

Q: What is the Community-Driven Institute?

We believe Community Benefit organizations hold the keys to improving life in our communities and around the world.

Yet with a sector so large,
with so many organizations
employing so many people,
and with hundreds of billions of dollars
poured into the sector every year,
the world and our communities
seem pretty much the same.

Why is that? And what can we do to change that reality, so there is significant improvement in our communities? That is what the mission at the Community-Driven Institute is all about - to explore, develop, convene and teach - to help organizations and communities leverage the boundless potential of the Community Benefit sector, to create that significant, visionary impact.

Q: So what have you learned so far? Why hasn't the sector created massive change in our world?

Just as there are life cycles in organizations, the whole Community Benefit sector is experiencing its own life cycle. For the past 40 years or so, the sector has been in classic start-up mode. 40 years ago, the sector as we know it did not exist - a \$200 billion worldwide force of more than a million organizations all aimed at doing good. So for the past +- 40 years, we've been inventing it, getting started, seeing what works - and as many have noted, what doesn't work.

What we at the Institute have learned so far is twofold:

- 1) The sector is ready to evolve to the next level. It is ready to grow. The discontent in the sector is palpable. From issues of governance to funding to the effectiveness of our very programs, everyone seems to agree on one thing: There is a lot that isn't working.
- 2) The reason the sector has not created massive change in our communities is simple: we have not aimed for that. We may aim our programs at creating some level of difference for some people, but overall, our organizations are not aiming every single function at creating significant change. And many organizations will flat out tell you that is NOT what they are about!

And so the answer isn't a new governance model. The answer isn't a new fundraising scheme to provide financial stability for your particular organization. The answer isn't a new approach to marketing.

The answer is: Everything. It is the way we govern and the way we raise money. The way we do "outreach" and "marketing." The way we plan our programs. The way we think of the community and the way we think of our organizations. The way funders provide funding. The things Management Support Organizations insist are "Best Practices."

It's everything. And that is where the frustration has come from - the seemingly endless hamster-wheel of "it's not working." Until we change the way we see the whole enchilada - until we aim every single function within our organizations AWAY from practices that preclude creating impact, and TOWARD practices that encourage that impact - we will continue to see incremental, reactive efforts that create little improvement in our communities.

Q: Is the Institute's work aimed primarily at the Social Service part of the sector?

Our work is aimed at every single part of the sector. Are the Arts about improving the quality of life in our communities? Is Historic Preservation? Environmental groups? Economic Development groups?

And what about funders? And management support organizations? And university nonprofit programs? Is the goal of all those efforts not also to improve our communities?

As you can see from the Community-Driven framework described below, it is all interconnected. The work of the sector is to make our communities and our world a better place to live. And that means the Institute's work is about everything this sector has the potential to be and do.

Q: What is the Community-Driven Framework?

As we re-think how we do our work in the Community Benefit sector, the following framework is at the core of all the approaches taken at the Institute:

<p>Accountability for Community Impact</p>	<p>The voluntary sector, each organization within the sector, and each individual working and volunteering within the sector, has boundless potential for creating amazing communities and an amazing world.</p> <p>➤ To create that visionary impact, Community-Driven organizations will hold themselves accountable to the community they want to impact, and will hold themselves accountable for creating that impact.</p>
<p>Means: Vision-Based</p>	<p>The only way we can create amazing communities is if that vision for the future of our communities is the context for all our work.</p> <p>➤ To create that visionary impact, Community-Driven organizations will therefore see today's issues and programs in the context of that amazing future, rather than focusing on today's problems in a vacuum, or assuming tomorrow will merely be an extension of today.</p>
<p>Means: Values-Based</p>	<p>The only way we can create amazing communities is to do our work in a way the community could stand behind, even if our work is about changing their values.</p> <p>➤ To create visionary impact, the actions of a Community-Driven organization - from the work of staff and volunteers to the board's decision-making - will ensure the community can always say, "We may not agree with them, but we respect the way they do their work."</p>
<p>Means: Interconnected and Interdependent</p>	<p>The only way we can create amazing communities is to acknowledge that none of us can create significant impact on our own - that individuals, organizations, communities, and countries are all interconnected and interdependent, and that the only way to create amazing communities is to link arms together to create that change.</p> <p>➤ To create visionary impact, Community-Driven approaches are therefore rooted in those connections, rather than competition, which breaks those connections.</p>
<p>Means: Asset-Based</p>	<p>The only way we can create amazing communities is if we build on our strengths, recognizing the abundance of assets and resources each of us has to work with.</p> <p>➤ To create visionary impact, Community-Driven approaches therefore build upon the strengths we have as individuals, as organizations, and as communities.</p>
<p>Means: Systems vs. Individuals</p>	<p>The only way we can create amazing communities is if we build systems that outlast any one individual.</p> <p>➤ To create visionary impact, Community-Driven approaches are therefore rooted in systems that build upon themselves and build upon your mission.</p>

By leading Community Benefit organizations towards the highest potential they have to create visionary impact in our communities, we can indeed create amazing communities, as part of an amazing world.

Q: This talk of “Vision” and “Values” and “Interconnectedness” sounds so esoteric. Is any of this Practical?

After years of aiming organizations at their vision for building a better community, we know two things:

- 1) Without practical tools for accomplishing these feats, individuals will continue to think such a visionary future is a utopian pipe dream.
- 2) Without tools that are more effective and more practical than anything else around, the idealism of our own internal beliefs and values will paint us as airy fairy philosophers with our heads in the clouds.

Therefore, the tools we have developed are indeed more effective and more practical than anything else around. Because they were created specifically for organizations who want to make significant impact in their communities (and not modified from other uses, such as making money in a profit-making business), they are, quite simply, tools that make the most sense for the task at hand - creating better places to live.

Q: What kinds of tools have you developed?

Here are just a few of the tools the Institute has developed, tested, and is now teaching:

An overall framework that focuses every organizational function - from governance to resource development to program planning and then some - on providing significant improvement to the community's quality of life.

- ✘ A Governance framework that aims accountability at
 - Creating significant impact and benefit for the community you serve
 - Adherence to core values
 - Ensuring the efforts to achieve that impact are strong and sustainable

And the establishment of ongoing systems that ensure boards don't miss a beat when board members rotate off, or when staff changes.

- ✘ A “Strategic Planning” process that consciously focuses on ensuring community impact, while proactively ensuring organizations have the means to provide that impact.
 - How will the community be a better place because of our work?
 - How do we ensure we are working towards that?
 - How do we plan for the day we will never again say, “We are doing the best we can with what we've got!” - and will instead proudly ensure we have the means to do whatever it takes (and further ensure that risk / liability don't eat away at those means)?

- ✘ A focus on Sustainability that goes beyond money, making the community such an integral part of your work that they would never let your program close its doors. And a Resource Development approach that builds upon an organization's assets, creating sustainable income streams while building an army of support.

- ✘ Collaboration approaches that work to bring whole communities together to solve unmet needs, avoiding turf and other control issues.

And much more

Q: What programs does the Institute offer?

The Institute is growing, and we encourage you to check back often (or sign up for our newsletter, where we will share news of our ever-evolving programs). Our current programs include the following:

➤ Communities:

- Community-wide educational opportunities / workshops and extended learning
- Community-wide convening of all levels of the sector - from funders to providers

Visit our website to bring us to your community

➤ Individual Organizations:

- Educational opportunities: Workshops and extended learning
- Consulting / planning
- Individual skills coaching
- And all our online resources (see below)

Visit our website to help your organization become more Community-Driven

➤ Conferences / Annual Meetings:

- Keynote speaking
- Workshop packages for break-out sessions

Visit our website if you are interested in having us present at your conference

➤ Funders:

- Educational opportunities that help leverage the dollars invested in the community, to create more community impact
- Convening community funder groups, facilitating conversations about leveraging significantly more impact for dollars invested

Visit our website to learn more about how we can help your grantees

➤ Consultants:

- We are planning our first Consultant Trainings for late 2006 / early 2007.

Visit our website to be notified about those events

➤ Online:

- Educational opportunities - recorded classes
- Free Online Library - articles on issues facing Community Benefit organizations
- Newsletter - monthly (or so) updates on becoming more Community-Driven
- Products - books and downloadable products to help you do your job

Visit our website for these and other tools and materials

Q: What are the Institute's Plans?

If your organization has grown or expanded its own programs, you know some of what we are facing as the Community-Driven Institute continues to grow and expand its offerings. We are always humbled as we develop our own organization, as it helps us understand firsthand what you - our readers, clients and program participants - face on a daily basis! In the words of former President Clinton, we feel your pain!

As the Institute's programs continue to expand and evolve, we are excited to share our plans for the months and years ahead. Here is just some of what we are working on.

What are the Institute's Plans? *(continued)*

Website Overhaul

In 2006 and 2007, the Help 4 NonProfits / Community-Driven Institute's website will be getting a complete overhaul, to provide the very best information we can about Community-Driven approaches.

Building an International Training System

Our plans for the next few years include transforming the Institute into an international educational institution - learning, exploring and training in Community-Driven approaches, including the development of train-the-trainer programs.

Books and Other Products

In the coming months and years you will see more books and online classes regarding Community-Driven approaches. From the book that will describe the Community-Driven approach in its entirety, to workbooks for doing various pieces of that work - we are looking forward to sharing what we have learned and developed on the road to creating significant improvement to our communities and our world.

Visit our website if you would like to be notified as new developments occur, sign up for our newsletter

Let us know your thoughts

We are always looking to link arms with others who are walking the path to creating significant, long term, visionary improvement to the quality of life in our communities. Please let us know of the work you are doing, and if you have come across anything interesting you think we should know about. We look forward to hearing from you!

Contact us: Info@Help4NonProfits.com