Erie Neighborhood House-Loyola Center for Urban
Research and Learning Partnership

Report of
Erie's Strategic Planning and Evaluation Process
Presentation to Board

Facilitators: Louis Delgado

                          Lucia Orellana-Damacela

                          Michael Rohrbeck

Chicago, October 23, 1999

Report Prepared by Lucia Orellana-Damacela

**Report of the Presentation of Strategic Planning and Evaluation Process
To Erie Neighborhood House Board
ERIE-CURL Partnership**

The Erie-CURL partnership has the purpose of facilitating Erie's strategic planning and evaluation process. This initiative is supported by a grant from Sara Lee Foundation. One of the activities of the initiative was the presentation of the status of the Strategic Planning and Evaluation process (SP&E) to Erie's board. This document contains a summary of the event. It also contains several appendices: the meeting agenda, the list of attendants, the handouts distributed to the participants, a summary of participants' responses to the exercises, a preliminary timeline of next events for the SP&E process, and participants' qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the workshop.

The presentation was conducted at Erie's, from 9:30 to 1:30, on October 23, 1999. It took place in the context of a one-day long annual retreat. A total of 28 persons attended. Sixteen of them were Board members, and 12 were staff members (see Appendix B). The goal of this activity was to strengthen and broaden board members' ownership and accountability of the process of Strategic Planning and Evaluation at Erie Neighborhood House (see Appendix A).

The main topics of the presentation included an introduction about Strategic Planning and Evaluation, and the current status of the process at Erie. We also presented key concepts such as goals, objectives and action plans (see Appendix C). Even though some of the attendants (staff members) had already been in a workshop in which these key concepts were discussed, we thought that it was necessary to build a shared understanding of the components of the SP&E process among all the participants. The agenda also included two exercises. The first exercise consisted of a small and big group discussion of the role of the board in the strategic planning process. The second exercise was a small groups critique of examples of goals, objectives and action plans (see Appendix D). Next in the agenda, the board director and the executive director discussed the next steps for the partnership, particularly regarding role. Finally, the attendants evaluated the presentation (see Appendix F).

In the introduction section, we discussed the importance of board involvement in SP. Some participants stressed the importance of evaluations addressing issues of real importance for the agency, as opposed to side evaluations designed from an academic standpoint. This kind of evaluations, which usually are one-shot measurements, might not be necessarily responsive to the real needs of the agency. We indicated that our model of evaluation is a participatory one, which means that stakeholders (staff, board, and participants) are involved at every step of the evaluation process. In this way, we ensure that the focus, design, implementation and results of the evaluation are useful for Erie. In addition, we are proposing a model that integrates evaluation into the day to day activities of the departments and programs. This model, in sum, builds capacity of staff to implement their own evaluations.

A participant indicated that it should be a connection between SP and evaluation. We commented that this is, precisely, what we want to accomplish. This Plan will have an evaluation component from the beginning. Other participants said that the plan

should be realistic about what to measure; otherwise, staff will end up burned out by compiling irrelevant information.

During the board role exercise, board members saw their role as being co-participants in planning and working in joint staff/board efforts without falling into "micro-managing". Special emphasis was placed on the need to develop systems to track performance measures previously agreed-upon, including financial information. This should be accomplished without burning out staff or "over-reporting" to board (see Appendix E).

During the exercise of critiquing of examples of goals, objectives and actions plans, several perspectives on how to analyze the examples were used. Some groups approved or rejected the plan based on the criteria specified in the handout. Some groups used their own values regarding the worthiness of the program. It was clear that a combination of both approaches is necessary when making these decisions.

In both exercises --the board role exercise and the goal/objectives critique exercise--we saw the difficulty of getting specific in group settings. In the first activity on board roles, for example, very few short/long term tasks had much specificity. However, as can be seen in the board/staff interchanges, it will be the staff's role to hear and incorporate the spirit of the board commentaries and work together at a later date in specifics for refinement.

Finally, the evaluation of the session provided us with some important insights. Without repeating topics of consensus between staff/board members and CURL team, the following supplementary comments seem relevant. In general, it seemed that learning goals were achieved, although it may be that less experienced people in SP got more out of it. It was very clear from the discussion that reporting to the board and various audiences overwhelms the staff. The executive office may constitute a special project during the next 3 years to design a database system that meets the information needs of funders and board without being burdensome for the staff.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Agenda

Appendix B: List of Participants

Appendix C: Package of Definitions

Appendix D: Handouts of Exercises

Appendix E: Summary of Participants' Presentations

Appendix F: Session Evaluation

Appendix A

List of Participants

Board Members

1. Joseph Antolin   Co-chair Program Committee
2. Charles W. Armstrong   Executive Committee
3. Steven Fox   Resource Committee
4. Maureen Hellwig   Chair, Executive Committee
5. John Jacus   Chair, Facilities and Operations Committee
6. George Johnson   Facilities and Operation Committee
7. Karen Mikle   Child Care Program Committee
8. Jack O'Keefe   Chair, Resource Development Committee
9. Jane Polachek   Co-Chair, Program Committee
10. M. Carmen Prieto   Executive Committee
11. Jesse H. Ruiz   Executive Committee
12. Shelley Smith   Program Committee
13. Layla Suleiman   Youth Options Program Committee
14. Ingrid Wilson   Child Care Program Committee
15. Eugene L. Woroch   Resource Development Committee
16. Librada Zamora   Budget and Finance Committee

Staff

1. Tim Bell   Director, Adult Education Department
2. Ricardo Estrada   Associate Executive Director
3. Lisa Galicia   Director, Development and Communications
4. Phaedra Leslie   Executive Assistant/Academic Liaison
5. Maria Matias   Director, Youth Options Program
6. Diane Montanez   Director, Operations and Facilities
7. Herbert Moreno   Director, Finance Office
8. Esther Nieves   Executive Director
9. Janet Nieves   Administrative Assistant
10. Maria Perez   Director, Human Resources
11. Rafael Ravelo   Senior Adviser (former Executive Director)
12. Sandy Schaefer   Director, Child Care Department

Appendix B

Erie Neighborhood House Strategic Planing and Evaluation Process Update

Date: October 23, 1999

Time: 10:00 - 12:30 (As one of the activities of Erie's Annual Board Retreat)

Facilitators: A team from the Center for Urban Research and Learning, Loyola University

Chicago: Louis Delgado

Lucia Orellana-Damacela

Michael Rohrbeck

Session Goals

General goal:

To strengthen and broaden board members' ownership and accountability of the process of Strategic Planning and Evaluation at Erie Neighborhood House

Specific goals:

- Learn about the basics of Strategic Planning

- Learn about current status of Strategic Planning and Evaluation at Erie

- Reflect on and begin to define the board's role on the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Process

- Practice critiquing and refining organizational and departmental goals, objectives and action plans

Schedule

10:00 - 10:15	Introduction: What is SP and Evaluation: Purpose, benefits, importance, structure. Current status of SP and Evaluation process at Erie. L. Delgado
10:15-11:00	Board role and accountability: small group and large group discussion M. Rohrbeck
11:00-11:10	Break
11:10-11:20	Examples and definitions of goals, objectives and action plans L. Orellana-Damacela
11:20-12:20	Exercise: Small groups critique of goals, objectives and action plans. Large group discussion M. Rohrbeck
12:20-12:30	Concluding remarks; what is next M. Hellwig

Appendix C

Workshop Material

(Package and Handouts)

SELECTED STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EVALUATION DEFINITIONS

VISION

The vision describes your dream of the way things ought to be. It is the dream that makes us work together

The vision has to be

- **Concise**

- **Positive**

- **General**

- **Flexible**

Questions to ask in coming up with a vision or mission:

- **What is our dream for our community?**

- **What kind of community do we want to create?**

- **What do you see as the community's major issues or problems?**

- **What do you see as the community's major strengths or assets?**

- **What do you think should be the purpose of this organization?**

Examples:

A healthy community

A safe neighborhood

MISSION

A mission statement describes what will be accomplished and why

The mission has to be

- **Concise, preferably one sentence**
- **States a broad goal or goals**
- **Includes the strategies**
- **Is general**
- **Is flexible**

Examples:

"*Our mission is to improve the quality of life of the community in the West town neighborhood through a community-wide effort which will provide education, support and community organizing and empowerment.*"

"*To promote community well-being by providing integrated services for low income families in the city of Chicago.*"

AGENCY GOALS

Guided by the agency's mission statement, the agency goal states:

- **The issue to be addressed**
- **The client population to be served**
- **The desired future state for the clients**
- **How it plans to achieve the desired state**

An example:

The goal of this agency is to provide temporary services to women in Cook county who have been physically or emotionally abused by their spouses and require financial and emotional support in order for them to re-start their lives outside of their abusive relationship.

Department goal*:*
To attract and retain qualified paid and volunteer staff for all services and activities by increasing their opportunities for professional and personal development

OBJECTIVES

Objectives describe what we hope to accomplish, providing specific descriptions of

a) **how much change is sought; b) of what kind; c) by whom; d) by when.**

In addition, Objectives have to be

- **Specific**

- **Measurable**

- **Attainable**

- **Relevant to the mission**

- **Challenging**

Objectives can be

- **Client-related (knowledge, attitudes, behaviors)**

- **Agency-related (maintenance)**

In order to define your objectives, you need a baseline data on issues addressed

Examples:

Increase Cook county women's awareness of the service provided by our agency, from 30% to 45% by year 2001 (as measured by a survey applied to a randomly selected sample of women).

By the year 2002, the reported use of Internet resources by students in the literacy program will increase by 33%.

Increase the number of volunteers by 25% by the year 2002.

ACTION PLANS

Action plans delineate the steps towards fulfilling goals and objectives. They include information about

- **What activities will be performed**
- **Who is responsible for carrying them out**
- **By when**
- **For how long**
- **With what resources**
- **How to measure the implementation and the results of the activity**
- **What is the standard of success for this activity**

FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

The following are useful guidelines to analyze Goals, Objectives and Activity Plans:

- **Consistency with Mission of Organization or Department**

- **Availability of funding/financial resources**

- **Staff time and expertise**

- **Possibility of internal or external collaborative resources**

- **Availability of organization systems and assets; e.g. computer hardware/software, space, procedures, policies**

OUTPUT AND OUTCOME MEASURES

To evaluate the implementation of you program, you have to monitor the outputs generated by the program.

<u>Output</u> measures indicate the amount of services provided, frequency of events, number of participants, products generated, etc. In sum, it measures the degree to which your activities were accomplished as planned.

Example for outputs:

Number of teenagers who attended school at West Town who have participated in the youth programs

To evaluate the change produced in your program participants, you should measure the outcomes of your program and compare them with your objectives.

<u>Outcomes</u> are the results that you obtain after you have implemented your actions.

Outcomes are the changes in participants' level of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, status or condition, as a result of the program or service.

Example for outcomes:

Percentage of participants who completed the job preparation program who found and kept a job paying above $7.00 per hour during 1998.

Taken from Community Tool Box: http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu

The outputs and outcomes measures handout was adapted from an early version crated by Anita Jayarac and Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar for Bethel New Life.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is

- **The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of human services or programs.**

Evaluation allows

- **Gaining insights about the service, improving its effectiveness and quality, and/or providing information for decisions about future programming.**

Based on Patton, M. Q. (1997). <u>Utilization-focused Evaluation</u>. CA: Sage.

(insert matrix)

Appendix D

Handout No. 1

BOARD ROLE DISCUSSION

Problem: Like in many organizations, Erie's work is diverse, detailed and relatively complex. It requires a staff that is both professional and understanding of the community and clients being served. The organization is a closely held corporation and wants its board of directors to be significantly involved in setting directions for program services and administration. However, the size of the organization and the volume of Erie's work make this increasingly difficult.

Plans and implementing strategies are typically drafted by the Executive/Managerial Staff. They are reviewed by department and line staff "teams" and board members review and approve them. They are reported on at least a quarterly basis. However, there may not be a strong "ownership" of strategic plans by board or department staff, nor adequate checks on the feasibility of such plans or the comprehensiveness of these plans in addressing board priorities.

Instructions.

1)   Discuss in your small groups what you think the board role should be in strategic planning, evaluation and reporting. Identify the key components of this role.

2)   What tasks would serve to increase the ownership, accountability and relevance of the strategic plan to board members and between staff and board leaders? Identify if these tasks are short term priorities (Year I) or longer term tasks (Year I or II). Please list below.

Note: If desired these tasks could be the beginning ideas of draft goals, objectives etc. for board development in the new strategic plan.

Handout No. 2

BOARD EXERCISE; REFINING DRAFT PLANS

Task: On the attached sheet are sample goals, objectives and activities from

your last three-year strategic plan. For each set of goals/objectives/activities

1. Determine whether you would approve the goal (Yes, No or Unsure); and

   then

2. Give your reasons or list key questions for staff in making a decision

   You may refer to handouts provided, including definitions and

   feasibility criteria.

Goal 1:   Collaborate with schools and parents represented by our
                    clients

Objective 1: Establish a relationship with the schools to provide programs to
                    meet the needs of the youth to enhance programs

Activities:	**Responsible**	**Resources**
Develop a plan to provide and enhance programs for youth in schools	Entrepreneur Trainer Academic Counselor	September 2000
Implement the program in schools	Entrepreneur Trainer Academic Counselor	
Evaluate the program quarterly	Entrepreneur Trainer Academic Counselor	

Objective 2: To create a parent group

Activities:	Responsible	Date
Identify parents Create goals and objectives for group Evaluate the parent group	Program Director	September 2000

Goal 2: To provide emergency assistance to poor and low-income families and/or individuals living on a fixed income

Objective: Meet the basic human needs of West Town/Humboldt Park's residents

Activities:	Responsibles	Date
Provide emergency assistance through food pantry Provide referral and support services Increase program visibility and support		Ongoing

Appendix E

Summary of Participants' Presentations
Exercise # 1
Discussion about the Role of Board on the Strategic Planning Process

General Issues, Considerations
- There should be a connection/integration between strategic planning and evaluation
- Being realistic about what you measure, what you include
- Sharing with board existing evaluations (internal reports)
- Having Strategic Planning work for you, not you work for it
- Time concern for reporting: reporting metrics/Data Base
- How to involve individual experts more in program and other areas; liaisons on staff level planning
- Maybe board can have a greater role in reporting
- No micro-managing
- How committees do/can function

Board Group No 1
Role
- Establish more affirming program goals "affirming ongoing"; living document
- Role/ownership by program committee
- Regular engagement with staff of departments
- Working in joint staff/board efforts
- Liaison with board
- Board pay stronger role reporting concerns, reporting plans, opportunities
Tasks
- Assist more in identifying sources and fundraising efforts
- Mechanism on SP, updates differently, "no tree killing"
- Reminders about connection to SP
- Accessing board expertise individually…how to approach

Board Group No. 2
Role
- It must be a joint effort (versus current way?). Board has to "buy-into" to the strategic plan
- Concern about micro-managing
- Agreement by consensus would be ideal
Tasks
- "Metrics" should be developed; reporting systems, e.g. turnover measures
- more time needed for activity

Board Group No. 3
Role
- Board should co-participate in planning

- Common agendas
- Agreed-upon performance measures
- Understanding about organization
- Staff distribution of resources, avoid overwhelming "reporting"
- Accuracy of information needed.
- Develop leading indicators for information flow re: steps in process
- Boar should be co-participant
- Board believes it is important to hear at meetings: common agenda, programs with board members is good
- Board member liability for performance: financial, Tax
- Contribute to dynamics of relationship in organization: be active, participate, have ownership
- Work of organization: Staff overwhelmed/crunch at meetings (for reporting)
- Board responsibility: work with them. There should be increased board involvement. In this way, staff will prepare small reports for meetings with board
- Financial Information: should be broken down in leading indicators: elements, data, $, ratio, measures
- Benchmark: e.g.. Percentage of government vs. private financing, standards to compare; means for comparison
- Program Efforts dynamics: areas of effort which may be changing: which programs should be expanded and which shut down.
- When to get out or get in a type of service
- How are we tracking plans and objectives

Tasks
- Information management: data needed; re: needs support
- Database for board and staff
- Filling out forms is a pressure for staff: how to automatize (computerize?).

Staff Group No. 1
Role
- Early involvement by board in planning will increase sense of ownership and commitment
- Role provides network connection with resources, technology models; they have a role as ambassadors

Tasks
- Program Plans "early and often"
- Are goals relevant, periodically

Staff Group No. 2
Tasks
- Involved with teams during plan development
- Be a liaison
- Board management –present

Staff Group No. 3
Role

- Board should be divided into committees. Their function is reviewing, advising, assessing.

Tasks

- Identify resources, expertise
- Mechanisms of communication want time understanding.

Exercise # 2
Critique of Examples of Goals, Objectives and Action Plan

Critique of Example No. 1 (collaboration with schools)
- Goal intention and strategies were not clear
- The target population was not clear either; "who are the clients?"
- Collaboration plan was unclear; no action steps; activity planning was "too easy". "Collaboration could be anything"
- Given that the objectives are not specific, it is attainable: anything accomplished may be OK; therefore, it is not challenging
- The goal is part of the mission
- Even though collaboration was not defined, the board could help by defining it, and approving the goal, since it is very important: Collaboration was defined as use our technology center to help with homeworks
- Some implementation issues: are schools going to work with us?
- Regarding resources, there is a staffing and time shortage; who is going to implement the lesson plans?
- No outputs, outcomes indicators were specified
- Regarding responsibilities, besides the department director, the person who is going to be implementing the activities should be specified,
- A board member may have responsibilities as a liaison agent, but no other specific responsibilities (otherwise, there is the risk of micromanaging)

Critique of Example No. 2 (food pantry)
- The objective looks more like a goal
- Issue to be addressed was not specific enough, or was not stated
- There were neither desired future states nor plans
- Goal is well stated, and should be approved, given that meets a need
- Feasibility for the goal should be taken into account: does the demand justify the staff time?
- Community has changed: maybe a service like this is not necessary in a gentrified community
- How do you know that you have achieved your goal?
- Is there a consistency between this program and the mission? The mission states that Erie should enable people to be self-sufficient
- There were different perspectives about how to critique this goal: based on the textbook, this is a well stated goal; based on a diagnostic of needs, this may not be the case
- The "ongoing" timeline for the program was vague. How to know when to carry on or cut the program?

Appendix F

Session Evaluation

ERIE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE STRATEGIC PLANNIC AND EVALUATION

PROCESS PRESENTATION TO BOARD

EVALUATION

Please circle the number that best represents your opinion about each of the topics/activities performed in this session.

Topic/activity   (From 5=Most useful to 1=Least useful)

	Mean	Mode
Introduction	3.1	4
Board Role and Accountability exercise	4.1	4
Presentation of Definitions	3.4	4
Critique of SP exercise	4.0	4
Concluding remarks and next steps	3.6	4
What is your overall satisfaction with the workshop?	3.9	4
How helpful has this session been for you?	3.7	4

Comments, suggestions:

- I liked this workshop because it went to the point, was brief and practical in presenting a plan of action.
- Helped clarify the plan and good discussion
- Thanks, it was better than I expected
- Thank you for the affirmation comments. I believe as a staff that the board got the message that they must be involved.
- Exercises were very good, helpful. Individual facilitators excellent. Mike and Lucia led very well and open to suggestions.
- Not sure people got to share all. Board role and problem –not clear what that was- the statement, Need to be spending time moving to more specifics. Too much a theoretical
- Lucia, though very articulate, is somewhat difficult to understand due to heavy accent. Knowledge and delivery is good.
- The exercises could be more relevant to the present task. The introduction was too basic and long. The output definition appears to consolidate inputs and outputs without explanation
- Small group activities-would be better to have a mix of board and staff in each group. Also had problem with the confusion over discussing strategic plan process on actual programs. We tend to get into programs too soon and miss the point of learning the process.
- I don't n know if we needed to spend as much time as we did overall, to get to the point we were at the end of the CURL presentation. However, I did appreciate the info; I do find it helpful as we move forward.
- The lecture were somewhat dry but the exercises were useful
- A lot of the discussion seems to focus on nomenclature and nuance in the definition of terms. It would be more helpful to focus on the development of a strategic plan that guides the agency to operate more effectively and grow in the right direction.