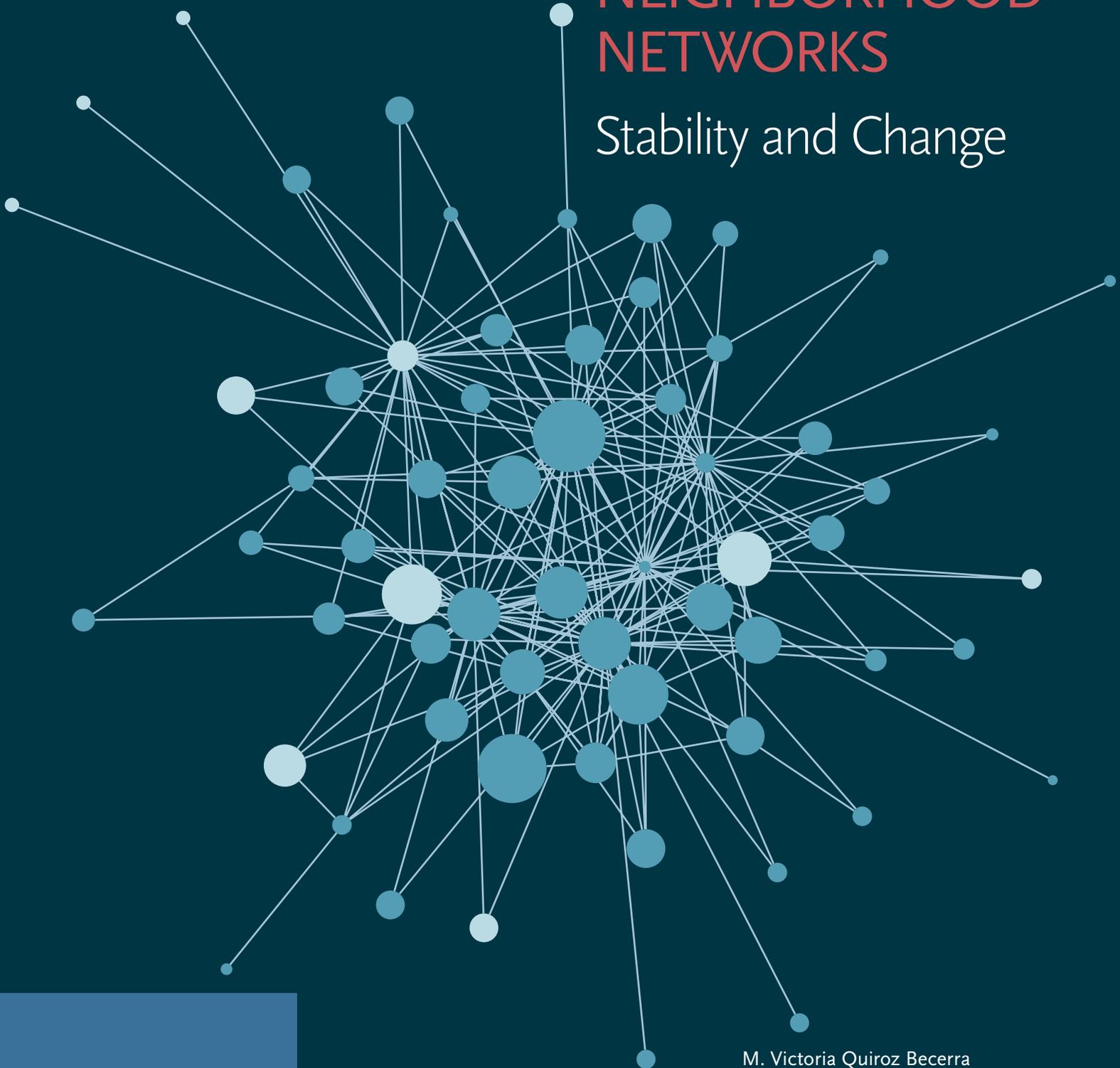


Executive Summary

CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Stability and Change



mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

M. Victoria Quiroz Becerra
David M. Greenberg
Edith Yang
Audrey Yu

January 2019

Chicago Neighborhood Networks

Stability and Change

M. Victoria Quiroz Becerra
David M. Greenberg
Edith Yang
Audrey Yu
with Gloria Tomlinson



JANUARY 2019

FUNDERS

The funding for this report was provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following funders that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Daniel and Corinne Goldman, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The JPB Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Sandler Foundation, and The Starr Foundation.

In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, Sandler Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

For information about MDRC and copies of our publications,
see our website: www.mdrc.org.

Copyright © 2019 by MDRC®. All rights reserved.

Overview

Neighborhood improvement initiatives have long underscored the importance of local organizations working together, sometimes in formal partnerships and sometimes through less formal coordination and engagement. Coordinated efforts may help neighborhoods achieve community improvement outcomes that include leveraging public sector investments and actions beyond what any individual organization could achieve on its own. A community's capacity to improve its neighborhood may hinge fundamentally on the nature, endurance, and evolution of the ties that bind local organizations, and the flexibility of organizational networks to address new challenges.

This report uses social network analysis, drawing from two surveys of local organizations over three years in nine Chicago neighborhoods, and extensive field research, and asks: How and why do neighborhood networks change or remain the same? The report looks at four dimensions of network change: (1) the place of individual organizations within a network, (2) levels of connectivity in neighborhood networks, (3) the extent to which neighborhood organizations collaborate on different issues (comprehensiveness), and (4) the distribution of potential power or influence in a network.

KEY FINDINGS

- While most organizations in the Chicago study upheld their level of neighborhood prominence, community conveners — organizations that rally others for shared purposes — remained most prominent or rose to a higher level of prominence relatively quickly. Community conveners may help sustain or enhance network capacity to coordinate or mobilize partners for collective efforts.
- Overall, levels of connectivity — the proportion of all possible connections between organizations within a neighborhood network that are realized — declined between surveys for six neighborhoods and remained similar for three neighborhoods. The drop in connections occurred despite declining numbers of network organizations — a development that would normally make it easier for organizations to connect. In some cases, a state budget crisis led to less funding for core activities and this may have weakened neighborhood organizations' capacity to build and maintain partnerships — and advance neighborhood improvements.
- Across neighborhoods, partnerships grew less comprehensive over time, spanning fewer areas of work. In some instances, pressing neighborhood developments such as increasing gentrification or a preoccupation with police violence led organizations to focus on single issues rather than partner with others on multiple issues. These changes might highlight the flexibility of neighborhood networks that face challenges to their communities.
- Overall, the distribution of potential power or influence among organizations within each neighborhood network was stable in the three-year period between 2013 and 2016. This suggests that overall patterns in the way power and influence are distributed in a network might be less susceptible to change in the short term. Depending on the circumstances, this may sustain strong community capacity or hinder improvements to it.

This study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of neighborhood networks in order to gauge a community's capacity to improve neighborhood outcomes.

Preface

The ability of local organizations to improve their neighborhoods is, in part, shaped by how these organizations work with each other and other actors. These relationships are central to achieving collective goals such as better educational opportunities, safe neighborhoods, and affordable housing. Community development initiatives have nurtured community ties to build local capacity. But effective relationships that withstand the test of time require both flexibility to respond to changing circumstances, and stability to reap the benefits of collaboration. The timing of this study — 2013 to 2016 — offers readers the opportunity to understand the resilience and adaptability of organizational partnerships during a time when neighborhoods contended with a major state budget crisis, heightened concerns with police brutality, and the loss of affordable housing in some neighborhoods. This report examines this complicated dynamic in an MDRC study of nine Chicago neighborhoods. The study is one of the most extensive attempts to characterize and measure the strength of neighborhood improvement networks.

Since 2006, MDRC has led an evaluation of community partnerships in Chicago's distressed urban neighborhoods. This research has yielded valuable insights about the importance of neighborhood partnerships to local improvement efforts, initially during a period of extreme economic distress, the Great Recession and the effect it had on neighborhoods in its aftermath, and subsequently during a state budget crisis that affected local services as well as organizational funding.

In 2012, MDRC launched the Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study to deepen our understanding of neighborhood resilience. The work has been funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The CCN study includes two surveys of local organizations and uses social network analysis and qualitative fieldwork to better understand the relationships among them. The initial network survey took place in 2013. The second and final survey occurred three years later, allowing for an observation of changes to partnerships over time and an understanding of how these changes might reflect internal and external pressures.

This report provides an opportunity for funders and practitioners to learn about the evolution of neighborhood networks. It offers insights about changes in neighborhood leadership roles, the expansion and contraction of partnerships in a neighborhood, the extent to which organizations can work together on a range of different issues, and how changes in organizational power or influence are distributed across a network. Those seeking to support community efforts to improve neighborhoods will find the insights in this study valuable to their practice.

Gordon L. Berlin
President, MDRC

Acknowledgments

The Chicago Community Networks team is grateful to program officers from our funder, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, for their support and guidance throughout MDRC's research and evaluation work in Chicago. Craig Howard, Director of Community and Economic Development at the foundation, has contributed valuable insights about this project that have advanced the research.

This report also benefited from the generous and thoughtful support and review of many others, both inside and outside of MDRC. Within MDRC, Nandita Verma and Alice Tufel provided important insights on early report drafts. In addition to reviewing and providing feedback to multiple versions of this report, James Riccio and Carolyn Hill provided guidance and supported the team as we completed this report. Gordon Berlin, MDRC's president, brought longstanding insights about community development to his review and support of this project. We are grateful to Nikki Ortolani, who served as our always prudent resource manager. Gloria Tomlinson made valuable contributions to this project, from assisting during fieldwork and data analysis to skillfully helping coordinate the report. Our appreciation also goes to Anaga Dalal, who edited the report, and Carolyn Thomas, who prepared it for publication. Outside of MDRC, Rob Chaskin, H. Brinton Milward, and Andrew Papachristos provided insights from the field and their research in various reviews. We are also thankful to staff from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Chicago for their insightful review of this report. We are indebted to Stephen Nuñez, who not only provided valuable support on social network analysis but introduced us to a new vocabulary and perspective on networks. Thanks to Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, who managed the project and gracefully led the team in its final stages. Thanks also to Sarah Schell, Deni Chen, and Sara Staszak, who processed and analyzed the survey data.

Our deepest gratitude goes to organizations across the nine neighborhoods who participated in our study, giving their time to provide insights about their practice and their partnerships. They were the source not just of the raw network and qualitative data, but also of invaluable insights about networks and how they matter for community partnerships and policy action. We are particularly grateful to our partners at Austin Coming Together, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Claretian Associates, Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation, Enlace, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Quad Communities Development Corporation, and the Southwest Organizing Project. This research would not have been possible without them.

Finally, we are still indebted to our late colleague, Keith Provan. His intelligence, wisdom, humor, and generosity are missed by all who were fortunate enough to work with him. He has made a deep and lasting mark on this research.

The Authors

Executive Summary

Community-based organizations and other local actors tasked with improving neighborhoods do not exist and work in isolation. They are part of larger *networks* of local institutions that encompass different types of formal and informal partnerships. Importantly, the features of networks themselves, not just the individual organizations within them, may affect the broader capacity of communities to improve local conditions and cope with larger forces of change. Local networks of community organizations are not static either; their membership, persistence, structure, and functioning may change over time. The dynamics of this change can heavily influence the strength or weakness of a community's very capacity to deliver positive change for its residents.

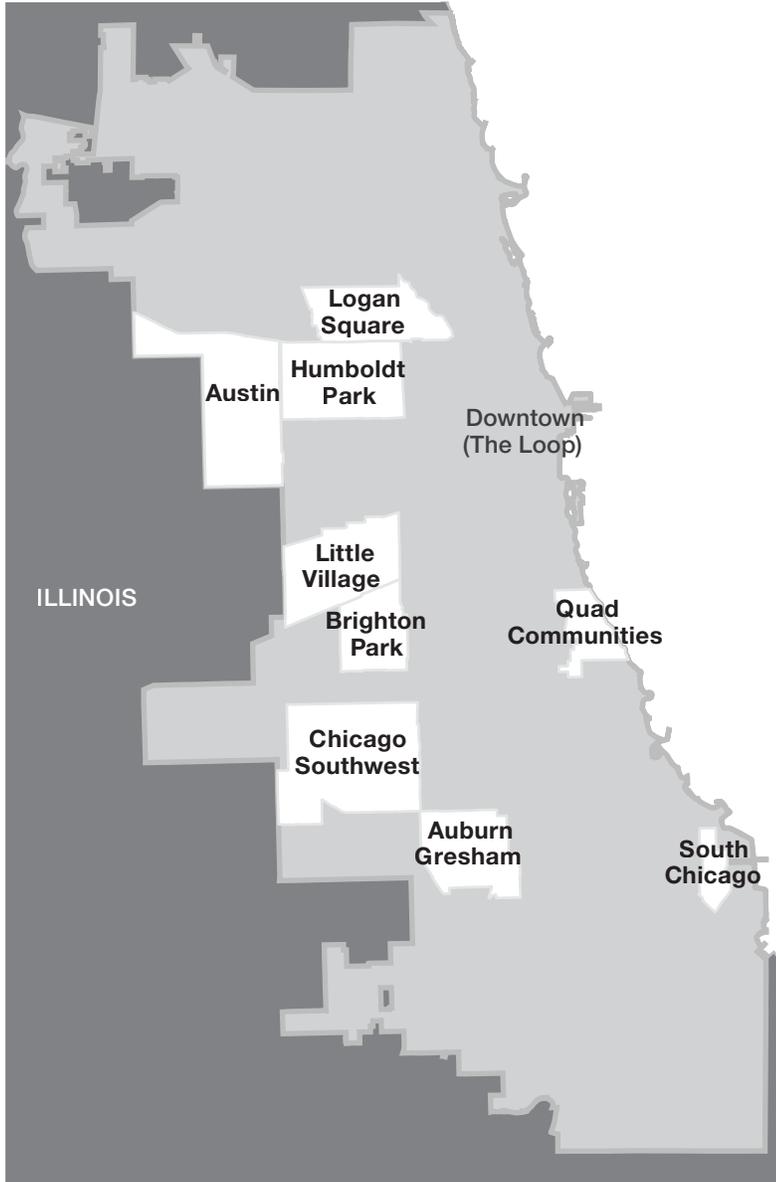
The potential importance of community networks to everyday neighborhood life prompts several important questions for which data are generally scarce. How stable are local networks? Why do some partnerships appear to endure over time while others dissipate soon after their creation? Do leadership patterns in neighborhood networks persist over time? Can new leadership emerge in the short term? Are partnerships that span multiple areas of work more stable than those that focus on fewer areas of work? Do overall patterns of partnership persist over time? This report explores these and other questions using data from the Chicago Community Networks study, which analyzed relationships among community organizations in nine Chicago neighborhoods, shown in Figure ES.1. The study examined the results from two surveys of network organizations in 2013 and 2016, and subsequent in-depth interviews with practitioners and other stakeholders in selected neighborhoods. While many other studies have explored partnerships within communities, few have attempted to quantitatively measure the relationships between community organizations and how they change over time.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CHANGE INITIATIVES

Federal, state, and local initiatives to improve low-income neighborhoods have long fostered relationships between community organizations and other actors to share information, coordinate activities, and deliver services. Efforts to improve educational outcomes in distressed neighborhoods, for instance, often rely upon partnerships between schools and community organizations to ensure that young people receive supportive and enriching services. Federal improvement efforts have sought to bolster connections between public housing administrators and social service providers. The very premise of comprehensive community initiatives is that funding multiple community organizations to collaborate is

Figure ES.1

Map of Study Neighborhoods in Chicago



a more effective way of tackling complex issues such as housing, education, public safety, and health care, than funding individual organizations to work in isolation.¹

Operating through partnerships has several potential advantages. It can extend the reach of an initiative beyond the scope of any one organization. It can also help coalitions change public policy by leveraging a broad range of public sector support for neighborhood improvement.² Over time, cultivating organizational relationships can help develop the long-term capacity of people and organizations to come together and improve a neighborhood.³ Research suggests that community partnerships also help to improve other aspects of community life, such as racial and ethnic integration, the effective exercise of political power, and even broader neighborhood outcomes such as community safety.⁴ In essence, partnerships are an important dimension of community capacity.

THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are by nature dynamic and change over time. It is vital to understand the role of change and permanence in making partnerships effective. Research reveals two competing dynamics that are important for understanding the potential effectiveness of partnerships over time: flexibility and stability.

Changes in partnerships can sometimes reflect growth and strategic flexibility. This change may occur when partnerships respond to new challenges and opportunities. For example, a spike in late payments and mortgage defaults may inspire a housing counseling organization to alter its focus and partner with a local block association to reach at-risk homeowners identified by a foreclosure prevention initiative. Neighborhood partnerships might have to confront new challenges such as the loss of affordable housing or funding cuts for social programs. They might also adapt in response to new funding streams or new partners. Adjusting to new circumstances can help partnerships maximize new opportunities and stay on course for the long run.

At other times, it might be important for partnerships to maintain some level of stability in order to establish policies, procedures, and routines that elicit better coordination across

-
- 1 Anne C. Kubisch, Patricia Auspos, Prudence Brown, and Tom Dewar, “Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges from Two Decades of Community Change Efforts” (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2010).
 - 2 Robert J. Chaskin and David M. Greenberg, “Between Public and Private Action: Neighborhood Organizations and Local Governance,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44, 2 (2015): 248–267.
 - 3 Robert J. Chaskin, Prudence Brown, Sudhir Venkatesh, and Avis Vidal, *Building Community Capacity* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001).
 - 4 Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

partners. For instance, a community mental health program may need to establish legal agreements with a youth development program before sharing patient information. This kind of sensitive coordination has the greatest chance of success when there is a longstanding and trusting partnership between both sides. Stable partnerships are often an indicator of success. Yet, partnerships require both flexibility to grow and evolve, and stability to reap the benefits of collaboration. In practice, this balancing act can be difficult to maintain.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study, funded by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is an extensive attempt to measure partnerships, to use those measures to better understand partnership dynamics, and to draw related implications for practice and research. This mixed methods study collected two types of data: (1) two surveys of community networks in nine Chicago neighborhoods, administered in 2013 and 2016 to organizations and other neighborhood actors such as local schools and elected officials who are involved in community development activities; and (2) in-depth interviews with staff from community organizations and other interested actors.

The CCN study was conducted at a time — 2013 to 2016 — when Chicago neighborhoods contended with a major state budget crisis that delayed payments to community organizations, ongoing struggles with violence in neighborhoods, and heightened public concerns about police brutality. During this time, some neighborhoods also experienced demographic shifts as housing costs increased throughout the city, particularly in neighborhoods directly west and north of the Loop, Chicago’s downtown district. The timing of this study presents an opportunity to understand both the resilience and adaptability of organizational partnerships during a challenging period for many Chicago neighborhoods.

This report uses social network analysis to measure and map relationships among organizations and other neighborhood actors to describe patterns of change in community partnerships during the three years between CCN surveys. This approach documents not only the presence or absence of partnerships over time, but also provides information about the structure of those partnerships, including the distribution of potential power or influence among local actors, the location of particular actors within the network, the strength of partnerships between organizations, and the depth of community partnerships. Figure ES.2 illustrates the building blocks of community networks. This report offers valuable insights about how best to support and strengthen partnerships that enhance a community’s capacity to address challenges over time.

KEY FINDINGS

Neighborhood partnerships, whether focused on service delivery or community organizing, can change in two ways: at the level of the organization and at the level of the network as

Figure ES.2

The Building Blocks of Community Networks

THE ORGANIZATION

A community actor working on neighborhood improvement

Some elements of organizational success:

- Quality of service models
- Organizational capacity
- Available resources
- Credibility in the community



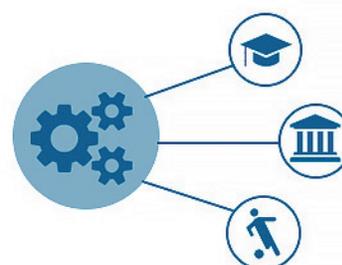
AN ORGANIZATION

PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships between two or more organizations that amplify the reach of a single actor

The value added by different types of partners:

- Local organizations can help with the same, or different, areas of work.
- Civic organizations can provide access to their facilities. For instance, a youth sports league can provide a youth development organization access to its athletic facilities.
- City agencies can provide an organization access to new tools or resources such as summer jobs for clients.
- Local schools can help spread the word about an initiative that may benefit its students and families.



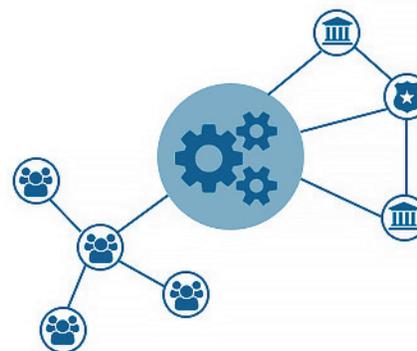
AN ORGANIZATION AND ITS DIRECT PARTNERS

AN ORGANIZATION'S POSITION

An organization's position in a network can have a great impact on its ability to effect positive change

In a network, an organization can have many connections to other organizations or have a limited number of connections.

- Organizations that have many connections to other organizations can play the role of brokers because they can link two or more organizations that may or may not have worked together to achieve a common goal. As brokers, they can provide information and coordinate the efforts of others to reach shared ends.
- Organizations that have a limited number of connections often play a peripheral role.



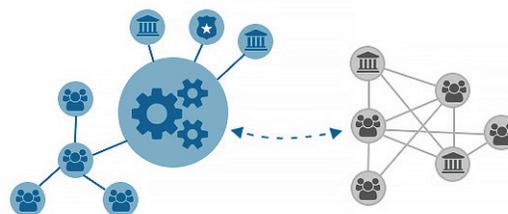
AN ORGANIZATION IN A NETWORK

THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF A NETWORK

A network may consist of organizations that are well connected and well coordinated, or largely separate and functioning somewhat independently of each other.

Types of networks:

- Well-connected networks consist of organizations that have many intersecting partnerships that facilitate close collaboration and coordination across a network.
- Fragmented networks may contain two sub-networks of organizations that do not interact with each other. This can make it difficult to involve the entire community or reach everyone in the neighborhood who may benefit from a single organization's services.



TWO SUB-NETWORKS OF ORGANIZATIONS

a whole. In the former instance, organizations can change by becoming more or less well connected and rise or fall in prominence accordingly.

At the network level, change occurs when working in partnership becomes more or less common in a neighborhood, or when there is variation in the number of issues that organizations work on together — something known as comprehensiveness. In addition, the ways that power or influence is concentrated in one or a few organizations can change at the network level as well. The CCN study measured change at both the level of individual organizations and at the level of the network as a whole. The key findings relating to permanence and change in Chicago Community Networks between 2013 and 2016 are highlighted below:

- **Organizations that acted as conveners or lead agencies maintained or increased their network prominence, which may have sustained or enhanced the capacity of some networks to mobilize partners or coordinate collective efforts.**

Many community initiatives rely on recognized, trusted, and well-connected organizations to play the part of conveners or lead agencies. Being well connected or prominent within a network allows these organizations to coordinate work among various partners, serve as conduits of information, and in some cases, connect other actors to resources. However, the position of any organization within a network may change with the addition of new organizations, the exit of established ones, and the changing roles of others. As a result, individual organizations can become more or less prominent, or central in a network. For organizations that act as conveners or lead agencies, changes to their prominence can affect their ability to perform a coordinating or convening role. Separately, the *kinds* of organizations that are prominent in a network may impact a network’s effectiveness. For instance, responses to the first CCN survey suggest that Chicago neighborhoods with prominent community organizing groups had greater success mobilizing local organizations for policy change than neighborhoods where aldermanic officials were the most prominent local actors.⁵

The CCN study shows that between 2013 and 2016, convening or lead organizations maintained or increased their prominence in their respective neighborhood networks. Qualitative research suggests that in some cases, convening organizations had the capacity and financial stability to seize new opportunities at a time when other organizations in the neighborhood were under stress. In other cases, the rise in prominence of a convener was associated with new sources of funding amidst leadership turmoil at other organizations. This finding suggests that at least in the short term, convener or lead organizations may be able to rally organizations despite broader network changes. These organizations might also be able to maintain information flows and continue coordinating work to keep initiatives afloat.

- **Throughout the Chicago Community Networks, overall levels of connectivity, or ties between organizations, declined or remained stable during the study time frame.**

.....
5 David M. Greenberg, Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, Mikael Karlström, Stephen Nuñez, Victoria Quiroz-Becerra, Sarah Schell, Edith Yang, and Audrey Yu, *Network Effectiveness in Neighborhood Collaborations: Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study* (New York: MDRC, 2017).

Where connections declined, the collective capacity of communities to address community challenges and advance improvement efforts was likely to be weakened.

Fostering organizational partnerships has been the goal of many community efforts. Working in collaboration with others has advantages to working alone. Partnerships allow organizations to share best practices, coordinate efforts, and attract new resources. In social network analysis, the overall proportion of organizations in a neighborhood that are connected and working together is known as a network’s density, or level of connectivity. Changes in levels of connectivity can arise for a variety of reasons. Consider the example of an educational program that promotes partnerships between schools and service providers. Community events can also impact connectivity. For instance, a collective response to the loss of affordable housing or a push for a local ordinance to protect renters can catalyze new alliances in a neighborhood. Partnerships, however, require careful management and maintenance if levels of connectivity are to endure over time.⁶

In the CCN study, the overall levels of connectivity across neighborhoods declined or remained the same. This change occurred despite a decline in the overall number of neighborhood organizations during this study. In fact, from 2013 to 2016, approximately 13 percent of organizations in the CCN study closed their doors. Fewer organizations might normally suggest an increase in connectivity among the remaining organizations.⁷ But this was a time when Chicago’s nonprofit sector faced unprecedented funding challenges. Indeed, many organizations closed during this period. Case studies suggest that fiscal strains forced organizations to divert time and resources away from collaborating with others to raising funds and maintaining their own operations. Reduced funding is also likely to have created fewer opportunities for collaboration. Networks seem vulnerable to changes in funding and seem to adapt to these changes, in part, by reducing partnerships. Declines in levels of connectivity are likely to limit the ability of neighborhoods to come together and coordinate work to improve neighborhoods.

- **Levels of comprehensiveness — the degree to which organizations work across multiple policy or programmatic areas — declined across neighborhoods. A focus on fewer areas of work may reflect strategic adaptations to address more urgent challenges in a neighborhood.**

Comprehensiveness,⁸ or the degree to which organizations in a network interact across multiple domains such as education, housing, public policy, and organizing, has become a guiding principle for many community improvement initiatives. Neighborhoods with partnerships that span various domains of work — that is, with high levels of comprehen-

.....

6 John Kania and Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, 1 (2011): 36-41.

7 Fewer organizations mean that there are fewer potential partnerships and thus the proportion of those partnerships that are realized increases as the denominator decreases.

8 In the networks literature this is known as multiplexity. See Keith G. Provan, Mark A. Vezie, Lisa K. Staten, and Nicolette I. Teufel-Sone, “The Use of Network Analysis to Strengthen Community Partnerships,” *Public Administration Review* 65, 5 (2005): 603-613.

siveness — are generally better positioned to tackle the multiple and complex problems facing a neighborhood and leverage additional resources. In addition, organizations that work together on multiple fronts tend to persist over time. However, like other aspects of community networks, levels of comprehensiveness are not static and may decline as organizations turn to new issues, or as funding streams dry up. Although high levels of comprehensiveness are a desirable feature of networks, lower levels of comprehensiveness are not necessarily detrimental to the success of an initiative if, for example, working across fewer domains enhances community efforts to address one or a few particularly urgent or high-priority issues.

Across CCN neighborhoods, there was an overall decline in levels of comprehensiveness during the three years of this study. Specifically, the study found a smaller proportion of organizations working together on five or six domains of work than on one or two domains of work. In follow-up interviews, organizations said they were shifting their focus from multiple causes to singular, pressing concerns in their neighborhoods. For instance, in Logan Square, community organizations began to prioritize the accelerating loss of affordable housing. In Auburn Gresham, some local organizations began to focus more collective attention on the growing alarm over police brutality. The ability of local organizations to redirect their attention to new and urgent challenges highlights the importance of network flexibility in response to evolving circumstances. Conversely, declining levels of comprehensiveness could dampen the ability of neighborhood networks to tackle complex issues.

- **The distribution of power or influence in Chicago neighborhood networks remained stable over time, which, depending on the circumstances, may sustain strong community capacity, or slow improvements to that capacity.**

At the neighborhood level, leadership of certain activities can rest with one or a few organizations. Alternatively, leadership can be shared among a broader group of organizations within a network.⁹ In some cases, it might be important for a single organization to coordinate local efforts for a more efficient neighborhood response. In other cases, a collaborative approach could be more effective because including more organizations can inject new ideas and vitality into the network and strengthen its collective voice by making influence within the network more representative of the broader whole. Changes to the distribution or concentration of power or influence in a network have important implications for the effectiveness of different community efforts and the need to build consensus and trust.

The CCN study suggests that the ways in which neighborhoods concentrated power or influence in a few, or many, organizations remained stable throughout the network during the short time period of the study. This suggests that overall patterns in the distribution of power are less prone to rapid change and that networks may be inclined to institutionalize existing power structures. It may therefore take longer to change the norms and dynamics that shape how neighborhood organizations relate to each other.

.....

⁹ See Greenberg et al. (2017).

CONCLUSIONS

A common goal of many community initiatives is to increase and strengthen partnerships among organizations and other actors, because these connections are essential to the collective capacity of a neighborhood network.¹⁰ Understanding how organizational networks are maintained and strengthened over time and how patterns of relationships shift within a network may be important for assessing the effectiveness of community initiatives. This understanding can help policymakers and other stakeholders support the work of community organizations. Knowing what aspects of networks are more or less prone to change in the short term might be important for determining how to foster new organizational partnerships or strengthen existing ones to enhance a community's long-term capacity to improve the lives of its residents.

.....
¹⁰ Kubisch et al. (2010).

Earlier MDRC Publications on the Chicago Community Networks Study

How Communities Work Together:

Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study

2018-2019. Website: <https://www.mdrc.org/chicago-community-networks-study>.

Network Effectiveness in Neighborhood Collaborations:

Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study

2017. David M. Greenberg, Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, Mikael Karlström, Stephen Nuñez, M. Victoria Quiroz-Becerra, Sarah Schell, Edith Yang, and Audrey Yu.

NOTE: A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its website (www.mdrc.org), from which copies of reports can also be downloaded.

ABOUT MDRC

MDRC IS A NONPROFIT, NONPARTISAN SOCIAL AND EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York; Oakland, California; Washington, DC; and Los Angeles, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff members bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-prisoners, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Children's Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.