Evaluation Roundtable

**Changing Stakeholder Needs and Changing Evaluator Roles:
The Central Valley Partnership of the James Irvine Foundation**

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Editor's Note: It has been frequently been shown that internally useful evaluation is difficult to achieve unless a program is achieves evaluability. In turn, one frequent prerequisite for achieving evaluability is the creation of a culture that is open to and supports evaluation and accountability. This paper is a case study in the process of creating such a culture

ABSTRACT

This case describes the changing roles of an evaluator as the program he was evaluating changed and developed, and as the needs of his client and primary intended users changed over time. The focus in this case is on the relationship between the external evaluator and the staff of a philanthropic foundation as a major initiative unfolded. The focus of the evaluation was learning and improvement, and as the evaluator developed recommendations for organizational capacity-building, he was commissioned by the foundation to implement his own recommendations, a form of developmental evaluation. The case explores the dynamics and challenges of such an arrangement and relationship. Those involved have agreed to have their real names used because this is a highly visible initiative and attempting to disguise the foundation and key players might undermine, in this instance, the authenticity of the case. The initiative that is the focus of the case is the Central Valley Partnership of The James Irvine Foundation headquartered in San Francisco.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL SITE AND CONTEXT OF THE CASE

This study describes a series of evaluations of the Central Valley Partnership, which is the centerpiece of the Civic Culture Program area of The James Irvine Foundation (the "Irvine Foundation" for short). The Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking organization that was established in 1937 by James Irvine, the California pioneer whose 110,000-acre ranch in Southern California was among the largest privately owned land holdings in the State. With assets of $1.2 billion, the Foundation expects to make grants of $51 million in 2003 for the people of California. During 2002, the Foundation awarded 265 grants totaling approximately $62 million (www.irvine.org).

On its web site, the Irvine Foundation describes its mission as follows:

> The Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the social, economic, and physical quality of life throughout California, and to enriching the State's intellectual and cultural environment. Within these broad purposes, the Foundation supports arts, community

development, higher education, and youth programs, and we are guided in our grantmaking by the following goals:

- To enhance equal opportunity and support the values of a pluralistic, interdependent society
- To improve the economic and social well being of the disadvantaged and their communities, foster self sufficiency, and assist ethnic minorities to function more effectively as full participants in society
- To encourage communication, understanding, and cooperation among diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- To promote civic participation, social responsibility, public understanding of issues, and the development of sound public policy
- To enrich the quality and diversity of educational, cultural, human services, and community-building programs throughout the State.

The Irvine Foundation contracted with Aguirre International to conduct the CVP evaluations. Founded in 1982 by Dr. Edward Aguirre, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, the company describes itself on its web site (http://www.aguirreinternational.com) as follows:

> Aguirre International provides high quality social issues research, evaluation, technical assistance, and information systems for government, business and nonprofit sectors. We specialize in projects relating to hard-to-reach and serve populations, such as farmworkers, low-literate and non-English speaking adults, people in transition from dependency to self-sufficiency, and nations moving toward democracy. . . .
> We conduct research to identify "what works" and provide training and technical assistance based on these findings. Our services include strategic planning, staff training, organizational development, and systems design. We use leading edge database, Internet and multimedia technologies to help schools, nonprofit organizations, companies and government do their jobs better.

This case was developed by the authors based on internal Foundation documents, memos, email exchanges among those involved in the initiative, files, and proprietary reports. In addition, Michael Quinn Patton (one of the authors of the case) conducted group and individual interviews with the key Irvine Foundation staff and the evaluator. Those interviews were followed up with email interactions and corrections. All direct quotations in the case are based on Patton's interviews. Those involved have agreed to have their real names used because this is a highly visible initiative and attempting to disguise the foundation and key players might undermine, in this instance, the authenticity of the case.

This case was developed as part of the *Evaluation Roundtable* which has as its purpose the development of a community of practice among evaluation professionals working in philanthropy. An interest in cases emerged from the group's work over three years delving into the behavioral and professional dynamics and techniques of designing and conducting evaluation in foundations. The *Evaluation Roundtable*, including case development, was supported financially by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,

the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the Wallace-Readers Digest Funds. (The *Evaluation Roundtable* is facilitated by one of this case's co-authors, Patricia Patrizi, Principal, Patrizi Associates, Wyncote, Pa.)

2. THE PROGRAM EVALUATED

The Central Valley Partnership (CVP) was initiated in 1996 by the Irvine Foundation as a "partnership for citizenship." Originally four organizations now grown to twelve, each with its own grant, were organized around three distinct objectives: 1) assisting and supporting immigrants seeking citizenship, 2) promoting active civic participation throughout the Central Valley's immigrant communities, and 3) building the leadership capacity and organizational resources available to Central Valley immigrants for addressing the problems they face. Most of the CVP grantees are small, community-based organizations. The population benefiting from the initiative consists primarily of Mexican immigrant farmworkers with very little schooling who have lived in California for 10-20 years. The Foundation's role in the Partnership has been to help organizations build their capacities toward greater impact, to encourage an environment of mutual learning, and, as productive collaborative effort has begun to take root, to encourage its growth. All of the organizations have received assistance in the use of applied research to improve their work.

The Irvine Foundation's Civic Culture Program Director, Craig McGarvey, helped develop the program and has been actively involved from the beginning. (See Figure 1 for an organization chart of CVP and its evaluation subcontractor, the Aguirre Group.)

Insert Figure 1 about here

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE PROGRAM

The guiding conception and value base of the CVP is the belief that when people come together with those unlike themselves to identify issues important to them and the communities they live in, and engage together in collective problem solving, they develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and relationships that build the democracy. This conception is associated with a variety of central and explicit themes, including partnering, intentional learning, collective problem-solving, building trust, and nurturing relationships. An important consideration in designing the evaluation was to ensure that the evaluation process would support and enhance these program direction and be meaningful to grantees rather than threatening or undermining them.

The conceptual model of the program, then, was values-based and philosophically grounded. The model was not derived from or explicitly connected to a body of scholarly literature. Rather, the model was based on the experiences and values of those involved, especially the philosophy of Civic Culture Program Director, Craig McGarvey, who had overall responsibility for developing the initiative.

4. CONCEPTUAL MODEL GUIDING THE EVALUATION AND ITS PROCESS

When CVP was launched in 1996 the Irvine Foundation had not yet added an Evaluation Director and evaluation was not built into the original grant-making. There was, however, an emphasis on learning from the very beginning in the Civic Culture Program area.

> We wanted to build a culture of collaborative learning. That became the parlance of the partnership. We did what we could imagine to do. We [the Foundation] needed to be learning with the people in the community. In the first year of the partnership they met monthly and I convened and facilitated the first few meetings. (Craig McGarvey, personal communication)

Subsequently, Craig McGarvey brought in learning consultants and coaches to facilitate the meetings and ongoing learning. He also brought in people who did action research. Key components became cross-learning and peer-learning among grantees. Partnership organizations now meet quarterly, inviting in leaders from various fields, and designing agendas to educate themselves.

The Irvine Foundation created an Evaluation Director position in 1998 with the expectation that the Foundation would contract external, professional evaluation assistance to assess each of its major program initiatives. The Foundation's Director of Evaluation, Martha Campbell [one of the co-authors of this case], explains:

> We evaluate only our major program initiatives. These are initiatives that cover a time span of more than three years, represent a significant investment (over $4 million for us), that relates strategically to foundation-wide and program-specific goals, and represents the 1 or 2 major program undertakings in each program area (we have 5 program areas). In 2002 we supported 10 major evaluations.

As a result of this new emphasis on evaluating major initiatives, Craig McGarvey contracted with The Aguirre Group in 1998-99 to conduct a retrospective assessment of CVP during its first years and to provide a foundation for an ongoing process of evaluation and program improvement within the learning network of the grantees. The Aguirre Group had substantial experience with immigration programs and was widely respected for its expertise on immigration issues and communities. The evaluation was designed through a 6-month planning grant that involved fieldwork to figure out what could be and should be done, and included highly interactive negotiations with the Irvine Foundation Program Director in keeping with his very hands-on involvement in all aspects of CVP. The Irvine Foundation Evaluation Director was a resource and consultant on the evaluation process and design.

The evaluation was designed to assess CVP accomplishments in two broad areas.

1. To what extent did CVP activities assist naturalization applicants in the Central Valley in securing citizenship?
2. To what extent did CVP activities catalyze immigrant civic engagement, foster sustained involvement, and support recent immigrants' efficacy in civic life?

The evaluation team measured the number and types of clients served, the number and type successfully naturalized as citizens, and customer satisfaction. The civic engagement of

immigrants was measured using surveys that captured attitudes and plans for future civic involvement. The survey also included open-ended questions about respondents' own understandings of civic engagement. Two community case studies were also conducted where a CVP grantee was active.

The Aguirre Group's 1998-1999 evaluation of the CVP focused primarily on research to describe and measure outcomes from the initiative regarding naturalization and immigration services provided by CVP to Central Valley immigrants, the impacts on immigrants' civic participation and engagement (by which was meant sustained civic participation, involvement, commitment), and on community life in immigrant communities in the Central Valley. The organizational development and capacity-building considerations, which were an integral part of the Civic Culture Program's design of the initiative, were not a primary focus of the evaluation, although the evaluation team, in the course of a year of field research, made numerous observations of organizational functioning and discussed with each of the CVP partners' the organizational challenges it was facing.

5. PROGRAM RESULTS

Major Evaluation Findings

The evaluation report's conclusions were highly laudatory with regard to the overall Civic Culture Program direction:

> The James Irvine Foundation's decision to invest in the Central Valley Partnership's overall activities, and specifically, its naturalization work represents a wise strategic investment in promoting effective pluralism and collective problem-solving.... The disparities between population characteristics and political representation in the Central Valley are as great as anywhere in California. But this civic divide which cuts across the social landscape of the region and detracts from truly participatory local democratic processes is probably more easily overcome in the Central Valley then in urban areas due to the fact that the rural nature of the region has given rise to many, small jurisdictions. In the Central Valley, politics are local, closer to old-fashioned traditions of American democracy than to 21st century media-drive marketing of political representatives.... The Central Valley Partnership's naturalization work is also a wise use of James Irvine Foundation resources because naturalization assistance is being provided to a population of individuals who desperately need help with the process due to limited-English proficiency and limited schooling (Aguirre Group, 1999, pp. 6/4 - 6/5).

A few highlights of the data provide some sense of the partnership's scope and challenges:

> The Central Valley Partnership has provided assistance to approximately 10,000 naturalization applicants from its inception in the spring of 1996 through the end of 1999. This naturalization activity may have benefited an additional 3,500

minor children who stand to secure derivative citizenship status as a result of a parent's achieving citizenship.

We consider this effort to be significant at the regional level since the naturalization clients helped by CVP probably make up almost one-tenth of the regional population of immigrants eligible for citizenship. CVP's provision of service to almost 10% of this population -- in the form of legal advice and ESL/citizenship instruction to satisfy the challenging INS [U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service] English-language and citizenship requirements -- represents an important contribution to outcomes. There appears to be a continuing need for naturalization assistance....

The cumulative outcomes of current naturalization efforts -- by CVP and by other initiatives... -- are as yet unknown. This is because the regional INS naturalization system, inundated with a huge increase in naturalization applicants, has had huge backlogs and breakdowns in procedures, which have resulted in waiting periods from 18 months to more than 3 years. Only one-quarter of the CVP naturalization clients we surveyed, most of whom had applied in 1997-1998, have been called to their INS interview.

The evaluation data show a 53% naturalization approval rate for CVP clients. Although we do not currently have access to reliable benchmark data on the INS approval rate for Central Valley naturalization applicant population, our assessment is that the approval rate for CVP naturalization applicants is significantly higher than it would have been for the same or similar applicants who did not receive assistance.

…There are other non-quantitative indications of the value of the naturalization assistance CVP has provided to Central Valley immigrants…including difficult-to-measure systemic changes in the relations between the INS and naturalization service providers. INS processing of naturalization applications is indubitably more responsive to applicants' needs, more orderly, and more in conformity with the intent of immigration law than would be the case without the Central Valley involvement of ILRC and CRLAF (two CVP grantees). (Aguirre Group, 1999, pp, 6/5-6/7)

The report concluded with a number of recommendations to the CVP grantees for program improvement and for strengthening the CVP network as a whole, including the following as examples:

1. Improve curriculum design and instructional methodology for English as a Second Language (ESL) and citizenship instruction, and enhance the training, technical assistance and resource materials for volunteer teaching teams.
2. Develop information systems to support case management and to sustain involvement by clients, volunteers, and community collaborators.
3. Enhance use of teams working on local civic action projects.

4. Expand options for civic involvement by developing partnerships with local institutions, in particular, local government, libraries, schools, and businesses, the key stakeholders for immigrant civic participation.
5. Create a "second generation" strategy for sustaining civic involvement by immigrants, with an emphasis on analytic thinking and on developing the ability of immigrant communities to have their voices heard. .
6. Strengthen the Irvine Foundation's oversight of grantee reporting.
7. Explore options for strengthening organizational self-assessment and sustainability.

Overall, the evaluation report concluded with praise for the program's capacity-building approach and a strong recommendation for further and deeper capacity building.

> One of the strengths of the CVP design is that the James Irvine Foundation encouraged the development of a wide range of capacity-building activities designed to support the development of the overall initiative. The broad spectrum of support made available to "front line" providers was an essential ingredient in their valuable work in assisting naturalization clients and in building immigrant civic participation. The goal of building a "learning network," providing an information infrastructure, and "priming the pump" with provision of top-quality applied research information, analyses of information relevant to issues profoundly affecting Central Valley immigrants was well-defined and well-articulated....
>
> We recommend addressing some new capacity-building goals but with particular care in strategic planning and a solid focus on clear-cut objectives in the course of implementing activities to pursue these goals.... (Aguirre Group, 1999, pp, pp. 6/52-6/53)

Elaboration of Key Programmatic Themes

The evaluator reviewed the key programmatic themes that undergirded the initiative and concluded that those themes were central to CVP successes.

Partnering

The CVP design included provisions to build partnerships between grantees which had very different sets of skills. A fundamental design feature was support for expert technical assistance to grassroots organizations in addressing legal issues related to immigration law, policy, and naturalization (from the Immigrant Legal Resources Center), for use of information technology to facilitate partnering among organizations (from an technical assistance group called "CompuMentor"), for understanding the sociopolitical context of the Central Valley and policy issues affecting immigrants (from the California Institute of Rural Studies, and, for evaluating the initiative and using that information to strengthen organizations, the Aguirre Group. Irvine's convening of quarterly meetings of the CVP to share information and discuss issues of common concern was, of course, another important element in the design of the initiative, as was Irvine's support of a "learning coach," Isao Fujimoto, who approached this task with a "circuit rider" strategy making ongoing visits to partner organizations throughout the Valley.

In 1998-1999, the evaluator observed the outcome of a major partnering effort among CVP organizations that involved Central Valley immigrants in the national policy debate about the 245(i), "family unity" provisions of immigration law which would have made it easier for family members of immigrants to also immigrate. Subsequent partnering efforts supported collective efforts to involve several Central Valley immigrant communities in the 1999 dialogue on "guest worker" provisions of immigration law (which might have doomed hope for a national amnesty). In both cases, partnering was important because the immigration groups were more likely to be heard if working together and speaking from a shared perspective and mutually agreed-on priorities.

In recent years, partnering has involved immigrants in addressing policy issues that affect them, e.g., for California immigrant youth, access to higher and to drivers' licenses; and further dialogue on family unity; these have all been strong areas where CVP organizations have partnered together as advocates.

From 1999 onwards, a major area of partnering effort has been the innovative collaboration between Irvine's Civic Culture Program and the CVP grantees in the Civic Action Network Small-Grants Program. This program has made 57 small grants to a wide range of local grassroots organizations to engage them in the network's efforts to catalyze immigrant civic involvement. This effort, which takes place via a committee consisting of representatives from the Civic Culture Program and CVP grantees, has moved in a systematic way to expand beyond its initial role in soliciting funding applications, reviewing them, and recommending grants. There is now a comprehensive effort that includes provision of initial orientation to new grantees in thinking about civic engagement, support for networking among peers, referral to technical assistance in organizational development, and involvement in interactions with "outside" groups such as the National Rural Funders' Collective.

2. Intentional Learning

The CVP design included a number of design features intended to catalyze intentional learning among CVP partner organizations, most notably policy forums presented by the California Institute of Rural Studies which brought major experts to CVP meetings to brief partner organizations on issues in their area of expertise and respond to questions posed by partner organizations (e.g. Professor Philip Martin of UC Davis, a nationally-recognized expert on farm labor).

3. Building Trust and Nurturing Relationships

The Irvine Foundation's Civic Culture Program Director, Craig McGarvey, worked from the beginning to build trust among grantees by providing them extraordinarily "transparent" insight into his perspectives on issues and constant encouragement for their input to him on a wide range of issues. The evaluators' observation has been that this openness has contributed greatly to partner organizations' commitment to accountability. The primary arenas for this trust-building have been in collaborative efforts between foundation staff and grantees in administering the Civic Action Network small-grants program and in designing and piloting the

Central Valley Partnership Fellowship Program, an initiative which debuted in late 2001, to provide short-term (one year) training for immigrants who were committed to active civic participation and community leadership.

4. Enhancing The Use Of Teams Working On Local Civic Action Projects

The most clear-cut examples of team-based approaches to civic action projects have been the collaborative efforts in which the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community, the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, the Immigrant Legal Resources Center, and The Aguirre Group have worked collaboratively to strengthen the network's capacity to provide naturalization applicants the knowledge and skills they need to successfully complete the process. The most recent, and most spectacular, effort in this area has been an innovative effort, which has also involved the INS. This has become a special preparation program for naturalization applicants in the Sacramento area who are then interviewed in local churches, instead of the threatening environment of INS office space with locked doors and high security The naturalization pass rate for this group of applicants was 90%, as compared to a national and regional average for Mexican applicants of about 50%. The Aguirre team and the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community are working together now to pilot an innovative program, funded by the California Department of Education, to concurrently prepare naturalization applicants both for the INS oral examination and for active and effective civic participation in community affairs.

5. Expanding Options For Civic Participation

The examples of these partnerships are as diverse as the organizations that are involved in partnering with them. The small, grant-funded Civic Action Network has generated a huge range of new partnerships. Some involve local schools and community groups--in sponsoring ESL/literacy programs. Others involve arts groups and public agencies in sponsoring cultural events which bring different ethnic groups together and build mutual awareness. The Sacramento Valley Organizing Community partnership with INS in conducting a national pilot of off-site naturalization interviewing is another example of the kind of new partnerships that The Aguirre Group's evaluation had recommended. Another very promising area of partnerships has been linkages among a variety of student groups at high schools and community colleges as well as more informal student groups. These linkages have brought parents and students together, and have helped recruit community college student volunteers to teach ESL.

6. Second-Generation Strategy For Sustaining Civic Involvement.

The CVP Fellowship program is a good example of a second-generation strategy for sustaining civic involvement. It provides what is essentially an inquiry-oriented (project-based) learning model to engage Central Valley immigrants, some of whom have little formal education, in a year-long effort to build their skills while meaningfully contributing to the civic engagement efforts of their "host" organization. That is, the skill-building occurs through learning-by-doing where the doing is civic engagement, e.g., working with and supporting other immigrants on immigration issues. The program design is quite structured, providing a model for more deliberate, more intentional strategies for bringing immigrants to the point where their civic

involvement can be effective and where they take on the roles of community leaders, thus making the efforts more sustainable.

7. Strengthen the Irvine Foundation's Oversight Of Grantee Reporting.

In 2002, The Aguirre Group recommended to the Civic Culture Program a reporting format for CVP grantees that included a more structured inventory of queries than the original reporting form. The primary structural change involved in the new reporting form (designed in conjunction with efforts to build grantees' self-evaluation capacity) was that grantees were requested to report progress in sections linked to specific objectives they had articulated in their proposals to the Civic Culture Program.

6. EVALUATION PROCESS RESULTS: EVALUATOR BECOMES ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RFESOURCE

Responding to the evaluation findings, the Irvine Foundation invited The Aguirre Group to develop a phase two evaluation process (2000-2001) with two strands of activity:

1) In partnership with a technology consulting firm, CompuMentor, develop a CVP information system for naturalization client tracking, case management and reporting;
2) Build grantee self-evaluation capacities, which includes using data internally for program improvement and improving the quality of grantees' reporting and ability to track progress relative to the Irvine Foundation's program goals.

In designing this new phase of evaluation and organizational development, the evaluator from The Aguirre Group (Ed Kissam), the Civic Culture Program Director (Craig McGarvey), and Irvine's Director of Evaluation (Martha Campbell) collaborated, exchanging detailed e-mails and interacting to fine-tune the strategies and activities of this new phase (see Figure 1 [the organization chart]). Kissam, the evaluator throughout this process, has reported and does report directly to Irvine's Civic Culture Program Director McGarvey. The Irvine Foundation's Director of Evaluation (Campbell) is a self-described "resource" in this process.

In this new phase evaluator Kissam has moved from working outside the program to becoming an internal partner. Program Director Craig McGarvey describes the relationship as follows: "Aguirre's become a part of the partnership. I use Ed [Kissam] the evaluator to test ideas. He's become a partner. We're joint strategists. Aguirre has the knowledge base to play this role." Here are some quotes from the relevant players reflecting evaluator Kissam's new partner role:

> Irvine Foundation Director of Evaluation Martha Campbell: "In early 1996, the Foundation adopted a grantmaking strategy of making fewer, larger, longer grants and to developing more interactive partnerships with grantees. At Irvine, grants programs are primarily developed in one of two ways: 1) upfront planning for well defined initiatives; or 2) rather than specifying predetermined long-term outcomes and measures, the programs are developed in an organic, interactive and iterative

way with program goals that emerge from and relate to local interests, circumstances and conditions. CVP clearly followed the latter, a collaborative learning approach.

"It's hard to find evaluators who have that capacity to assume multiple roles in an evaluation and who can build trust and work effectively with community based organizations."

Aguirre evaluator Kissam: "I'm not an evaluator by identity. I'm more a planner, an organizer. I want to do what's useful, whatever role that involves."

Irvine Foundation's Civic Culture Program Director McGarvey: "The collaborative approach promotes learning at three levels: (1) intentional learning by grantees, so they can continuously improve their practice; (2) cross learning among grantees, building networks of relationships and lifting up best practices; and (3) meta-learning through real comparison, research and analysis, linking practice with theory to strengthen and advance the field

"The key is for the foundation and grantees to engage in the evaluation collectively. Intentional, collective learning is demanding intellectual work, and it stretches everyone. In order to build the mutual trust that is necessary, the foundation needs to learn along with the grantees. We have to be transparent and share in the risks. And though the work is very challenging, it is also potentially enormously powerful. If, working together, we can continuously improve—and find better language to articulate the work to a broader public of constituencies—we can advance the field. The fact that the broader public includes the foundation's executive leadership and board of directors is a net positive motivation for our evaluation work together. We definitely need to help them understand the impact of the work, so they will continue to support it."

The decision for The Aguirre Group to transition from its role as outside evaluators to technical assistance providers also was an important strand in efforts to deepen the commitment to intentional learning that had been a theme of CVP from its beginning. In the case of Aguirre's work, the focus of the technical assistance was on useful and practical approaches to evaluation, training for sustainable skills, and encouraging organizations to design evaluation approaches that were affordable and reflected their own organizational priorities. This effort has moved forward in 2002 in The Aguirre Group's work with the CVP on developing a logic model of the network (still in development as this is written). The emphasis in the model is on accurate description of the current network configuration as the basis for strategic planning. Such planning is designed to further develop the network's governance and make it more collaborative while also fine-tuning efforts to make the network more resilient and agile in responding to changes in the environment in which it works.

7. DISCUSSION, LESSONS LEARNED, CONCLUSIONS

Evaluator's Reflections

As part of preparing this case, we invited the evaluator, Ed Kissam, to provide an overview of his conclusions. He reflected as follows:

Looking back from the vantage point of 2002, what is clear is that the Civic Culture Program Officer's original vision has borne fruit as the CVP network has observably increased its ability to partner and to work on collaborative projects. During the period from 1999 to the present, two highly-structured new collaborative endeavors have taken shape--the Civic Action Network (which includes grants to 57 small, local grassroots organizations) and the Central Valley Partnership Fellowship Program (which is piloting fellowships for immigrant civic activists). During this period the collaborative efforts to involve immigrants in addressing issues of immigration policy and immigrant social policy have continued.

There have also been several collaborative events, for example: the Tamejavi Festival in Fresno, a 3-day celebration of immigrant culture bringing together a wide range of organizations from more than five ethnic groups; the National Rural Funders' Collaborative tour of the Central Valley; and a recent tour of the Valley in September 2002, sponsored by Grantmakers Concerned about Immigrants and Refugees. The most striking evolution has been in the CVP network's support to the Civic Action Network and its collaborative work with the James Irvine Foundation in this effort.

Key ingredients in the CVP network's evolution as a partnership among a wide range of community-oriented organizations has been Irvine Foundation's inclusiveness, which has meant that the Civic Culture Program Officer, Craig McGarvey, has regularly and systematically involved his grantees in discussions of the entire context of the initiative. The leadership and organizational behavior of two organizations, the Immigrant Legal Resources Center and the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, which were originally included in the initiative in order to provide technical assistance, have gone well beyond "technical" issues related to immigration law and contributed significantly to community-based organization's development, motivation, and ability to partner together. The involvement of The Aguirre Group, originally involved as external evaluators, has evolved beyond that initial role and, most recently, contributed to network-wide dialogue about how to evolve as a network and what the implications might be for collective governance as a means to enhance the CVP's work.

Current Evaluation Challenges

This evaluation raises a number of issues that often confront foundations and grantees alike. In this concluding section, we'll highlight these issues.

1. Balance Between Generic Training and Individualized Consultation

Under the contract to provide capacity-building support for grantees, Aguirre began offering generic workshops on (1) meeting reporting requirements in communicating results, (2) evaluation strategy as a program planning tool, (3) data collection and analysis, and (4) "making

a case for your project." Aguirre has also been providing customized and individualized consultation with grantees beyond the workshops. One challenge is finding the right balance between generic training and individualized consultation -- and within budget constraints.

2. Finding and Taking Time for Internal Evaluation Capacity Building.

Grantee staff in partnership organizations face huge challenges just getting services in place and maintaining basic functions. There's too much to do and too few people to do it. Staff are sustained by the hope that they can make a difference. Aguirre Evaluator Ed Kissam says: The Central Valley is consumed with a thirst for social justice which doesn't leave enough time for imagination and creativity." Short of time, short of staff, and short of resources, it can be hard to get partners to make time for learning how to use MIS software or constructing logic models or attending Aguirre workshops.

The organizational development process aimed at building the self-evaluation capacity of grantees has followed a strategy of working slowly to build trust and get buy-in, placing priority on working first with those who were responsive and cooperative. A strategy for working with the more resistant and uncooperative was less clear.

In February of 2002, evidence of how much grantees had absorbed came in the form of new proposals from grantees for the next funding cycle. Civic Culture Program Director McGarvey determined that sufficient progress had been made by all of the partners to merit recommending the next round of funding for all. In one instructive case, a grantee had not been cooperating with the evaluators in the fall of 2001. They didn't return phone calls and did not work with the evaluators to develop their proposal for this next phase. However, it turns out that they do use the new MIS, have been entering data, and have produced quality data about their work in naturalization and civic participation. In the judgment of McGarvey, they turned in a solid proposal so he made a recommendation for renewal funding for them.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Ultimately, it is understood by all involved that the grantees bear the responsibility to use the training and consulting support they receive to implement their own evaluation and reporting systems. However, Aguirre has some responsibility for quality assurance and aggregate data analysis at the CVP level. This makes the evaluator and grantee roles and responsibilities somewhat overlapping and interdependent. And it raises the question of what happens when interactions between a grantee and the evaluator becomes strained. In one case it appears that some "personality issues" emerged between a grassroots grantee and the evaluator. It appears to fall to the Irvine Foundation's Civic Culture Program Director to sort out these relationships when they don't work as hoped-for and determine how to proceed.

4. Different Levels of Organizational Development and Evaluation

Organizational development and evaluation must occur at both the grantee level and at the partnership level. In part because CVP was funded and implemented before evaluation was

introduced, adding evaluation to the mix has meant integrating or layering a new set of expectations, responsibilities, and conceptual framework onto existing work and relationships. For example, grantee capacity-building development has proceeded before and as a foundation for generating a CVP-level logic model. Moreover, CVP has become more complex with the addition of a fellow's program, small grants program, multiple technical assistance providers (not just the Aguirre group), and other joint CVP activity. Sequencing, fitting together synergistically, and weighting the various levels and components of evaluation is a challenge at the overall program level.

5. Evaluating the Whole Versus the Parts

Periodically, the program has been and will be called on to sum up its impacts across grantees to track its progress toward the overall strategic goals of the Civic Culture Program. Such a summing up is difficult in a bottoms-up structure and process when the grantees have developed individualized project and evaluation designs. There appears to be no single evaluation design that can be used to generate comparable data on grantees' performance unless there is tighter alignment of the grantee projects to the Irvine Foundation's goals. In addition, there is no consensus in this field about the appropriate metrics beyond "registering to vote" and "voting behavior." This evaluation is attempting to identify a wider range of outcomes and measures of civic participation for non-citizen and recently naturalized immigrants. How should the separate grantee-level evaluations and various outcome measures be aggregated and weighed in determining overall program-level impact?

6. Evaluator Credibility

Aguirre came to CVP as an external evaluator and produced an external evaluation report at the end of 1999. Now Aguirre has become a coach, facilitator, and provider of technical assistance in building grantee capacity for self-evaluation. How does this affect Aguirre's capacity to provide an assessment of overall program-level effectiveness with credibility and independence of judgment? If Aguirre is no longer able to play that role, who will? Or will the program-level evaluation be based entirely on data generated by grantees? And if so, will that be a credible approach to overall program-level evaluation?

7. Turnover and Sustainability

Turnover among grantee staff is fairly high, especially among some of the small grassroots organizations. This makes it difficult to train staff in the evaluation data collection, computer systems, and MIS data entry and reporting -- and sustain these functions at a high level over time. Civic Culture Program Director McGarvey notes that: "Turnover is a fact of life in the Central Valley." Irvine Foundation Evaluation Director Campbell adds: "The Central Valley is like a developing country with a huge brain drain." Building capacity for ongoing learning, internal evaluation, comparative analysis, and external reporting is hampered by high turnover. All of the grantees geared up this year to provide data and proposals for the current new funding cycle. It remains to be seen if the evaluation system can be sustained once new funding is procured this year. In a sense, this involves the larger question of whether the evaluative

capacity built today has really been internalized by grantees into their separate program cultures in ways that are genuinely valued and sustainable.

8. The Costs and Benefits of Evaluation at Different Levels

The Irvine Foundation's Evaluation Director Martha Campbell and the Foundation's Civic Culture Program Director Craig McGarvey have come at evaluation from different directions. The Evaluation Director has to worry about reporting on the overall effectiveness of the CVP Initiative. The Civic Culture Program Director has focused on learning across grantees and building the capacity of grantees, that is, bottoms-up approaches. Will these two levels of evaluation, the Overall Initiative level and the Bottoms-Up Grantee level, come together? Evaluation Director Campbell reflected as follows on this challenge?

> A question that we continually wrestle with at the Foundation is, when is it appropriate to invest time and resources in evaluation? We have learned that programs and evaluation work best when they are anchored in clear goal statements and program theory. It is has been my experience that the ability of the Foundation to learn from any evaluation depends in large part on the degree to which we have articulated clear goals and expected outcomes. Programs must achieve a certain threshold of maturity and stability before outcomes can be useful in drawing conclusions. With CVP, since specific program models, outcomes and indicators were not defined in advance, the first phase of the evaluation could only be used to describe activities or what happened in retrospect. With the recognition of the limitations of this evaluation for our own program planning and accountability purposes, we launched a second phase of the evaluation in which the evaluator worked with the grantees to develop skills in setting clear program objectives, linking activities to outcomes, and assessing their project progress. We have had to invest a substantial amount of resources to actively engage grantees in setting goals, developing and implementing data collection systems, and improving their programs. We are now in the process of what may be called a third phase of the evaluation of clarifying the program goals, specifying the overall theory of change, and moving the partnership haltingly toward a shared commitment toward those goals. The problems and dynamics of then reconciling the diverse program approaches of the respective grantees awaits us and will be played out over this next funding cycle and what constitutes years 6-8 of the Initiative. Putting all of these building blocks in place has put any rigorous evaluation work on the back burner over the last 2-3 years.

> Trying to put all this together and make sense of it, these are questions we wrestle with: (1) When is it appropriate to invest significant evaluation resources, even if it is for program improvement and helping grantees acquire knowledge and skills for self-assessment, when the programs are not yet sufficiently articulated, developed or aligned within a larger program framework? and (2) Is this bottom-up, collaborative approach, while consistent with CVP culture and principles, the most efficient use of scarce evaluation time and resource?

Conclusion

The textbooks in program evaluation and planning frequently present a rather straightforward process: the evaluator or planner (1) identifies a program's goals, (2) develops operationalized measures of goal attainment, (3) plans ways for the program to meet its goals, and (4) then collects data on the measures to evaluate the program's degree of goal attainment. The present case illustrates how "unstraightforward" the picture frequently is for multi-dimensional programs with goals that are of vital social importance, but which are complex and dynamic and which take time to become clear and evaluatable. Moreover, in such programs the roles of planner and/or evaluator often merge in thorny ways with those of organizational development resource and advocate.

Indeed, this case illustrates some of the challenges and complexities of conducting evaluations collaboratively with an emphasis on learning as advocated by several recent theorists (Preskill & Torres, 1998; Cousins & Earl, 1995) and studied by Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom (1996). One of the most highly collaborative ways of working with stakeholders in a design team setting is "developmental evaluation" (Patton, 1994, 2002). The developmental evaluator becomes part of the program design team or an organization's management team, not apart from the team or just reporting to the team, but fully participating in decisions and facilitating discussion about how to evaluate whatever happens. All team members, together, interpret evaluation findings, analyze implications and apply results to the next stage of development. The purpose of the evaluation is to help develop the intervention; the evaluator is committed to improving the intervention and uses evaluative approaches to facilitate ongoing program, project, product, staff and/or organizational development. The evaluator's primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data and logic, and to facilitate data-based decision-making in the developmental process.

As this case illustrates, developmental evaluation changes the role of the evaluator from just facilitating evaluation to also facilitating program or organizational development. There are sound arguments for defining evaluation narrowly in order to distinguish genuinely evaluative efforts from other kinds of organizational engagement. However, on a comprehensive menu of possible evaluation uses, organizational development is a legitimate use of evaluation processes. What is lost in conceptual clarity and purity with regard to a narrow definition of evaluation that focuses only on judging merit or worth is made up for with a gain in appreciation for evaluation expertise. Part of the value of an evaluator to a design or program implementation team is bringing a reservoir of knowledge (based on many years of practice and having read a great many evaluation reports) about what kinds of things tend to work and where to anticipate problems. Young and novice evaluators may be well-advised to stick fairly close to the data. However, experienced evaluators have typically accumulated a great deal of knowledge and wisdom about what works and doesn't work. More generally, as a profession, the field of evaluation has generated a great deal of knowledge about patterns of effectiveness. That knowledge makes evaluators valuable partners in the design process. Crossing that line, however, can reduce independence of judgment. The costs and benefits of such a role change must be openly acknowledged and carefully assessed with primary intended users (Patton, 1997).

Where stakeholders want and need an independent, summative evaluation, that is what they should get. Where they want the evaluator to act independently in bringing forward

improvement-oriented findings for formative evaluation, that is what they should get. But those are no longer the only options on the menu of evaluation uses. New, participatory, collaborative, intervention-oriented, and developmental approaches are already being used. The new challenge is working with primary intended users to understand when such approaches are appropriate and helping intended users make informed decisions about their appropriateness for a specific evaluation endeavor.

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