, program directors view their role as the "face of Knight" in the community, as a resource to both the Community Advisory Council and to grantees, and to encourage other community investment in the project. It appears to be more difficult for program directors to sustain this in situations where they live in one community and represent another.

Sustainability

It is generally stated as an expectation of Knight's grantees in this cluster that they are working toward sustainability beyond the Knight grant. Due to the different grant award dates and terms, grantees in the cluster are in varying stages of sustainability discussion and planning. Regardless of the stage, however, grantees express concern about this expectation and how to achieve it. Oftentimes, the grant award does not provide them the capacity to support sustainability activities. In some cases, existing systems will incorporate parts of the programming into their general operating budgets, in the majority of others this is not an option, and additional grant

funds will be sought. In these cases, it appears that sustainability is really defined in terms of how the program will identify a donor from year to year. The following list of questions is intended to support Knight staff discussion around sustainability:

1. What does sustainability mean?
2. What are Knight Foundation's expectations with regard to sustainability?
3. What resources does Knight Foundation provide or leverage to promote or support sustainability?
4. What are grantee options and pathways to sustainability?
5. What is Knight Foundation's role with regard to sustainability?
6. What types of resources are required and/or considered in the grantee's proposed budget that can be used to support sustainability?
7. What is Knight Foundation's role or responsibility in assessing up front whether or not a system can likely sustain a program or initiative?
8. How should or does Knight Foundation leverage its resources and/or influence, e.g. through program director to contribute to sustainability prospects?
9. To what extent is Knight Foundation leveraging their resources and intentionally seeking collaboration with other donors up front during program planning– e.g. providing leadership, being a catalyst, shining the spotlight and raising up for recognition the identified program?

Though leveraging of partnerships are known to occur in other cases of Knight's grant making, (e.g. what's cited in Knight's newsletter about "After the Storm..." with local groups matching Knight's funding...), the principles can be applied at smaller and lower levels, not just when it's a whole neighborhood or community but for a single program or grantee that is/has potential to more broadly impact and benefit the system.

VIII. NEXT STEPS

An intentional and more systematic look at systems change at the community level. This would provide an opportunity to explore in more depth the systems changes which are occurring in communities, to identify what is contributing to those changes, and note ways that Knight could intentionally support this momentum.

Exploring with grantees their experiences related to attaining sustainability and what role Knight might assume in ensuring their success.

Exploring and developing tools and resources related to leadership development. For example, creating an organization assessment tool specific to leadership capacity, infrastructure and relationships which could be used during the grant making process.

Facilitate exploratory exercises with program directors to help them determine useful methods for internal learning; develop requirements and specifications for internal learning.

Based on findings of the youth outcomes survey being conducted by the National Research Center across the cluster, develop a community level view which identifies relationships between the outcome results and their community context.

During the course of this 2006 assessment, the consultants have heard program directors discuss the idea of community transformation as the stated goal of Knight's grant making. However, on the whole, staff lacks clarity about the terminology, its meaning and how to operate within the vision. Further specificity, beyond the vision for transformation, about Knight Foundation's role or contribution to it would provide a broader basis for shared clarity, alignment, buy-in and effectiveness for program directors. This clarity would also aid grantees in understanding the larger picture of Knight and how they can best support that vision.

While this cluster assessment has sought to provide the findings and insights on a number of topics, it is recognized that interrelationships, nuances and insights can best be understood through interactive dialogue. This dialogue would be more valuable and actionable with program directors engaged and contributing their own perspectives and responses, and would in effect provide an opportunity for cross community and system learning. To that end, the Wellsys team offers to facilitate a session focused on these areas. This dialogue would also present an opportunity for the consultants to learn feedback about the findings and better understand areas of interest and priorities for the assessment in 2007.

Other areas to consider for exploration in 2007 which may yield helpful information and insights include:

1. An intentional and more systematic look at systems change at the community level. This would provide an opportunity to explore in more depth the systems changes which are occurring in communities, to identify what is contributing to those changes, and note ways that Knight could intentionally support this momentum.
2. Exploring with grantees their experiences related to attaining sustainability and what role Knight might assume in ensuring their success.
3. Exploring and developing tools and resources related to leadership development. For example, creating an organization assessment tool specific to leadership capacity, infrastructure and relationships which could be used during the grant making process.
4. Facilitate exploratory exercises with program directors to help them determine useful methods for internal learning; develop requirements and specifications for internal learning.
5. Based on findings of the youth outcomes survey being conducted by the National Research Center across the cluster, develop a community level view which identifies relationships between the outcome results and their community context.

The opportunities for the Knight Foundation to improve and grow as a result of the cluster assessment are significant. Just as highly successful grantees have capitalized on Knight funding to realize greater gains than were intended, it is hoped that Knight may do the same with the cluster assessment findings. While these results do inform the Foundation's grant making in the area of youth development, they also allow an opportunity to

establish foundational practices which will support other areas of grant making and Knight's ongoing operations. Making the most of these opportunities will position the Foundation for even greater success.