

2010-2011

Miami Children's Initiative Annual Evaluation Report

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Introduction

Over the past year, the Miami Children's Initiative (MCI) has completed several more steps toward fulfilling its legislative mandate and developing infrastructure necessary for sustainability. During the first half of the fiscal year, the county, with the assistance of an interim steering committee, was responsible for specific objectives including advertising, interviewing, and seating the board of directors. In the latter half of the year, the responsibility for the MCI shifted to the board of directors who hired the president/CEO, established offices, worked with professional consultants to complete the mandated 10-year business plan, and began implementing the plan.

The evaluation team has monitored progress by reviewing documents, meeting minutes, e-mails, and other process measures. During the year, the team also helped to develop a community survey for a door-to-door data gathering process of the initial MCI geographic area and completed a web-based survey for the MIC board of directors. This report presents an analysis of the data supporting seven key areas of the MCI development process as well as the results of the board survey:

1. Board of directors recruitment and training
2. Executive director recruitment and hiring
3. Development of vision and mission statements
4. Community engagement during the reporting period
5. Board meetings and communication
6. Development of the 10-year business plan
7. Successes and challenges in the MCI development process

The first three key areas are an examination of process information with comparisons to best practices literature that focuses on 'how to' recruit and train board members and staff, as well as develop an organization's vision and mission. This includes a review of meeting minutes, e-mails and other information that offers insight on the decision-making processes that resulted in seating a board of directors, hiring an executive director, and developing vision and mission statements.

The fourth section uses process information as described along with discussion of the community and board surveys to understand the degree of community involvement in the development of the MCI in the last year. This is a critical section considering that keeping the community involved and having the community take ownership and responsibility for the initiative was a consistent message during the strategic planning process.

The fifth section is a short section targeting the board meetings. Board meetings were scheduled ambitiously for twice per month, twice as often than normal according to the literature on not-for-profit start up. The data from the board survey will be used to summarize opinions on the board meetings through objective key questions and open-ended responses.

The sixth, and most analytically rigorous, section is an analysis of the process information that led to the development of the 10-year business plan and a comparison analysis to ascertain the degree that the business plan incorporates and is consistent with the strategic plan. A comparison to best practices and suggestions from similar initiatives is also provided along with some suggestions for next steps to further integrate the strategic plan and the 10-year business plan.

The final section summarizes the board survey on what board members view as successes up to now, as well as challenges they believe they will face in the coming years. Lastly, recommendations appearing throughout the document are consolidated into a single section at the end to facilitate easy reference.

Board of Directors Development and Training

The board of directors, when fully constituted, will have 24 members. The current by-laws of the MCI support seventeen voting members which will include seven community seats, three youth advisory seats, two parent seats, three programmatic seats, and two board of trustees representative seats. The seven ex-officio (non-voting) members are the superintendent of Miami-Dade County public schools, the county mayor, the City of Miami mayor, the district administrator of the Florida Department of Children and Families, and the commissioners elected to the Board of County Commissioners and the City of Miami Commission or their designees (3 seats).

The open board seats were filled, in part, through a pre-established protocol that included an application and interview process. This analysis includes information on the fourteen members selected through this process; however, information on the pool of potential members, those that applied for the board and were not selected, was not available. Thus, there is no group to compare the selected board against to see what may have distinguished them from other candidates.

Each individual that responded to a community-wide call for potential directors received a packet that described the desired background and skills for a board member, the interim mission of the initiative, the purpose of the board, and other relevant background information about the MCI. A Board of Director's Selection Committee (BDSC) was identified and was in charge of interviewing and rating the applicants and working with an interim steering committee to ultimately select the current board. There were five members on the BDSC and one alternate. Four of the members, which included the alternate, were also interim steering committee members.

To be considered for selection, applicants were expected to have most, if not all, of the following characteristics or attributes:

- Reside in or operate a small community-based business or organization in Liberty City
- Understand the community and its needs
- Have passion for the cause and compassion for the community
- Be willing to commit time for board meetings, committee meetings, planning meetings and special events
- Work well with groups and understand community collaborations
- Listen well to other's ideas/opinions
- Be thoughtful in considering issues and seeking solutions for community needs

Each candidate was triaged by the BDSC in order to participate in the interview process. The interview process included an interview guide with five broad questions. Review of the notes for each interviewee found that these were truly beginning questions, as the BDSC followed-up with questions based on candidate responses, covering both the standard questions to all interviewees as well as specific questions based on potential board members responses, strengths, and opinions. All candidates were asked the following questions:

1. Tell us what you understand about the Miami Children’s Initiative and its purpose.
2. As a board member, what do you see is your responsibility for meeting the goals of MCI?
3. What long-term results do you think MCI should accomplish?
4. What makes you an excellent choice for the board?
5. Based on the role you now have in your organization or employment, do you foresee any potential conflicts of interest with MCI?

A brief review of board development literature found that these questions are part of the expected questions for not-for-profit boards when an interview process is completed. It was also noted that not-for-profit boards are the least likely to use an interview selection process, though it is highly recommended. The MCI interim steering team is applauded for its foresight. One very standard question is whether the applicants have board experience. Many of the responses to question 4 above included board experience. Another question covered in many board interviews for not-for-profits was how potential board members would handle conflict with other board members, community employers, or residents. Considering the history of contention that has been part of this project’s genesis, this might have been a useful question. Reviewing responses to the interviews, issues on dealing conflict were not consistently addressed.

Prior to an interview, prospective board members completed an application. The application was thorough and covered the following areas:

1. Biographical Profile: Name, contact information, employer, occupation, gender, race/ethnicity
2. Education: School, city, degree and year
3. Experience and/or Qualifications: This included the statement “Describe how your past experience and/or qualifications would benefit the Miami Children’s Initiative.” This section was where applicants would frequently list board experience.
4. Organizations and Activities: Including community, civic, professional and other organizations that applicants were/are members of and the position they held. Applicants were asked to list three people acquainted with their activities/experience. In this section, they were also asked to describe the goals and objectives they would seek to accomplish if selected as a director. This was very similar to question three of the interview process and a strong correlation was noted between the application and interview question response. This is a technique recommended in the literature for incorporating a validity check for applicant responses.
5. Public Office Held (Elected or Appointed): Including the office and dates in office.
6. Category of Membership: Applicants were asked to indicate whether they wanted to be considered for any combination of community seats, parent seats, or programmatic expert seats. This is discussed in detail later in this section.
7. Attachments: Applicants were asked to include either a short biography or a resume.

8. Certification Section: Candidates were asked to acknowledge and certify United States residency and either a residency, or ownership/operation of a small business or service organization, in the Liberty City community.

In reviewing/analyzing board candidate responses, the following is noted. The age range of the 14 directors with information available is 29 to 64, with an average age of 53 years. Ten board members are female and four male. Ten directors had board experience listed on the application though an additional director is believed to have board experience after reviewing the notes from their interview responses. Thirteen of fourteen had Black/Non-Hispanic for race/ethnicity and one indicated "other," with no other detail available. Education is obviously valued by the MCI considering the level of educational attainment for board members. The most common level of education attainment noted is a masters degree (5 directors), while five directors have associates or bachelors degrees and three have an education specialist or a doctorate degree.

Each applicant was asked to select all categories of membership for which he/she would like to be considered, as well as indicating the program expertise that he/she wanted considered as part of their application information. Table 1 summarizes this information. Five board members have been, or are currently, residents of Liberty City. Three have been, or are currently, parents residing in Liberty City. Only one director indicated that they had experience as a small business person. Regarding residency, operating or working for a community-based organization was the most endorsed category of residence.

There was considerable programmatic expertise, with directors indicating between zero to five areas of expertise on their applications. The most highly indicated area was educational achievement for children and adults, with youth support and early childhood education following closely. Though some directors are known to have considerable experience with juvenile justice programs, no one directly identified restorative justice. One of the key areas identified in the community strategic plan directly refers to restorative justice as one area of need for Liberty City. However, after reviewing the resumes, there is experience in juvenile justice programs on the board, so the lack of direct mention of restorative justice is more likely a recording oversight versus a critical lack of experience needed for board members. One area of potential concern is the low number of board members that considered their experience to include housing and community development and economic development. The MCI's movement toward self-sufficiency will be of paramount concern for sustainability.

The board survey, completed in June of 2011, included a section on board member background, focusing on residency, work experience in Liberty City, and whether the board member had participated in the strategic planning process that culminated in the development of the MCI Strategic Plan. Of the sixteen board members that responded, six (37.5%) are currently living in Liberty City. The length of time they have lived in Liberty City ranged from 4 to 43 years, with an average of 27.5 years and a total of 165 combined years. Directors were also asked if they had EVER been a resident of Liberty City. Five additional directors had lived in Liberty City for a total of 113 combined years, ranging from 2 to 44 years with an average of 22.6 years. Of those, one answered both current and past living in Liberty City, indicating that that director had moved from Liberty City and had since returned. In total, directors have lived in the community for a total of 278 combined years. Of those that *had* lived in Liberty City, when they had moved out of Liberty City ranged from this year (2011) to almost forty years ago.

Table 1. Summary of Board of Directors Liberty City Residency and Programmatic Expertise by Director

Director #	Liberty City Residence				Programmatic Expertise								Total Program Expertise
	Resident	Parent	Small Business	Community Based Org.	ECD	PE	EACA	YS	RJ	HCD	ED	CS	
1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4
4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
5	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	5
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
7	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
8	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
9	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
11	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
12	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
13	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
14	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	5	3	1	9	5	6	8	7	0	2	1	5	

*ECD = Early Childhood Development; PE = Parent Engagement; EACA = Educational Achievement for Children and Adults; YS = Youth Support; RJ = Restorative Justice; HCD = Housing and Community Development; ED = Economic Development; CS = Community Safety

Directors were also asked about the number of years they had worked in Liberty City. When asked whether they *currently worked* in Liberty City, eight (50.0%) of the directors responded yes. Length of time working in Liberty City ranged from six to 25 years with an average of 22.7 years and a total of 136 person years. Thirteen directors have worked at some point in Liberty City. The five directors that had worked in Liberty City but no longer do so had worked for an average of 1.6 years with a range of two to four years for a total of 14 person years. Total work years in Liberty City for directors equals 150 years.

Once the initial board was seated, a structured board development training process was completed. Board members participated in two all day board development sessions that focused on board roles and responsibilities, fundamentals of board membership, Sunshine Law requirements, board structure and bylaws, and MCI vision, mission, and values. The outcomes of the board development sessions included a Governance Policy Manual that is being used by the board to guide its operations. A question in the board survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they had participated in the board training, of which thirteen, (81.25%) stated that they had. Table 2 summarizes three additional questions regarding the board training. There was agreement that the board training helped to prepare the board members for their obligations with the MCI. The majority believed that the right amount of time was allotted for the training and that the training had relevancy. It is important to note that though there are eight respondents that strongly agreed with each statement, these were not the same eight agreeing with each of the statements. With a limited sample, this type of artifact frequently arises.

Table 2: Responses to Board Development Questions, N (%)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The board training prepared me to contribute to the board in a meaningful way	8 (61.5)	5 (38.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The right amount of time was used for board training	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	0 (0.0)
The board training covered relevant information	8 (61.5)	4 (30.8)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)

The survey contained many open-ended questions that allowed the directors the opportunity to express their opinions. Almost all the director’s took advantage of this opportunity. Regarding the board training, two open-ended questions were asked. The first asked what the respondent felt was the value of the board training. Three responses stood out. The first is that the training helped the board members to better understand the history of the MCI and its place in the community. The second was that it was truly preparatory in defining the roles and responsibilities of the board. Comments suggested that this was specific to the MCI board and not only to boards in general. Finally, the board was grateful for the opportunity to bond and get to know other board members, increasing the ability to work cohesively. Several board members, as noted, were part of the strategic planning process so there was positive past history to build on.

A second open-ended question was what could have been done to improve the board training. This was asked in case there are additional board trainings as new members are selected in the future. Board members were again quite willing to express their opinions and needs. Four board members felt that the time could have been increased, citing the need to better understand the specifics of what they are

expected to do, and not only the general functions that the board will engage in. One board member felt that an earlier trip to the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) might have been beneficial. This is an understandable response. However, from a combined program development and evaluation perspective, the HCZ and the MCI, while sharing some crucial basic characteristics, are developing along different paths when taking into consideration the context and community in which the programs are embedded. Lessons learned and suggestions on specific issues from the HCZ to the MCI will certainly benefit MCI. Finally, one board member did not feel that the training was as clear and precise as it should have been. This response is reproduced in its entirety for two reasons. The first is that there are multiple concerns voiced in the text, and the second is because the concerns are consistent with the board development best practice literature for early stages of board development and can serve as an opportunity for self-evaluation by the board to see if others become aware of similar but unvoiced concerns. It is noted that this is one person's opinion and is not consistent with the other members that responded to the survey.

"It definitely lacked a clear vision of the role that a board member plays. The board is very disconnected to what is going on. In the startup of a company the board is supposed to be very involved, later they are less connected. I think the current board is not effective at all and because they are not clear on their role it makes it difficult to be an engaged board member. I also question the fact that so many of them are approving documents almost like they are not reading them."

President/CEO Recruitment and Hiring

The recruitment and hiring process of the President/CEO, hereafter CEO, for the MCI involved a nationwide search, though emphasis appears to have been on people with local, especially Miami based, experience. This was reasonable and necessary considering the communities desire for individuals with historical and preferably personal knowledge of the Liberty City area. A total of 19 respondents had information available for review for this report, including the individual chosen as CEO for the MCI. These 19 respondents had a wide variation of background and experience. This analysis was completed in two ways. First, all 19 were assessed on seven criteria that were important to the search team as evidenced by the summary of each candidate appended to each resume. Second, is a brief qualitative analysis that addressed commonalities across candidates. This offers insight into the type of person desired for the position. Since this exercise was part of the process evaluation, it is worth noting that evaluating the CEO selection was not nor should it have been part of this evaluation. Thus, the board survey did not include a section on the CEO. Overall, what this brief analysis does provide, as noted, is some insight into the type of person desired and the strength of the candidate pool available. Note that the documents from the MCI interchange CEO and Executive Director (ED). This is because in April, the motion was made and passed to change the designation from ED to President/CEO.

Noted previously, an understanding of Miami as a resident or working adult was important to the selection committee. The majority of the 19 applicants were currently residing and/or working in the area in or around Miami with a few exceptions. Two individuals had an out-of-state address. One individual had a local Florida address but the resume had all out-of-state experience. Education levels were identifiable in the resumes of seventeen of the applicants. Looking at highest degree attained, there was one person with a completed Ph.D., one completing a Ph.D. with a completed masters degree, nine others with a completed masters, and seven with a bachelor's degree. Looking specifically at CEO experience, including Executive Director (ED), eight (50.0%) of the applicants had current and/or previous experience as a CEO or ED. All nineteen had program management and fiscal management experience, though for fiscal management this was at times assumed due to descriptions of duties in the resumes and not stated in the candidate summaries.

For a position working directly with youth programs, an expectation would be experience with children and youth service or support programs. Review of candidate summaries and resumes, fourteen candidates (73.7%) had obvious experience with youth based programs. Two other candidates managed programs that appeared to be youth based but were involved in grant-writing or other duties that did not appear to involve the same degree of support and interaction with youth or staff providing direct services with youth. The final category was experience with community-based programs. In reviewing summaries, this was the least apparent as to how candidates were rated. In some cases, candidates were noted as working with community-based programs in the Miami area and in other cases, the candidate was noted to have experience in community-based programs that were not in Miami. It is unclear whether the Miami based were rated higher. Overall, twelve (63.2%) of the candidates had the majority of their experience with community-based programs with four other candidates having some experience with community-based programs. Final selection appeared to lean towards experience with management, fiscal, which included grant-writing and managing large budgets, and understanding and experience in youth based and community programs.

One of the areas that immediately stood out was the candidate self-descriptions. In short, candidates viewed themselves as compassionate, passionate, a successful leader, proactive, qualified, responsible, and capable. This is not surprising from a pool of resumes. However, what was also common and directly related to being successful with an initiative like the MCI is the emphasis on the experience and learning from those experiences. In almost all cases, the candidate listed experience before education, and in many cases made only cursory mention of their education. This did not minimize their educational achievements but it did maintain the focus on skill sets needed for organizing and managing complex organizations.

Candidates focused on their results, what they had been able to accomplish, with several discussing their ability to nurture organizations, do more with less, increase yearly budgets and other fiscal successes. Working directly with parents and children at some point in their career was relatively common as well. Generating partnerships and building collaborations were also mentioned with frequency. This included the ability to work within systems to build collaborations between existing organizations. Leadership and adaptability were also frequently mentioned abilities, with an emphasis on adapting to changes in legislation affecting their organization, resource availability, or organizational mission. Overall, this was an impressive number of qualified candidates to choose from as the MCI moves from planning to activity.

Development of the MCI Vision and Mission

The development of an organization's vision and mission may occur prior to a strategic planning process in order to help guide that process or can emerge out of a strategic planning process for organizations that begin with a strategic planning process. The MCI is a unique blend of these two pathways. An emerging understanding of the vision and mission, mostly based on the HCZ's, helped to guide the strategic planning process for a geographic area much larger than where the MCI is beginning its work. The vision and mission continued to evolve as the MCI began to develop, including the time when the board of directors were seated. The results are the vision and mission statements for the MCI as stated in the 10-year business plan and reproduced next:

Vision of the MCI: A prosperous community for Liberty City's children and families.

Mission of the MCI: To create a community-based network that develops, coordinates, and provides quality education, accessible health care, youth development programs, opportunities for employment, and safe neighborhoods for children and families living within the initiative's boundaries.

The vision of an organization (where it wants to go) supports the mission (what will it do) with an underlying set of values (how will it go about doing what it will do) in order to meet measurable goals. Unfortunately, with the high rate of turnover in not-for-profit organizations that serve social or educational needs, often less than 10 percent of the current staff can state with certainty their organizations mission (Institute for Corporate Productivity, 2008).

Research into not-for-profits and their development notes that the congruence of the vision, mission and values of an organization with a primary goal of fostering partnerships is of even greater importance compared to a service delivery organization that target specific issues and/or populations (Kettner, Moraney & Martin, 2008). Seeking to assist in the development and coordination of services means that MCI leadership and staff will need to understand the vision and mission of partnering organizations and work to create harmony without losing sight of their own vision and mission. Indeed, the pursuit of sustainability through generating a solid financial base often means chasing dollars with the threat of unintentionally broadening the mission or even losing sight of the mission of the organization.

The leadership, including the board of directors, of organizations must understand and have a vested interest in the congruence and should endorse that the vision and mission statements of the organization were developed collaboratively (Poister, 2003). Leadership and the board of directors should view the vision and mission statements to be consistent with their understanding of the purpose of the organization. Further, the vision and mission should be congruent with the results of a strategic planning process, should one have been implemented. Finally, the vision and mission should be viewed by organizational leadership, the board of directors, and staff as consistent with the needs of the community. These ideals were assessed in the board survey through asking the directors to indicate their level of agreement with five statements. The results are summarized in Table 3.

There is an obvious and positive agreement across directors regarding the establishment of the vision and mission of the MCI. Part of the 10-year business plan included finalizing a vision and mission for inclusion in the plan, which was collaboratively prepared with all board members. The vision and mission are also consistent with the legislation that funded the project and the area was selected because of a high need for this type of project. Thus, there would be an expectation of strong agreement between the vision, mission, and purpose of the MCI, which is shown here. The vision and mission are similar to the operative statements used during the development of the strategic plan, so a high degree of agreement was expected here as well. The final statement, consistency of the vision and mission with the needs of the community, showed strong agreement. This was anticipated to be high as well with the level of past community involvement in developing the strategic plan. In total, board members were expected to, and did, have a strong level of agreement regarding the vision and mission of the MCI. The next set of questions targeted the degree of community involvement that the MCI had during the past year.

Table 3: Development of Vision and Mission, N (%)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The vision statement/information for the MCI was collaboratively constructed	12 (75.0)	4 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The mission statement/information for the MCI was collaboratively constructed	12 (75.0)	4 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The mission and vision statements for the MCI are consistent with my understanding of the MCI purpose	12 (75.0)	4 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The mission and vision are consistent with the community strategic plan	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The mission and vision are consistent with the needs of the community	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

Community Engagement during the Reporting Period

Community engagement is critical for initiatives such as the MCI and other similar initiatives, e.g. HCZ, that expend considerable effort in promoting their program, educating the public, attracting board of trustees members, recruiting volunteers, engaging service providers, and other activities to make the project a household name in the target area and beyond. Review of MCI documentation shows that over the last year the MCI has engaged in approximately four events that were specifically designed to engage the public or that had public participants. These were all in the final quarter of the year after board development (second quarter) and employment of CEO (end of second quarter) and completion of legislatively mandated deliverables (third quarter), e.g. the 10-year business plan.

The organizational chart for the MCI appropriately reflects an early stage of organizational development as the program begins to hire staff and expand its activities. The organizational chart has some similarities to the HCZ and includes a Vice President for Community Engagement which will, if left unchanged, include an outreach-worker for social services and what is listed as case managers that answer to the community engagement VP. The MCI organizational chart is a work in progress, but shows MCI's recognition that the community will require consistent interaction with the MCI. This is consistent with community initiative research that has demonstrated positive results through consistent planning and execution of trainings, events and other inclusive opportunities for community visibility and support (Foster-Fishman, Fitzgerald, et al, 2006).

The board initiated a community survey in the latter half of the year. The survey was developed in collaboration between the board, MCI personnel, and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. The Ounce of Prevention Fund evaluation team also developed an online data entry system to store the survey data. A separate data system for entering the tracking logs was developed as well. The evaluation team will produce a report when all data is entered. The survey had the following sections:

1. Opening section to gather basic demographic and residency information
2. Neighborhood attachment section
3. Child and family information
4. Community services and resources

- Validation of priorities to see how well the smaller area correlated with the larger Liberty City area for priorities of needs as outlined in the strategic plan

Liberty City youth were trained to work as partners in going door-to-door to collect the responses. Teams were outfitted with T-shirts, bags, surveys, clipboards, and incentives for the respondents. The final count shows that 241 homes were surveyed of which 34% completed the survey and 65.8% were either not home, refused, vacancies, unsafe, or repeat visits with no success. A total of 82 surveys were completed, as reported in meeting minutes of the board of directors, of which there are 14 currently entered into the data system.

The board was surveyed regarding their perception of community engagement over the last year. Three objectives and two open-ended questions were asked. The responses showed a fairly large degree of variance across responses. Some of the narrative responses suggest a possible, though not verified, explanation. Some board members may have viewed the intent of the questions to be to assess the degree that the community was made aware of the MCI through structured events, newspaper articles, and presentations at non-MCI specific events, radio shows, and other means, all of which occurred in the last year. Other board members may have viewed the questions as how much the public in the target zone were actively engaged as partners in the MCI development process over the last year, specifically to what degree community residents were active partners in developing the MCI, increasing community ownership of the initiative, versus more passive recipients of MCI related material. Table 4 summarizes the responses to the three objective questions.

Question	Very Engaged	Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Not Engaged
How would you rate the overall level of community engagement by the MCI for the last year?	1 (6.7)	6 (40.0)	7 (46.7)	1 (6.7)
To what degree was the community engaged in the startup of the Miami Children’s Initiative in the last year?	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)
To what degree was the community engaged in the development of the 10-year business plan?	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)

It is noted that though the second and third questions have the same numbers, the respondents that endorsed each item was markedly different. It is not clear why residents were viewed as much more engaged in the startup of the MCI or in the development of the 10-year business plan than engaged overall considering the documentation available to the evaluation team does not support any more or less engagement in the startup, business plan, or general interaction with MCI.

The responses to the open-ended questions provide some additional information. The first question asked board members to discuss their perception of the strengths of the community engagement process this past year. Those that noted the development and use of the community survey and community events such as the forums and picnics also viewed the community as engaged or very engaged. Two opinions stand out as representative of several other board members and are

reproduced here. The first quote is representative of those that endorsed higher levels of engagement and the second lower levels of engagement.

“The total approach to meeting the residents where they are. Going door to door soliciting input from residents directly affected by MCI strategic plan. Proactive parental involvement on the board provides a critical piece to ensure credibility with the residents.”

“The board did not focus on the community engagement process since being seated. The last 3 months have been focused on community engagement through family events, providers, educators. The intent since the seating of the board in October was to recruit the executive director and get the office going.”

The second open-ended question asked the board members to identify what could have been done to improve the community engagement process over the last year. Responses ranged from a more focused and deliberate involvement of families in the designated area, including more parent trainings, community forums, and community building events, to the feeling that no additional activities could have been done given the mandated deliverables, e.g. the business plan, that required investment of energy and resources. Some noted that a great deal had been accomplished, including starting the board, obtaining 501C-3 status, hiring the CEO/ED, finalizing policies and procedures, developing the 10-year business plan, beginning the development of a board of trustees, starting a youth advisory group, development and implementation of the community survey, and starting the physical location for the MCI, as well as some community events during the final quarter of this reporting period.

There was some concern that the residents in the initiative area may not know how the MCI will eventually benefit them. Reviewing the data from the strategic planning process, this was also an issue for several residents. Residents are far more used to an organization that provides a specific service, e.g. health care or child care. An organization that has as its goal to organize the efforts of other agencies and work for better system cohesion is not easily understood given the lifelong experience of service delivery from separate agencies addressing specific issues that most residents have come to accept. Two quotes capture how the board was somewhat divided on this question.

“They need to go door to door and inform everyone in the main target zone of the events. No one on the board really even has an understanding of that main target zone. I think the focus should be there to make this Initiative effective. The CEO could not even tell us by memory where the area was, this is not acceptable.”

“Have more events that involve the community. Establish partnerships now with existing organizations or programs in Liberty City. Employ residents and students from Liberty City to work on select events.”

MCI Board of Directors Meeting Analysis

MCI personnel, the board of directors, and other engaged individuals participated in routine meetings and other structured activities over the course of the year. This section starts with a review of processes related to board meetings and the board survey results that are specific to board meetings. The literature on board development suggests that new boards meet more frequently, usually quarterly and as much as monthly. The MCI board surpassed that by agreeing to meet every other Tuesday, which for some months meant three meetings. Overall, there was information from eleven board meetings as well as information from two other meetings including interim committee and finance committee

meetings. The descriptive analysis applies only to the board agendas and meeting minutes. The following is noted:

- Meetings began and ended approximately on time. The shortest meeting was 30 minutes, but this was due to the rest of the meeting time being allocated for Sunshine Law training. The longest meetings were 100 minutes long. Average meeting length was one hour and eight minutes. Having set times and set lengths is part of the best practice recommendations for conducting board meetings, with the caveat of not adjourning until all agenda items have received attention. The length of MCI board meetings were found to be directly related to the number of agenda items, suggesting that there was little wasted time.
- Successful boards have regular updates on agenda items that span meetings and continue items until they are completed (Poister, 2003). Reviewing meeting agendas and minutes chronologically, the MCI board was successful in following items until conclusion in all cases. In only about 30 percent of agenda items did items appear on only one agenda, since the majority of items having to do with development, financial management, community awareness and the business plan required multiple meetings to resolve.
- Common sections included attendance, the chair’s report, the President/CEO report, updates, and other business. By grouping items into familiar sections, the ability to track progress is increased.

Overall, the administration of meetings and record keeping were superior and matched closely with best practice literature. Table 5 summarizes the results of five objective questions regarding board meetings from the board survey. These questions were selected because they specifically relate to areas strongly associated with board members perceptions of a successful and well functioning board (Butterfoss, 2007).

Table 5. Degree of Community Engagement N (%)				
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meetings are noticed properly	9 (60.0)	5 (33.3)	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)
Meeting minutes are made available in a reasonable time frame	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Open and free exchange of ideas are encouraged during board meetings	9 (60.0)	6 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The majority of the board engages in the discussion of board agenda items	10 (66.7)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)
Decisions of the board are made according to a generally accepted set of rules of order	9 (60.0)	6 (60.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

As can be seen, the majority of board members agree that the meetings are well run, that the majority of board members share ideas, and that decisions are made according to rules of order. Only two members disagreed on one item each. Board members were asked to respond to an additional open-ended question asking what could be done to improve board meetings. Two individuals felt that the board should reduce its meetings to once per month. Two members were concerned about attendance and felt that more consistent attendance was needed. Attendance was reviewed for this report and it was noted that a quorum existed in all meetings, which is the usual benchmark for having adequate attendance. The review also noted that some members more regularly attended than others did. Since

the survey was anonymous, it was impossible to link the individual responses with attendance information.

Two other comments are worthy of replication and a brief comment. For full transparency, the first comment had the final sentence deleted, as it was a negative comment targeted to a specific individual and was not viewed as constructive.

“I think it is quite clear this board is made up of people who know each other. No one wants to ever question or bring up negatives about each other.”

“Have documents sent before board meetings. Especially financial statements and any documents that have to be voted on.”

The first comment is worthy of note because it raises a question regarding whether the board may have the ability to address challenging and potentially divisive issues and arrive at a true consensus. The best practice literature suggests that board members’ comfort with each other is a boon for decision-making and a bane for challenging entrenched ideas or positions. Though only one person noted this, the board should take the time to consider if this is an opinion that is shared more widely than discussed. The second comment targets another area of concern. Though the objective questions specifically noted only meeting minutes, it is important to complete and share other documents of importance in as timely a manner as possible.

Development of the 10-Year Business Plan

Development of the 10-year business plan was a crucial legislatively mandated deliverable for the MCI. Literature on community recovery initiatives suggests that a focused business plan with sufficient detail to guide implementation is a necessary factor for initiative success. The assumption is that a strategic planning process has either been completed, as it has for the MCI, or is the first order of business. Targeted goal setting is then followed by developing both an implementation and a sustainability plan to ensure longevity. Thus, this section is divided into two sub-sections. The first section discusses the board survey and aspects of the MCI business plan as it relates to the strategic plan and the evaluation of the strategic plan. The second section examines the business plan in relation to best practices from a brief comparison with two other long-standing initiatives similar to the MCI, as well as a brief discussion regarding implementation of the business plan.

Board Survey and Strategic Plan Inclusion within the 10-Year Business Plan

One of the most important goals of the business plan was to ensure that it operationalizes the strategic plan. A rough way to estimate whether the strategic plan was included in the business plan was to count the number of times it was referenced. The terms strategic plan, strategic community plan or community strategic plan were used approximately 55 times throughout the document, indicating that it did indeed factor into the business planning process. Indeed, a section titled “MCI Strategic Community Plan” is included in the business plan. Before reviewing this further, it is relevant to assess the responses in the board survey to questions that specifically asked for level of agreement to questions targeting the 10-Year Business Plan and its development. These responses are summarized in Table 6.

Agreement was high that the business plan was just what was needed and that it for incorporated the strategic plan to the appropriate extent. The only two questions with one board member disagreeing, which was the same board member in both cases, were regarding sufficient communication between

the board and the business plan consultants and whether the plan included input from all necessary parties. Overall, the board stands in agreement regarding the plan.

Table 6. Level of Agreement with 10-Year Business Plan Development Questions N (%)				
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The final plan was exactly what was needed	9 (60.0)	6 (40.0)		
The level of communication was sufficient between the developers and board members	8 (53.3)	6 (40.0)	1 (6.7)	
The business plan incorporated the work of the strategic planning process to the degree needed	10 (66.7)	5 (33.3)		
There is the necessary expertise available to implement the plan as designed	8 (53.3)	7 (46.7)		
The final business plan included the right amount of input from all necessary parties	8 (53.3)	6 (40.0)	1 (6.7)	
Sufficient time was taken for revisions, additions, and/or changes	8 (53.3)	7 (46.7)		

The board survey also included two open-ended questions. Because of the importance of the business plan to the sustainability of the MCI, all responses from board members are included in Table7. As can be seen, different board members focused on different strengths of the plan. Specificity and comprehensiveness are considered strengths. Being in line with current community expectations was considered a strength as well. Providing a map for growth is also noted, both overall and as related directly to educational goals.

Table 7. Board Member Responses to What are the Strengths of Business Plan
I think because it is so similar to the Harlem's Children Zone that it is doable with the right staff, board, and trustees.
States goals and objective and comprehensive.
The strength of the 10 year business plan development process is that it establishes a framework for direction and growth for MCI.
The goals and objectives are measurable, clear, and concise.
It incorporates all of our ideas in a very professional and detailed way.
The plan tells us what is wrong with Liberty City.
The plan connected with what happened with the initial community engagement process which produced the community strategic plan. Also, the dedication and commitment of the staff, consultants, and board ad hoc committee.
The progression of the educational expectations for child in the catchment area.
The time and detailed effort taken to ensure the plan was in line with the community expectations.
The plan was developed and discussed thoroughly with major input from board members and staff.

Board members were also asked what could have been done to improve the business plan development process. Board member responses are reproduced in Table 8. Two board members noted that the planning process was not as inclusive of the community as they would have liked. The MCI was described in at least three places in the business plan as being community focused and actively engaged in gathering community opinions. In addition, MCI’s need to be community focused was also noted in the assumptions, reproduced below, that were used to develop the business plan and in the bylaws of the corporation.

Business Plan Assumption: “Unless the plan clearly reflects that it is “community focused” and builds upon the Community Strategic Plan, it will not have much credibility in the community.”

In the evaluation of the strategic planning process, it was noted that inclusion and responsibility of area residents was critical to the success of initiatives like the MCI, which is also supported by the growing literature on development and evaluation of community coalitions and community recovery projects (Foster-Fishman, Fitzgerald, et al, 2006; Hicks, Larson, et al, 2008). Consistent community inclusion,

Table 8. Board Member Response to What Could Have Been Done to Improve the Business Plan Development Process

Earlier indication of the business plan development process; attempts to review with residents and community members.

It would have been good to have input from the original stakeholders and some community residents.

Telling us why this plan is different from all the failed programs that have come into the area over the past 20 years.

when reasonable, in decision-making, targeting of priorities, and ensuring they understand the purpose of the MCI is again recommended. Although community inclusion and engagement is included in the business plan, it is not prioritized in the business plan to the degree that the literature and the evaluation of the strategic planning process suggests it should be.

The third comment in Table 8 addressing failed programs in Liberty City is consistent with what the MCI Planning Team found in the strategic planning process, the evaluation report regarding that process, and the business plan assumption reproduced above. The MCI will have the task of maintaining credibility with the community and finding a way for residents to accept, become excited by, and actively support the initiative. Long-term residents have a greater risk of being suspicious and possibly being non-supportive. Actively confronting negative legacies is the recommendation of the literature on developing and evaluating initiatives. Though references to the negative history of Liberty City are noted in the business plan, there are no recommendations to actively confront it or how to do so. It is recommended that the business plan be supplemented with a concentrated and transparent effort to offset the effects of the negative history in Liberty City. Other initiatives have started with a similar legacy, e.g. Battle Creek, Michigan, and learned that by choosing to ignore the pent up anger and distrust due to recurrent failure, and assuming that the initiative was going to be viewed and accepted as different because they said so, was ultimately counterproductive.

The priorities listed in the business plan were compared to those in the strategic plan and the evaluation of the strategic plan. The business plan notes the six priorities in the order that they were listed in the strategic plan. Several points are made about this. First, in the business plan it is stated, “The rankings elicited from the community engagement process evolved into the six major themes that ultimately

served as the foundation for the priorities and strategies in the MCI Strategic Community Plan.” This is incorrect. What the strategic plan states, and what was observed in the process evaluation, was that the six themes emerged during the development process and these *became the priorities* and were then voted on to rank them in order of importance. We reiterate here that a concern of the evaluation team was that the six major themes “emerged” quite early in the data gathering process and all further data was then used to support the themes instead of looking for additional themes that could have possibly become priorities.

Second, while there is mention of the results of the balloted survey that was given to the work group members as a whole to rank the six priorities in the strategic planning process, there is no mention of the community rankings by 971 community residents that ranked the priorities separately and had a different opinion of what was most to least important. The table from the strategic plan evaluation report is reproduced here (Table 9) with an additional column added. The second column is the ranking that was included in the business plan from the work group members, i.e. the expert group. The third column is from the resident survey. The literature from other initiatives has strongly noted that community support will hinge on transparency, and when there are differing perspectives by experts and residents, this should be approached openly with a discussion of why one perspective was favored over the other.

Third, the business plan states “the priorities were listed to form a sequential progression from an *individual* focus to *systemic change*.” This is copied from the strategic plan to page 10 of the business plan. The priorities are then listed in the sequence noted in the last column of Table 9. This is confusing because nowhere in the strategic plan, including available drafts, or the evaluation of the strategic plan are the six priorities ranked in the order shown. It is not clear why this is the case. It is noted here to help clarify the multiple rankings available from the strategic plan development and evaluation.

Table 9. Comparison of Priority Rankings from Two Sources

Priority	Ranking in Strategic Plan	Liberty City Resident Rankings	Individual to Systems Ranking
Parents and children/youth remain engaged and actively involved in stimulating educational environments from pre-school to successful high school completion	1	2	1
Improve strong and positive parenting and parenting support	2	1	2
Strengthen the capacity of core community organizations to deliver evidence-based services and revitalized support to children, youth and their families, by providing capacity building, technical assistance, training on quality programs and related support	3	6	6
Creating a balanced approach to community safety with restorative justice for youth	4	5	4
Improved economic resources and affordable housing	5	4	5
Early and adequate health care from prenatal care through adulthood	6	3	3

A more pertinent issue, however, is the emphasis in the strategic plan, and now the business plan, of the progression from an individual focus to a systemic focus. This is not uniformly supported in the

literature from other community recovery initiatives. In fact, the balance of the information on these types of initiatives tends to favor a combined effort to include building the capacity of the individual through ensuring the best possible services, e.g. improved parenting, mentoring or tutoring, what most residents and organizations are already familiar with, as well as starting to build the capacity for a systemic infrastructure for a true interrelated continuum of services. The emphasis of individual to systems focus suggests what is believed to be a false dichotomy between the individual and the system that may slow development of the needed system change as well as possibly creating implementation problems that could be avoided. This is discussed more fully in the next section.

Comparison of the 10-Year Business Plan to Best Practices and Suggestions for Implementation

This section starts with a discussion of the final business plan as it compares to best practices in the development and formatting of a business plan for a community-based, not-for-profit program. The best practice literature is considerable for for-profit, competitive organizations/corporations compared to not-for-profits. The majority of information for not-for-profits targets strategic planning, the process completed earlier by the MCI Planning Team. A business plan relevant to organizations like the MCI should contain in some form, though possibly using other labels, the following sections (Poister, 2003):

1. Executive Summary (present in MCI document)
2. Vision, Mission and Values of the organization (present in MCI document, though the discussion of values is not as extensive as recommended)
3. Assessment of the Local Community (Environmental Analysis in MCI)
4. Formulation of realistic goals, objectives and strategies (Services, Programs Growth Plan and Appendices in MCI)
5. Identifying, evaluating and prioritizing projects (Services, Programs Growth Plan and Appendices in MCI)
6. Develop a plan of action that prioritizes goals/objectives (Appendices D and E in MCI)
7. Provide guidance for implementation of the business plan (not included in MCI)
 - a. Select, monitor, and evaluate indicators and outcomes. This is usually subsumed under the implementation portion of the business plan (not included in MCI)
 - b. Preplanning to retool and adjust protocols for reacting proactively to new opportunities and data as it is available. This section is usually either subsumed as well under an implementation section or is part of an additional section that some organizations have that specifically target Outcomes, Data Collection and Evaluation (not included in MCI)

Though some differences are noted, it appears that the MCI Business Plan is consistent with best practices as they pertain to something as unique as the MCI.

The lack of an implementation section is not a criticism of the business plan. Development of an implementation section usually requires a detailed understanding of the community and the initiative along with some history of successes to better understand the interaction of the initiative, service agencies, residents, and other factors. As the MCI moves forward, further development of an implementation plan should be systematically completed by the MCI leadership and the board to provide necessary detail to support accomplishing the stated action steps.

One additional note regarding the MCI comparison to best practices relates to item 5 above, identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing projects. Based on this analysis, this section would have benefitted from some discussion of identified potential projects, such as the Pride Institute, and more specifically, how such projects will generate opportunities for the community and react to potential threats. The literature is clear when a community-based organization is starting, or operating, in an environment with known threats or detractors, the plan should include a significant discussion of known threats. Since MCI has clearly had some detractors where hostility over use of state resources did, and perhaps still does, exist, a more thorough discussion of these threats should have been included in the business plan. We reiterate here the consistency of the literature in support of meeting a negative legacy head on. A discussion of threats should also include some discussion, or more properly termed, forecasting, of potential changes to conditions and some mention of planning for adaptation to changes, both predicted and unexpected.

Continuing to evaluate the business plan relative to best practices, the business plan's focus on pragmatism and building the initiative via priorities and phases is strongly endorsed in the literature. However, there was no consensus in the literature as how to develop an initiative, especially ones like the HCZ or the MCI that are only now becoming well-researched. While there is a plethora of information on community building that targets specific issues, e.g. improving educational outcomes or reducing crime, initiatives striving to impact the literal fabric of a community through investment of resources and coordination of services across many problem areas remains the exception. Initiatives like the HCZ are being described in greater detail and held as exemplars, but the process of development in business and evaluation literature is still not well described. Probably the best-researched initiative using rigorous methods is the Battle Creek Michigan YES WE CAN! community building/recovery initiative funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, which has focused on using a systems perspective in change. If the MCI board is not already familiar with systems perspectives in community development, the members of the board and staff may find it helpful to increase their knowledge in this area. This is important because the mission of the MCI, to coordinate and enhance service systems, is noticeably different than managing direct service organizations in a community.

Resident involvement has been a problem in Battle Creek and other similar initiatives, and will likely be an issue in the MCI, as already evidenced by the difficulty in getting full participation and information on the community survey. When it comes to resident involvement, demographic variables were found to be relatively unimportant in the Battle Creek initiative. However, "...resident perceptions of neighborhood readiness (i.e., hope for the future and collective efficacy) and capacity for change (i.e., social ties and neighborhood leadership), and the level of neighborhood problems were strongly related to whether and how much residents were involved in individual and collective action efforts (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, et al, 2007)." Further, perceived strength and effectiveness of community leadership were strongly related to community residents' willingness to engage. This was independently noted in the evaluation report targeting the strategic planning process for the MCI, where the concept of *visionary leadership* was noted as extremely important. It is recommended that the concept of visionary leadership in the evaluation report be reviewed. Further, developing leadership, though addressed in the business plan, may not currently be as high of a priority as it should be, given that other initiatives have found it to be of greater importance than they had anticipated.

Interdependence and interactions between service providers can have a profound impact on how well systems coordinate and how open they are to a separate entity coordinating services in a community (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, et al, 2007). This is strongly associated with building the capacity of service providers as noted in the business plan. What is not mentioned, and would likely be included in an

implementation section, is a concrete discussion of *how* the MCI personnel will work to recruit individual service providers. Specifically, what incentives motivate the service providers to connect with the MCI and possibly share already scarce resources with other agencies with whom they may be in competition, or at least with whom they perceive themselves to be in competition. In other words, how will the MCI deal with the challenges of collaboration given scarce resources and a culture of agency individualism? This and other questions specific to the MCI implementation are presented in Table 10. These questions were drawn from the literature describing or evaluating other initiatives and are customized to the MCI.

Table 10. Questions to Ask Regarding Implementation

How will the MCI go about convincing service providers to team with/become part of the MCI?
How will the MCI convince residents to trust the MCI and work with it for service coordination?
How will the MCI deliver or place its products and services with residents, service providers, and other stakeholders?
How will the MCI convince Liberty City residents that the MCI is for real, trustworthy, and sustainable?
How will the service providers and MCI work collectively to price products, work in unison, and deal with competition?
How will the MCI promote its name, products, intent to coordinate services through advertising that works cooperatively with established service providers?
How will the MCI provide entrepreneurial assistance through training and support in such a way that it encourages cooperation and not competition?
How will the MCI retain contact with residents and track service provision (dosage) to evaluate impact?
How will the MCI select reasonable indicators and outcomes in such a way to include what is important to the community and what is reasonable for granting and other organizations, which may not always be aligned?

An analysis of multiple initiatives completed by the Foster-Fishman group in 2001 suggests that initiatives like the MCI can address these types of implementation questions through nurturing four types of capacity within their collaborative partners. These include:

1. **Member Capacity:** Developing the ability to work collaboratively with others, creating effective programs via understanding/using evidence-based programs that fit the community and not to assuming any one program fits (in other words, taking the time to truly know and understand the residents), building an effective coalition/collaborative infrastructure that is sensitive to members, supporting member involvement through telling of individual stories, and other member capacity building.
2. **Relational Capacity:** Developing cohesion, trust, honesty, a shared vision and common goals; sharing power, valuing diversity, and fostering positive external relationships. This crosses between developing the individual, or member, as noted above, and the next type of capacity building. This is an exceptionally important area when building in communities where distrust has been longstanding and pervasive. The self-empowerment component fits very well in addressing relational capacity. However, when considering the evaluation literature of community projects like the MCI, and assuming the schematics and descriptions in the business plan are sequential, making an earlier effort in developing the self-empowerment component

and implementing it would be more in line with what has been described in the peer reviewed literature on community initiative development.

3. Organizational Capacity: Effective and flexible leadership is of foremost importance. Helping organizational leaders to gain personal capacity that is recognized by the community, as noted, will generate greater effort and energy from community residents. Organizations with formalized, but still flexible, procedures will be able to coordinate their services better with other organizations. This includes having effective internal and external communication capacity. Organizations need sufficient resources to feel comfortable in their security before being willing to link with other organizations, which will almost always feel competitive, at least at first. Helping organizations build the capacity for data collection and management to increase their chances to be successful in competitive grant processes is essential. Further, because of different missions, organizations linked in an initiative like the MCI will often not be competing with each other for grants and can assist each other through letters of support. A final capacity to be built in member organizations, if not already present, is a capacity for monitoring and evaluation that supports continuous improvement and the ability to alter direction with new information. The MCI business plan touches on some of these issues and these issues would be included in an implementation section. Approaching agencies in the community with the idea of strengthening and supporting them will be essential for organizational buy-in.
4. Programmatic Capacity: Realistic, clear, and focused goals and objectives are essential for a program's success and are still an area in which many organizations struggle. Assisting the organizations that partner in clarifying their goals/objectives, with great sensitivity, of course, will help them to streamline resources and become more effective. Helping programs to identify what is unique and innovative about their organization, and helping them to capture that in messages is another area where capacity building is needed, will lead to greater ability to compete for grant funds. Finally, for initiatives like the MCI, it is paramount for organizations to take an ecologic perspective, to see that they provide services based on community needs, that are culturally competent in design, and that, when coupled with other programs/organizations, fit together as a system of care.

One of several things that tie the four areas of capacity building together is a targeted, outcome-oriented approach. One concern with the business plan is the focus of outcomes analysis starting in phase two, five years in the future. This is longer than usual for programs, and outcome data is often needed by grant writers to attract additional funding. It is inconsistent to state in one section that picking the low hanging fruit to have a measureable success is necessary, but then to delay outcome analysis for five years. Beginning systematic data collection with process data and building as quickly as is reasonable for outcomes and indicator data, is a best practice recommendation.

Improving the ability to target grant funds will rely on having proven outcomes at different levels, including framing evaluative outcomes for the capacity building services offered through MCI, collecting data on children considered to be MCI children from multiple service providers, assisting service providers to improve data collection and evaluation of their impact, building toward an overall impact of the MCI on specific indicators, e.g. lower teen births, more high school graduations, etc. Evaluation is mentioned at times, but is not stressed to the degree that ensuring evidence of success would need, considering systematic data collection and analysis is needed to prove that something is effective.

Before addressing a formal sustainability plan, a brief discussion is provided on how the MCI plan compares to the HCZ. What is available from HCZ is a growth plan, labeled business plan on the Internet, for years 2001 to 2009. There was nothing akin to the MCI document available for the period of time from 1997 (when the HCZ started) to 2001. Central to the HCZ plan are five, what are uniquely termed, “imperatives” that could also be termed goals. These include:

1. Penetrating the Zone: A discussion of seven projects, e.g. the Baby College, used to target the specific geography of the zone
2. Tracking Performance: A discussion of the first of a three-year effort to design and pilot an evaluation system for the HCZ. It is noted here that the HCZ began their tracking process later than what best practices recommend at this time.
3. Building the Organization: Planning for growth and expansion through diversification and strengthening of HCZ’s core management, staff, and operating systems
4. Informing the Field: Planning to share the successes and identified best practices outside of the Harlem and even New York area. This has obviously been successful with the advent of Promise Neighborhood grants and nationwide training opportunities
5. Expanding the Boundaries: Expanding the area of the zone systematically and realistically through pre-planning and communication with the new target areas leaders, services, etc.

When reviewing the HCZ document, what is most obvious is the four years of growth and service delivery already accomplished. This history of implementation allowed for more discussion of how objectives would be targeted, what has been noted as mostly absent from the MCI business plan. As noted, implementation should be a formal planned activity that is best left to the MCI board and organizational leadership, those with a much firmer understanding of the MCI environment.

A final note from reviewing the best practices from other initiatives is the recommendation for the development of a formal sustainability plan. This is not included in the business plan, though some of the job descriptions offered do have sustainability as a main focus. Further, the financial sustainability is of utmost importance and this is very well laid out in the business plan under the financial section as well as in the appendices. Those sections would be an excellent guide for developing a comprehensive sustainability plan, with the plan having more formal action steps and time frames. Initiatives with sustainability plans tend to be a step ahead in strategically planning their next moves in relation to community engagement, securing funds, capital projects, and other aspects of sustainability.

Successes and Challenges to the MCI Development Process

The final section of this report reviews responses by the board of directors on the board survey to questions asking them to list successes and challenges. They were asked to list up to three successes that did not include completion of the board training or the 10-year business plan, as these were considered given successes. They were then asked to predict three challenges MCI would likely face within the next year and to provide a suggested solution to each challenge. Finally, they were then asked to predict three challenges that the MCI will be facing three years from now and to suggest remedies for those as well. The discussion starts with a review of the successes. They are listed in descending order in Table 11, from most to least suggested, with ties being listed alphabetically.

Community engagement in order to introduce, promote, and build a positive reputation for the MCI was strongly endorsed, even though practicalities consigned said activities to the latter portion of the

reporting period. Having a CEO and a place for the MCI to call home were also viewed as successes. The community survey was linked to community engagement, as board members that thought of one also thought of the other. A final comment is the importance of the board of trustees, noted by three directors. Though this has only been a goal in the last quarter, a good board of trustees is crucial for sustainability and the board of directors clearly recognizes this.

Challenges over the next year were somewhat varied, but the majority were related to securing a steady stream of funding in order for the MCI to thrive and carry out its mission in the community. Table 12 reviews the responses to challenges over the next year. The count includes representative quotes made previously in this section. Fiscal viability is the obvious frontrunner and of great concern, especially with the economic downturn. The next most suggested, and closely related to the third most suggested, is educating the community about the MCI and distinguishing it from other programs. Review of HCZ literature suggests that the MCI will need to take a leadership role in the community, which will require considerable buy-in from local partners. To accomplish this, the community will need to be an ally for the MCI by recognizing it as a leader and change agent. This is made even more challenging due to the legacy of mistrust that exists within the community due to past initiatives that have promised change and revitalization but failed to deliver. Other suggestions are also important, though mentioned with less frequency, including the creation of a feedback and visibility mechanism to keep the MCI in the minds of the residents and for the residents to see real success.

Table 11: Board of Director Listed Successes of the MCI in the Last Year

Successes	#	Comment
Community engagement activities	8	This item includes references to the town hall meeting, the family dinner, the community picnic, and the community forums.
Hiring of a president/CEO and staff	5	Staff was not specified outside of the ED/President/CEP and in one case the mention of a fund raiser being hired
Attracting a board of trustees	3	Noted as still a work in progress
Community survey and outreach	3	The community survey was viewed as both a chance to gather baseline data as well as a chance to promote the MCI
Facilities and equipment	3	Securing a location for the MCI and equipping it for success were noted
Adding three parents to the board	2	
Meeting mandated objectives	2	Specifically mentioned was the 10-year business plan and incorporating as a 501c3
Selection of the board of directors	2	
Harlem Children Zone (HCZ) fact finding visit	1	
Public relations/promotional material developed and available	1	

The third challenge, “Overcoming a legacy of corruption, disappointment, and mistrust,” points to the need for transparency in order for the MCI to realize its vision and mission. Transparency, especially fiscal transparency, should be of the greatest concern to the board. It was noted during the strategic

planning process that the level of distrust in the community is rampant and that there is almost an expectation of unethical and self-indulgent behavior, especially regarding the proper use of funds. Several comments from the board survey illustrate the need for what may almost be termed, “hyper” transparency.

“Transparency, as a board Member to date I have seen no financials-I know no one's salary info etc. I am very uncomfortable being on this board and having no insight to the financials. I have requested numerous times to see the expenditures and to date have not seen one. I had a CEO of a company that was willing to cut the Initiative a check for discretionary spending and I told them I would get back to them once I had a better vision of the financials, I have NOTHING!!!”

“Educating people about how MCI will be different from all the other programs that have failed in the past.”

Table 12: Board of Director Listed Challenges for the MCI in the Next Year		
Challenges	#	Comment
Securing stable funding	12	Funding from non-government sources and the recruitment of a board of trustees skilled in fund-raising was often noted
Educating the community on the MCI and that it is not just another program	7	The point was consistently made that the MCI has to distinguish itself from other programs and to make sure that the goals/mission of the initiative is strongly delineated in the community. Included here are references to community engagement.
Overcoming a legacy of corruption, disappointment and mistrust	5	Discussed above
Creating a feedback process for the community to see success and increase buy-in	3	Comments in this category also discussed communication and organizational visibility
Implementing the business plan	2	One specific reference to the baby college
Selecting “the right” service providers	1	
Staff learning the community	1	

“Convincing the community that this is not just another group taking advantage of the community to provide themselves and their friends with income.”

“Acceptance by people who want the money MCI has.”

“Trying to get trustees on board when the politicians in the past have been so corrupt.”

Part of this could be overcome by keeping open communication with the community, engaging them as partners, and updating them on success as this quote notes:

“Providing the community with information about things they are doing that are making a difference.”

As noted, the board was asked to provide potential suggestions for solutions. Table 13 lists solutions when available. Regarding stable, sustainable funding, the board of trustees was mentioned the most. One board member addressed improving lobbying capacity, which most not-for-profit best practices

suggest as well. Increasing the capacity to compete for dollars was also addressed by the cogent suggestion to hire good grant writers.

Educating the community on the MCI and creating a good feedback process brackets the challenge of overcoming the legacy of corruption. Though not listed by directors per se as directly addressing the negative legacy, the suggested solutions for educating the community and having a feedback process would help to erase the unwanted legacy. Other solutions noted for different challenges are straightforward and would be relatively easy to implement.

Table 13: Board of Director Listed Suggested Solutions for the MCI in the Next Year

Challenges	Suggested Solutions
Securing stable funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trustees were frequently mentioned including the need to have clear directions for trustees, enhancing strategies to attract more trustees, and supporting the trustees as they begin to engage in fund-raising • Strengthening lobbying capacity to better engage the legislature • Connecting with donors before the 2012 election cycle • Hiring good grant writers
Educating the community on the MCI and that it is not just another program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding classes at the MCI offices on how the MCI works • Utilizing community desired incentives • Stressing the MCI mission consistently • Hiring familiar local people whenever possible and hiring youth in the community to staff/support the MCI
Overcoming a legacy of corruption, disappointment and mistrust	
Creating a feedback process for the community to see success and increase buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating the goals and successes of the program as often as possible • Sharing individual success stories through multiple mediums
Implementing the business plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidifying action steps and having a feedback and monitoring system in place to gauge progress
Selecting “the right” service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring an unbiased selection committee for providers • Partnering with the school system as soon as possible • Formalizing community partnerships in writing as soon as feasible
Staff learning the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to engage the community in events but also to walk the community and introduce themselves • Engaging and supporting staff to encourage their participation

The final questions on the board survey looked at projected challenges and solutions three years down the road. Not surprisingly, there were fewer responses and several were repeated. However, there were some new responses as well as different takes on previous responses as outlined in Table 14. Sustainability is mentioned most regarding fiscal issues, but legitimacy, the next most endorsed, was

also linked to sustainability. In the strategic planning process, momentum was often mentioned as critical to agency success in Liberty City as was nurturing successful partnerships. The public safety/crime issues were viewed by many in the strategic planning process as a critical priority, as were community unemployment and related issues such as stable housing and nutrition.

Table 14: Board of Director Listed Challenges for the MCI in Three Years

Challenges	#	Comment
Continue to secure stable funding	6	The need for stable, sustainable funding was noted by several and one director noted the link between political support and stable funding.
Convincing the community that the MCI is legitimate while fostering community support and buy-in	5	This is obviously viewed as an issue that will not fade quickly and must have continued vigilance and effort
Maintaining the enthusiasm and momentum of staff and the community	2	No embellishment provided
Continuing to foster and maintain successful partnerships	1	No embellishment provided
Facing the public safety/crime reality	1	No embellishment provided
Community unemployment	1	No embellishment provided

As with the previous challenges, directors were asked to suggest solutions when they could for the challenges they listed. Their responses are contained in Table 15. No new strategies for fund raising were suggested. Some of the suggestions for other solutions also used language that suggested tailoring solutions to the unique characteristics of the community, a suggestion that has equal relevance to the more immediate solutions as noted in Table 15.

Table 15: Board of Director Listed Suggested Solutions for the MCI in Three Years

Challenges	Suggested Solutions
Continue to secure stable funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a successful cadre of grant writers are available
Convincing the community that the MCI is legitimate while fostering community support and buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that MCI is a household name by then Executive outreach in the community should be consistent in order maintain a public face with the community Host inexpensive community events with some frequency to bring people together
Maintaining the enthusiasm and momentum of staff and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase successful programs that were supported by MCI in the community
Continuing to foster and maintain successful partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop unique and community relevant strategies to enhance and maintain community support
Facing the public safety/crime reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the community puts on events to take back their community
Community unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host job fairs and education trainings

Recommendations

The MCI has taken several crucial steps this year to give legs to its vision and mission. The interim steering committee oversaw the seating of a board of directors in a thoughtful and structured manner. The board largely and consistently utilized best practices in hiring its first CEO and developing its first business plan. The following recommendations are provided to support the ongoing implementation of the MCI in achieving its vision and mission:

1. Going forward, make every attempt to include the community residents, especially in areas that are being directly served by the MCI, in order to further support, enhance transparency, and to work against the expectation of failure which is part of this community's history.
2. Make leadership development in the community a higher priority than it currently is in the business plan. The association of leadership with resident willingness to engage and work toward unified change is a consistent finding in the literature and is worthy of replication.
3. Consider developing and implementing the self-empowerment component earlier in Phase 1 sequencing to better address member and organizational capacity in order to begin to build more resident involvement in the MCI.
4. Consider supplementing the business plan through a campaign that identifies why the MCI is different, its vision and mission, and what will be concrete changes in the community to better the lives of the residents. Again, this links to the need for transparency where the history is acknowledged and the community is given something by which they can measure positive change in the future.
5. The MCI leadership and board of directors should familiarize themselves, if they are not already, with the development of cohesive systems in community building/recovery and the best practices noted in the literature to help them coordinate development of individual/resident and system/organizational capacity over time. The evaluation team is available to provide a workshop targeting these issues to any degree of comprehensiveness desired should the leadership and board agree that this would be appropriate.
6. Consider developing an evaluation mechanism including outcomes and data collection protocols earlier than is mentioned in the business plan. The evaluation mechanism should include performance measurement for the MCI's role in building collaborations and capacity as well as measuring outcomes reflective of indicators of child and family well-being. This will provide additional baseline information as well as the ability to adjust if some selected outcomes/indicators are not beginning to move or at least show some type of improvement in the first five years of the program. Many of the community indicators are lag indicators and will take time to impact. Having sub-indicators/outcomes data available allows the MCI to determine if they are on the right path before they have invested multiple years of resources. This is also an area where the evaluation team may be of some assistance, if desired.