

Outcome Evaluation for Neighbourhood Centres

December, 1998

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Coalition of Neighbourhood Centres*

Summary Report

The CNC Outcome Evaluation Initiative *

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* Please note: CNC member agencies merged with TANS agencies in 1999 to form Toronto Neighbourhood Centres - TNC

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I) Introduction

This report is designed to support the efforts of community-based, multi-service, non-profit social and health service organizations (Aneighbourhood centres@) as they strive to specify and measure the outcomes of their work. Over the past year and a half, the Coalition of Neighbourhood Centres (a network of fifty neighbourhood centres across Ontario), through its **AOutcome Evaluation Initiative@** (see AProject Description@ section VII of this report for details) has worked to locate and develop evaluation models and instruments that might be helpful in this regard.

The series of reports generated from this work are organized as follows:

Summary Report: The CNC Outcome Evaluation Initiative

This report outlines our general observations and recommendations regarding the use of Outcome Evaluation in Neighbourhood Centres, and provides a brief summary of the other two reports ABeginners Guide@ and ATools and Resources@.

Beginners Guide to Outcome Measurement

This report familiarizes readers with the basic principles of outcome evaluation, definitions, evaluation process, and options regarding measurement tools.

Tools and Resources

This report provides readers with information on further resources relating to outcome evaluation.

The materials presented should help agencies focus more precisely on how, and in what circumstances, outcome evaluation might be used to support their evaluation goals. We hope as well that the report will further the efforts of staff, community members, supporters, and funding partners, as they work together to develop practical and effective methods for evaluating the impact of community services in people's lives.

Your feedback and comments on this work would be appreciated. You can contact the project coordinator, Rob Howarth, by fax care of Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre in Toronto (416-656-1264), by e-mail to rhowarth@interlog.com, or by visiting the website (<http://www.interlog.com/~cnc>) and leaving your comments on its guestbook.

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II) Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation of community-based services is not a new phenomenon. Basic evaluation questions such as: 'Is the program effective?', 'Are we reaching the expected target group?', and 'How could we improve what we do?' have been an implicit part of the design and revision of these services since their inception. Most agencies also collect statistical data which helps them to assess the impact of the work they do. Common evaluation approaches have included: soliciting ongoing client feedback (informal and structured client satisfaction reports); holding key-informant and focus group discussions about program achievements and gaps in services (needs assessments; strategic planning); comparing program models, and developing strategies for better integration of programs across the sector (examining best practices, collaborative initiatives, community systems).

In the past few years, however, organizations have felt increased demands to demonstrate program effectiveness more rigorously. Outcome evaluation is being advanced by a growing number of funders as a necessary procedure, requiring agencies to more explicitly formulate their assumptions regarding program effectiveness, and gather data demonstrating program results. As Canada's National Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector notes in their Discussion Paper, of May 1998: 'The demand for assessment of impacts and outcomes is increasing: funders set standards as part of service contracts and require results-based performance. In addition, the public, including major donors, are also asking voluntary organizations to show that they do, in fact, make a positive difference rather than merely being well intentioned . . . Outcome measurement and social auditing are the way of the future.' In this context, then:

There is increased pressure for agencies to document and communicate information that can clearly demonstrate the impact of their work. Such efforts are critical, not only in order to secure continued financial support, but also as a way to strengthen community support for the proposition that community-based social services have a significant impact on the well-being of our communities.

Outcome evaluation work requires the commitment of significant levels of time and expertise if it is to be carried out effectively. Each stage of the evaluation process, from defining outcomes and developing measurement tools, to data collection, collation, and reporting are extremely time consuming. In the absence of significant support for on-going evaluation efforts at the sector-level (e.g. evaluation institutes, evaluation activities integrated with funders work or allocations, free or subsidized consulting), individual community organizations and their funders are faced with a serious dilemma. They can limit their evaluation goals to the study of modest outcomes using simple techniques, or divert resources from service-delivery to help build evaluation and research capacity across the social services sector. To address this dilemma, we recommend that:

Agencies and their funders should select a sample of programs for in-depth evaluation, rather than measuring the outcomes of every program. Limited resources could then be effectively focussed on the evaluation of a few representative programs within a given category (e.g. specific community, agency, or service-type). The resulting learning could then be generalized to all programs within a given category.

Neighbourhood Centres may be able to draw upon previous outcome evaluation efforts to support assumed links between their short-term program outcomes, and longer-term results. Agencies should not, however, expect to generate meaningful outcome evaluation results from a modest program-level collection of data. In this regard we recommend that:

Neighbourhood Centres should set practical goals to achieve outcome MEASUREMENT, but should not expect to implement more in-depth models of outcome EVALUATION without intense research support.

Some of the underlying assumptions and implementation challenges of outcome evaluation may make it poorly suited for analysing certain program activities. Many implementation challenges are not, in our opinion, effectively addressed by current

outcome evaluation tools or strategies. For example:

- we have found no psychometric measurement tools that have been tested across a significant range of cultures, languages, and literacy levels, such that they could be said to provide reliable data when used with our program participants,

- we have found no strategy for measuring outcomes in any rigorous fashion where participants are highly transient, or are linked to services for very short periods of time,

- we have found no simple strategies for linking the outcomes of program-level interventions to broader initiatives and changes at a community level

This is not to suggest that the outcomes of neighbourhood centre activities are unmeasurable. To measure them effectively, however, would require the development of more practical evaluation tools than presently exist, and the dedication of significant resources to support on-going data collection, analysis, longitudinal and background research. Such evaluation efforts reach beyond the scope of individual community agencies. In this regard, we would recommend that:

Key funders of community services (such as different levels of government, foundations, and United Ways) work with agencies to:

- determine more precisely the type of social change, accountability, or human behaviour questions they wish to study;

- link with social policy institutes and university/college research departments to start a coordinated monitoring of outcome evaluation initiatives in other provinces/ countries;
- compile summaries of evaluation literature in given fields, and find ways to disseminate the results so that they can be used by practitioners at the program level.

III) Opportunities

A) CLARIFYING GOALS AND REFINING PROGRAM DESIGN

Undertaking outcome evaluation at the program level can promote more explicit thinking about the intended impact (i.e. anticipated *Outcomes*) of the program or activity, and how the achievement of the desired effects might be verified (i.e. *Indicators*).

Agencies have found the first steps of outcome evaluation, those of writing outcomes and indicators, and linking them to program activities, to be a helpful process for clarifying program goals.

Test agencies participating in the CNC Outcome Evaluation initiative have noted the most significant benefits as being the clarification of staff thinking and questioning regarding their program models. Outcome evaluation can promote positive discussions with staff and participants about the specific intentions of a program. Data gathered on outcome evaluation can provide an important support to staff, either by re-affirming or positively challenging assumptions about the impact of the work they do for others.

For example, consider a supportive housing program. An examination of outcomes may promote useful discussion about whether the program's primary focus is to provide the greatest number of people with access to short-term housing, or ensure that residents have the life skills and resources needed to maintain their housing over an extended time. In the first instance, the program would try to maximize the number of people housed, and might promote, or at least accept high tenant turnover rates. In the second case it might instead develop programs intended to lower turnover and demonstrate decreased rates of transiency.

In the case of a child-care program, its design may be influenced by considering whether the primary goal is that of safe and affordable child care, or whether there is to be equal attention paid to the desired outcome of enhanced child development, or improved parenting skills.

In addition, whenever program participants share in the process of identifying intended

outcomes, critical information emerges about the similarities or differences between the participants, the agency, and the funder's definition of program success.

For example, some English-as-a-second language programs have been challenged by the fact that participants have no desire to advance to higher levels of instruction. This is because they wish to stay with their classmates who have become their primary social support network in the community. A familiar setting and emotional support have become more important outcomes for some participants, while the intended outcomes of the program staff and the funder remain more specifically focussed on the acquisition of language skills. Identification of these divergent expectations could lead to redefining the program model with the funder, perhaps integrating social support and skills-development activities in innovative ways to meet multiple goals.

IV) Challenges

A) ADEQUATE EVALUATION RESOURCES

At the sector level, it would more practical to select a sample of programs for in-depth evaluation. Limited resources could then be focussed on the evaluation of a few representative programs within a given community, agency, or service-type.

Outcome evaluation work requires the commitment of significant levels of time and expertise if it is to be carried out effectively. Each stage of the evaluation process, from defining outcomes and developing measurement tools, to data collection, collation, and reporting are extremely time consuming.

Intensive evaluation efforts are required to understand how community well-being (however defined) may be variously affected by economic changes, social policy changes, program-level initiatives, and broader efforts to promote community cohesiveness and capacities.

At the program level, critical and basic building blocks for change, such as increased empowerment, self-esteem, or self-efficacy may be poorly measured using simplified evaluation models. This is especially true when we acknowledge the role that culturally-based assumptions have in shaping such concepts. Behaviours, such as making eye-contact, and asking staff for support, that may signal increased confidence in one culture, represent increased despondency or distress in another. Such complexities will be central to any evaluation work in neighbourhood centres, as they commonly work with people from numerous cultural backgrounds. At present, tested research tools that address these complexities are not available.

Work to develop appropriate measurement tools and in-depth evaluation strategies are presently beyond the practice and indeed the mission of many non-profit community agencies. One possible strategy to address this dilemma at the sector level is to select a sample of programs for in-depth evaluation, rather than measuring the outcomes of every program. Limited resources could then be focussed on the evaluation of a few representative programs within a given category (e.g. community, agency, or service-type). The resulting learning could then be generalized to all programs within a given category.

For example, funders of settlement service programs across Ontario could choose a few programs that they fund, and commit significant resources for the study of their effectiveness. This approach would enable not only the documentation of short-term outcomes, but also extensive research on the effectiveness of settlement service programming in other provinces and countries, and important longitudinal follow-up to understand the longer term impacts of programs. The quality of learning gained from this research design could prove to be more helpful than the more limited data obtained by requiring outcome evaluation efforts from every settlement service program across the province.

B) DETERMINING A DESIRED@ OUTCOMES

Difficulties can arise at the initial stages of evaluation if there are divergent or unclear expectations held by participants, funders, and delivery agencies regarding the intended outcomes for a given initiative. Where possible, these varied and sometimes conflicting expectations need to be identified and resolved before conducting outcome evaluation. The following questions illustrate challenges that may arise in this regard:

Will A Success@ be broadly or narrowly defined?

For example, are an employment program's outcomes of A participants' increased skill and confidence levels@ included in its definition of success, or is a successful outcome to be defined more singularly as A the attainment of employment@?

Are shorter-term outcomes sufficient?

Is there agreement that an outcome such as A enhanced social networks@ is sufficient, or would this shorter-term outcome need to be shown to have an impact on longer-term or related outcomes, such as A decreased incidence of depression@ or A increased reliance on friends in times of crisis@?

Are the expected outcomes realistic given the time-frame of the initiative?

- Are changes in participant's parenting styles to be expected after first contact with a program; within a few months?, a number of years?
- Can influences at an institutional level be expected of a program that is intended to operate for a short time (e.g. awareness and education efforts to change levels of racial intolerance)?

To what degree can a program expect to succeed despite changing external factors?

- Should an employment program be expected to demonstrate similar levels of success regardless of changing labour market conditions?
- How should a housing program re-define Asuccessful@ levels of client placement to reflect a reduced availability of affordable housing?

Whose outcomes and indicators are to be examined?

- For example, an agency intends to measure increased support networks and self-esteem resulting from an after-school program, but the funders wish to know how many youth stay in school longer, or have reduced truancy rates.

C) DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES

Significant challenges for an outcome evaluation plan arise at the stage of implementation, when measurement tools and data collection processes may prove to be poorly suited for obtaining useful and reliable information about some important outcomes. These challenges include:

Lack of appropriate measurement tools.

- can surveys and questionnaires that have been developed and tested with predominantly well-educated middle class respondents, who are often of the dominant culture, provide reliable results when used with people of diverse cultures, languages, and literacy levels?

Lack of practical data collection strategies.

- how can the information necessary to demonstrate changes over time be collected from participants who have one-time or sporadic contact with a given program, and whose transiency precludes follow-up contact by phone or mail?

Can agencies gather their own outcome data (using program staff or volunteers) without creating unacceptable levels of bias?

- is it necessary in all cases to carry out data collection using Aoutside@ evaluators in order to diminish bias introduced if program staff are directly involved?

Can appropriate comparison data be found?

- does information exist that can be used to compare program participants= outcomes to other groups of people who have not been affected by a program=s activity?

Should data collected be standardized to allow for comparisons with other programs?

- do agencies or funders want outcome evaluation data and reporting that will not be comparable across programs/agencies - or is there a need to develop some common evaluation questions/techniques? If so, is it possible to develop such techniques without overly Ahomogenizing@ program goals and models across different communities?

D) INTEGRATING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL OUTCOMES

True understanding of the nature of individual change requires an analysis of the social context for such change. As one recent community evaluation project contends: AAt every turn and every stage of growth, an individual is subject to a multitude of changing opportunities, challenges, and constraints. Some originate within the individual. Many more come from the multiple and constantly changing environments in which we all live.@ - from The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods; web-site report at <http://www.phdcn.harvard.edu/>.

Refocusing on community outcomes often requires the evaluation of phenomena that are different from a simple tally of individual outcomes.

For example, some experts, especially psychologists, treat empowerment as a quality to be exercised or imparted to an individual. However, for those concerned with community revitalization, community empowerment is not the same as self-esteem or self-confidence. Instead, many identify community empowerment with community participation, community mobilization or ownership. These concepts require different evaluation approaches than those we might use to measure increases in an individual=s self-esteem.

This is a challenging realm of analysis. Measuring levels of mutual respect, caring, and cooperation between individuals, as well as the influence of significant variables on community participation or individual behaviour, has not been undertaken except within the context of larger-scale complex research initiatives.

There is a pressing need within the community services sector to establish the on-going monitoring, synthesis, and distribution of outcome evaluation results from other jurisdictions.

E) KEEPING OUTCOMES IN PERSPECTIVE

Outcome evaluation is only one of many different frameworks that an agency should use to assess and demonstrate program effectiveness. Other types of evaluation include client satisfaction, quality assurance, best practices research, and process evaluations.

When outcomes are advanced as the most important criteria of success, serious distortions to a program's goals and actual operation may result, for example:

Is the program beginning to work more with those clients most likely to achieve the stated outcomes (i.e. *Acreeaming*)?

- Will an employment program focussed on demonstrating high levels of *Afound employment* outcomes still be able to justify an intense use of staff time to support clients who are less job-ready?

Are results overshadowing process concerns?

- Is a program demonstrating high success rates for job placement also taking the time to ensure that all participants have the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their employers' adherence to workplace health and safety, human rights, and employment standards legislation?

Are program goals narrowed to those most easily measured?

- Over time, would an after-school youth program become focussed on concrete activities whose outcomes are more easily evaluated (e.g. home-work, photography) and reduce efforts such as *Apromoting leadership* which may be more difficult to measure?
- Will programs that address community or societal change (e.g. community development, creating healthy public policy) be less supported because their outcomes are harder to measure than outcomes for individuals?

Will programs tend more toward case-management models to facilitate data collection and analysis?

- Can an informal group drop-in collect data needed to assess outcomes, without altering its structure to include individual case files and interview sessions for tracking client change?

V) Beginner's Guide

The following summary of definitions and methodologies for implementing outcome evaluation are explored in greater detail in the CNC Outcome Evaluation Initiative report *A Beginner's Guide to Outcome Measurement*.

A) DEFINITIONS

Outcomes

I) The principle goal of outcome evaluation is to answer the question *What is the effect of our program activity?*

Outcomes are the *effects* of a program activity.

*(These effects may also be referred to as program *impacts* or *results*, however, not all evaluators or funders agree that such terms are synonymous.)

II) With outcome evaluation, we are interested in finding out about changes in the condition of people or things affected by the program activity. Depending on the program's desired effect (*intended outcome*), we may be interested in understanding changes in individuals, communities, or inanimate things such as written policies.

Common categories of outcomes include:

- **skills changes**
- **attitude changes**
- **knowledge changes**
- **behaviour changes**
- **changes in individual conditions (e.g. income security, health)**
- **changes in social conditions (e.g. levels of poverty, availability of affordable housing)**
- **institutional changes (e.g. change in policies or practices)**

III) It is also useful to identify a progression of outcomes that are expected to take place in a given sequence over time. Outcomes usually lead from those that are more modest, to those that are seen as more significant. Evaluators use various terms to describe these different types of outcomes. In these reports we have called these *short-term* and *long-term* outcomes. There is no hard and fast line between these two terms, but in general:

Short-term outcomes are those we expect to achieve while a program activity is occurring (also called *program* or *intermediate* outcomes).

Long-term outcomes may not occur until much later, perhaps months or years after client contact with the program has ended (also called *ultimate* outcomes).

Indicators

Indicators are measurements used to understand whether or not a given outcome has taken place.

Outputs

Outputs are the program's activity or products - in contrast to the program's outcomes which describe the effect of its activities.

The Logic Model: Linking Short and Long-Term Outcomes

Logic Models are charts that show the specific links between your program activities, their intended short-term outcomes, and the longer-term or ultimate outcomes.

Methods of Comparison

Since outcomes involve measuring changes, it is necessary to compare conditions effected by a program activity, to those that have not been influenced by the activity.

Three possible approaches are:

Before/ After: compare conditions of individuals before a program activity takes place to conditions for the same people after the program activity.

Control Group: compare conditions of people who are similar in all important respects (e.g. socio-economic characteristics) but have not been affected by the program, to conditions of those affected by the program.

Norms: compare conditions in a representative sample of the overall population, to conditions of people affected by the program activity.

Other terms used when referring to comparisons at points in time are:

Baseline Data: information that describes the condition of people or things before the program activity has influenced them. These are the conditions at time zero, before you start.

Benchmarks describe the conditions you hope to achieve at certain key points in your program activity.

Community Scale Outcomes

Community Audits are variously referred to as social impact studies, civic indexes and report-cards. This approach involves the periodic collection and reporting on community conditions and indicators of well-being.

B) STEPS FOR PROGRAM LEVEL EVALUATION

The basic steps in an outcome evaluation process are as follows:

1) Clarify intentions and expectations

2) Define the project activity

- make sure you have clearly stated project goals and objectives
- identify all the different activities that are part of the program.

3) Develop outcome statements and indicators

- identify intended outcomes for each of your project activities and specify measurable indicators of these outcomes that will tell you whether or not you are achieving the desired outcomes
- conduct background research on similar program models and outcomes: learn from others who have tried to conceptualize and measure similar outcomes
- draw the links between program activities, intended short-term, and intended long-term outcomes (this mapping is sometimes called a Program Logic Model)

4) Find or create appropriate measurement tools

- find existing measurement tools, or create your own tools that are clearly focussed on gathering information about your indicators
- always test the measurement tools before using broadly

5) Data collection

- determine sample size
- identify measurement periods (e.g. before/after, yearly)
- choose appropriate data collection methods
(examples are: verbal/ written questionnaires; telephone survey; interviews, face-to-face or phone; focus group; project diary; program records; creative documentation such as art collage or storytelling)

6) Analysis and reporting

- compare your results to baseline data; previous measurements of same sample; comparable target group or neighbourhood; provincial/national data; established standard of performance; trends over time

7) Using the results

- sharing of results with others
- use of results to inform future planning

C) TIPS AND CAUTIONS

Limits to Outcome Measurement

There are many things outcome measurement does not do. It does not:

- eliminate the need to monitor resources, activities, and outputs;
 - tell a program whether it is measuring the right outcomes;
 - explain why a program achieved a particular level of outcome;
 - prove that the program caused the observed outcomes;
 - by itself, show what to do to improve the outcome or answer the judgment question of whether this is an outcome in which resources should be invested.
- (Excerpt from Greenway; United Way of America)

Acknowledging Concerns

When first introducing outcome evaluation, staff and participants may have many concerns about the process. Any evaluation work should include space for these concerns to be recognized and talked about before proceeding. Some concerns can be addressed by ensuring that objectives for the work are clear and specific from the outset. Answering the following questions may be helpful in this regard:

- Will the results be used within the agency to make program and staff changes?
- Will the results be shared with funders?
- Do the agency and its key funders agree on the principles and questions that should guide the outcome evaluation work?
- Will there be additional staff or volunteer time to help with the work?
- Will there be “outside@ evaluators involved?

Other concerns cannot be easily answered by merely clarifying goals or process. These issues need to be noted and re-examined at each step of the evaluation process. For example:

- for programs that have not gathered extensive information from participants before, concerns about the “intrusiveness” of the process, and how it may change the quality of relationships between staff and participants often arise.
- concern that an increased focus on the “results” of a program may lead to the “creaming” of participants (i.e. working only with those most likely to succeed), or a focus on those program goals that are the easiest to measure, or which are more suited to defining and demonstrating success.
- concerns around the question Awho determines appropriate outcomes for the program?@ and related questions about whether outcome evaluation will encourage a narrowing of program goals.

The Importance of Background Research

Programs are often contributing in some way to significant longer-term changes, but do not have the resources to carry out longitudinal evaluations used to track such changes. Compiling previous research on the relationships between short and long-term outcomes is often the only practical way a program can support such inferences.

This option is, of course, only helpful where the issues you are addressing have been evaluated effectively using longitudinal research. For example, research on the long-term outcomes of early educational interventions with children have been widely studied, while research on the long-term outcomes of settlement services for immigrants and refugees of different cultures is comparatively limited.

Use Participatory Data Collection Methods

The prospect of asking a lot of questions, and often personal ones, of program participants can raise a number of legitimate concerns for many agencies and staff. Participants may have already had very negative experiences in giving information to others. In some cases personal information is gathered by social institutions only to control or punish people. This is not a great place to begin in terms of implementing extensive surveys or questionnaires. Some helpful strategies to limit these effects of data collection are:

- Include program participants in each stage of the development, implementation, and if appropriate, collection of evaluation data.
- Try to collect only the information that everyone can agree (program staff, funders, and participants) they really need to know about. Gathering information that the participants want to know can be empowering rather than intrusive.
- Ensure all information is confidential and that any reported responses cannot be linked to specific individuals.

Estimate Appropriate Time-Lines for Data Collection and Analysis

It easily could take an agency seven months or more of preparation before collecting any data, and it easily could take three to five years or more before the findings from a program's outcome measurement system actually reflect the program's effectiveness. (Excerpt from Greenway; United Way of America)

D) COMMUNITY LEVEL OUTCOME EVALUATION

Multi-service neighbourhood centres are most interested in finding ways to measure the outcome of their work at the community level. Integral to the model of a neighbourhood centre, is the supposition that the effect of providing integrated social, health, and recreational services for all age groups and cultures at one site, within a specific geographic community, results in different and more significant outcomes than if the same services were delivered in an uncoordinated and isolated fashion.

Therefore, for neighbourhood centres, key questions to be addressed through such community level evaluation include:

To what degree, and in what ways do community conditions influence the behaviour, attitudes, and values of individuals?

To what degree, and in what ways do a neighbourhood centre's program level interventions (particularly community development, local economic development and health promotion processes) affect community conditions?

Is the neighbourhood centre's integrated program model more effective than uncoordinated community programming? If so, in what ways. What are the specific synergistic effects that may not be achieved by stand-alone service models?

Approaches to measuring community outcomes include ACommunity Audits@, and more extensive, longitudinal AComplex Research Design@.

1) Community Audits

Useful strategies have been developed to track changes in indicators of community well-being over time. Depending on their focus, they are variously referred to as Asocial impact studies@, Acommunity audits@, Acivic indexes@ and Areport cards@.

These approaches involve the listing of and periodic collection of data related to two key factors: indicators of community well-being, and a profile of community resources and capacities.

On their own, neighbourhood centres do not commonly have the resources to collect all of

this data, and carry out the required statistical analysis and reporting on an on-going basis. However, many municipal governments already carry out this work, or are moving towards such models of reporting (e.g. city of Toronto's Report Card on Children).

An appropriate expectation then, for most neighbourhood centres, is not that they will carry out this work themselves, but rather that they can participate in the process to select indicators, so that the data collected provides a reflection of the anticipated community-level outcomes of their work.

2) Causal Research Design

Significant understanding about the factors and interventions that most influence community well-being can only be gathered from research designed to enable comparisons between communities, and an analysis of relationships between changes in individual behaviour and community conditions observed over time.

One interesting research initiative currently underway in Chicago is specifically designed to examine relationships between community context and individual behaviour. The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, is a longitudinal research project that will follow 7,000 individuals and 80 communities over eight years in a coordinated effort to study the many intricate pathways of social competence and antisocial behavior. This research costs five million dollars a year, and is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Institute of Justice, the US Department of Education, and the National Institute of Mental Health.

Clearly, such evaluation is beyond the scope of all but the most comprehensive research initiatives sponsored by government and/or private sector funding. The community services sector in Ontario could, however, take steps to ensure that learning from such research efforts is more effectively reviewed and distributed in a form that would support local evaluation efforts. While the ability to implement evaluation models capable of addressing these questions is beyond the capacity of individual community agencies, it may be possible to mobilize key funders of community services (such as different levels of government, foundations, and United Ways), as well as social policy institutes and university or college research departments, to monitor, and share the results of such research.

VI) Resources

A more extensive listing of evaluation resources, along with a collection of sample evaluation instruments, are presented in the CNC Outcome Evaluation Initiative's report *Tools and Resources*.

A) INTERNET

Good starting place for links to evaluation sites:

<http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu/eval.html>

United Way of America evaluation links:

<http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/>

ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre) evaluation clearinghouse:

<http://ericae.net/>

Minnesota Family Services Outcome Report:

<http://carei.coled.umn.edu/CAREIwww/fsc/2yeartoc.html>

Basic evaluation concepts:

<http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/>

Designing questionnaires:

<http://www.freenet.tlh.fl.us/~polland/qbook.html>

Social Indicators (at Canadian Council on Social Development)

http://www.ccsd.ca/soc_ind.html

B) PRINT

- **A Hands-On Guide to Planning and Evaluation**

National AIDS Clearinghouse; Ottawa, no date

- **Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach**

Population Health Directorate, Health Canada; Ottawa, 1996

- **Making a Difference: Program Evaluation for Health Promotion**

Horne, T. WellQuest Consulting Ltd; Edmonton, 1996

- **Manual on Outcome Measurement**

United Way of America; 1996

- **Measuring Well-Being; Proceedings From a Symposium on Social Indicators, Final Report** Canadian Council on Social Development; Ottawa, 1996

- **Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Children.** (Volume 1). Policy Implications in Studying Neighborhoods (Volume 2) Brooks-Gunn J, Duncan G & Aber JL (eds.). New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 1997.

VII) Project Description

The material presented in these reports has been developed over the last eighteen months as part of the Coalition of Neighbourhood Centres' Outcome Evaluation Initiative. The project grew from member agencies' desires to learn more about the process of evaluating outcomes, to get a better sense of the implications of such evaluation for human services in a community context, and to provide a starting point for discussion with key funders of their work.

Major activities undertaken to develop this report were:

- TEST-SITE ACTIVITIES AT THREE AGENCIES, INCLUDING:

- a series of workshops for staff to review the nature of Outcome Evaluation and get staff to a point where they can articulate key program outcomes and indicators for their work;
- work with staff and program participants to develop and conduct initial testing of outcome evaluation tools in programs such as:
 - i) Settlement Services
 - ii) Family Centre Drop-in
 - iii) Employment Services

- ADDITIONAL WORKSHOPS/ PRESENTATIONS:

- workshops for staff at various CNC member agencies covering the introduction to and implementation of outcome evaluation

- BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON OUTCOME EVALUATION:

- research to locate existing outcome evaluation tools, specifically relating to the concepts of:
 - i) Self-Esteem
 - ii) Social Isolation
 - iii) Child Development
- (search included internet, funders, academic evaluators, key informants, and libraries)
- collection of materials for assessing community impact and community health indicators

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VII) Acknowledgements

NOTE: The opinions and perspectives reflected in this report are those of the CNC Outcome Evaluation Initiative's Steering Committee, and do not represent any shared perspective from CNC member agencies, individual staff, or additional resource persons listed below:

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* person's title or position has changed since participating in this work