



Neighboring Summative Evaluation Study Report

ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Introduction

Points of Light Institute and HandsOn Network has embraced Neighboring as a grant making strategy to strengthen families for four years, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Over this time, affiliates have worked to co-create innovative, ground-up programming that builds stronger, closer-knit communities with the under-served and under-resourced residents of those communities. Neighboring had the promise to work -- to build community and to strengthen families -- yet not much was known about it, except anecdotally through self report by affiliate sub-grantees.

In 2009, evaluators from Points Of Light Institute developed a Summative Evaluation Study (SES) to investigate the process of Neighboring, including unique characteristics of Neighboring and factors that contribute to sustainability of Neighboring initiatives, as well as an in-depth assessment of the outcomes achieved through Neighboring on individuals, families, and communities.

The five previously funded Neighboring grantees that served as SES grantees (SES) are:

- HandsOn Manatee (Manatee, FL)
- Metro United Way and Louisville Asset Building Coalition (Louisville, KY)
- United Way of Greater Toledo and Read for Literacy (Toledo, OH)
- Volunteer Center of Lehigh Valley (Bethlehem, PA)
- Volunteer Macon (Macon, GA)

Method

The method section explains steps undertaken to conduct the SES with success contingent on full participation of the five previously funded affiliates.

Design—In this non-experimental summative evaluation study evaluators employed a mixed methods design and gathered a large body of qualitative data, as well as collection of quantitative data from SES grantees key stakeholders including volunteers, partners, staff, funders, and community beneficiaries.

SES grantees played a large role in coordinating the logistics of the study. Representatives from the five sites organized site visits with time dedicated to:

Extant document review

SES grantees provided a list of ready-data upon application to the 2009 evaluation study. As part of the site visit, Points Of Light Institute evaluators reviewed and discussed data elements that were available with grantee staff.



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Focus groups

Using a loose protocol, Points Of Light Institute evaluators led focus groups with grantee-identified volunteers, community beneficiaries, partners, and staff. Points of Light Institute provided written tips to guide recruitment by SES grantees. Focus group participants were recruited by sub-grantee representatives using guidelines provided during SES grantee orientation and ongoing technical assistance during monthly teleconference calls. Participation data from these focus groups is presented in the section on subjects.

Observation

Observation of Neighboring opportunities was the last element of the site visit coordinated by SES grantees and attended by Points Of Light Institute evaluators. SES representatives were instructed to schedule the observation with an activity typical of their Neighboring initiative...not the 'biggest, best' activity, but rather one that will help provide a real picture of what Neighboring means in their community.

Surveys

In addition to the methods described above that were employed during the evaluation site visits, POLI evaluators administered two variations of stakeholder surveys. The organizations and partners stakeholder survey was administered to organizations identified by SES grantees that collaborate with the SES grantee to deliver Neighboring or other initiatives that have been implemented in response to the original Neighboring initiative. The individual stakeholder survey was administered to:

Measurement tools—Focus group protocols were developed by Points Of Light Institute evaluators. The first iteration was a standard protocol and used at the first site visit. After piloting the instrument, evaluators realized that focus groups were likely to differ so much that a standardized instrument could not be instituted and turned to a protocol that featured core questions for all sites paired with a series of “activity-based” questions that changed based on the activities in which focus group participants were engaged. Evaluators oftentimes changed or added questions based on subjects’ responses during focus groups. The extant document review was informal and notes were taken on observations using a standard form. See Appendix III for protocols and instruments.

Data analysis—Data were collected onsite using an audio recorder and then transcribed and coded by evaluators into important concepts and themes to support the research purpose.

Subjects- A total of 155 people participated in 20 focus groups. Table 1 presents participants demographics collected onsite using standard participant intake forms. As shown, when compared to the service area population, focus group oftentimes had more minority, female, and Baby Boomer representatives; yet participation is still comparable, for the most part. Considering the spirit of the Neighboring program, we believe that for the purposes of this study, SES grantee recruitment efforts produced a group of voices that collectively may be similar to the universe of participants in the initiative.



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That said, one foreseeable blemish to the representativeness is the lack of socioeconomic characteristics, omitted from collection due to the sensitive nature of doing so in a group setting, that would reveal whether these participants are likely those that personify the Neighboring concept as those people who neighbor inside their own community.

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Table 1. Participant and community demographics

AVERAGE FOR:	HandsOn Manatee		Metro United Way		United Way of Greater Toledo & Read for Literacy		Volunteer Center of Lehigh Valley		Volunteer Macon	
	Participants	Service Area	Participants	Service Area	Participants	Service Area	Participants	Service Area	Participants	Service Area
Ethnicity	n=33	n=266,315	n=30	n=256,231	N=17	n=352,612	n=21	n=590,505	n=54	n=92,408
African American	42.4	6.4	13.3	33.9	17.6	16.9	23.8	6.4	64.8	59.5
Caucasian/White	54.5	89.0	76.7	64.2	82.4	77.7	47.6	90.5	33.3	38.4
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
Asian	0.0	0.8	3.3	1.7	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.7
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Latino/Hispanic	3.0	7.7	3.3	1.9	0.0	4.4	23.8	7.2	0.0	1.1
Other race (including two or more)	0.0	3.6	3.3	1.2	0.0	4.0	4.8	4.8	0.0	1.2
Gender	n=33	n=242,797	n=30	n=256,231	N=17	n=338,074	n=21	n=488,808	n=54	n=91,318
Male	27.3	48.2	33.3	47.3	23.5	47.9	28.6	49.1	16.7	44.2
Female	72.7	51.8	66.7	52.7	76.5	52.1	71.4	50.9	83.3	55.8
Age	n=33	n=199,349	n=30	n=256,231	N=17	n=265,760	n=21	n=401,096	n=53	n=70,360
24 and younger	33.3	25.0	0.0	34.1	11.8	35.7	0.0	31.8	5.6	29.7
25 to 34	9.1	9.9	26.7	17.7	17.6	13.7	23.8	11.9	9.4	13.6
35 to 44	21.2	13.5	6.7	15.7	17.6	15.3	19.0	17.6	18.90	14.0
45 to 54	9.1	13.1	16.7	13.2	5.9	13.8	33.3	14.6	15.10	12.3
55 to 64	18.2	12.2	23.3	7.8	35.3	8.4	23.8	9.1	20.8	16.9
65 and older	9.1	26.3	3.3	14.7	11.8	13.2	0.0	15.0	30.2	13.4

Note: Service area averages calculated by averaging the percentages for each variable for each zip code provided by SESS; some of the variables do not total 100%, which is believed to be a result of rounding and then averaging. For the purposes of this discussion, we find this acceptable.

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All SES sites (100%) completed the site visit components of the SES by recruiting participants and organizing logistics for focus groups, providing data sources for the extant document review, and serving as a liaison so evaluators could observe Neighboring activities. Further inspection of the data sources revealed that content and quality were often mediocre; this issue is discussed under Findings. In addition, 100 percent of sub-grantees provided lists of individuals and organizations to survey for outcomes measurement.

FINDINGS

Evaluation capacity

SES sub-grantees were critical to the successful implementation of the evaluation study. Points of Light Institute evaluators employed a collaborative evaluation approach to engagement of SES sites throughout the evaluation process to assure that increased knowledge of evaluation principles and practices were achieved. While a formal pre-assessment of evaluation capacity was not executed as a part of the evaluation design, the RFP shared with former grantees to participate in this study was designed using the principles of evaluability assessment to provide an ad-hoc assessment of past and current capacity to evaluate Neighboring initiatives. In particular, it was noted that through the site visit extant document review process that standardized data collection tools and records management practices critical to execute program evaluations were non-existent or incomplete. This coupled with a lack of working knowledge on how to utilize evaluation to manage and improve programs provided a large window for growth in evaluation capacity of participating SES sites.

Orientation

SES representatives were required to attend a two day evaluation orientation where they learned about how evaluation methods with a specific focus on those employed in this project, focus groups, observations and survey development. The results from pre-post tests administered to SES staff at the orientation clearly demonstrated that they acquired new skills and knowledge about evaluation practices and were provided with tools and resources to apply them in their daily work.

Conference Calls

Points of Light Institute evaluators facilitated ongoing conference calls with SES representatives to discuss upcoming evaluation activities, progress on instrument development, provide opportunities for sharing of best practices for recruitment of study participants and one on one consultation with Points of Light Institute evaluators.

Instrument Review

All SES sites were requested to complete reviews and provide constructive feedback on the focus group protocols, observation form and stakeholder surveys.

While many of these activities were successful in engaging SES sites to learn about evaluation practices, much more can be done to build the evaluation capacity of organizations to collect, manage and utilize data to make programs better.

Family strengthening outcomes

Evaluators used the three constructs in Table 2 to help define and subsequently measure Family Strengthening Outcomes.

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Table 2. Family strengthening outcomes

Child success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children and youth the opportunities, resources, and role models necessary to become successful adults
Community change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of the places in which the nation’s most vulnerable children and families live.
Family economic security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide low-income workers with the supports they need to get and keep good jobs, and build assets and savings. • Promote workforce participation through job creation and skill development.

Through analysis of the qualitative data collected during focus groups, Points of Light Institute evaluators have provided a synthesized assessment of outcomes achieved as voiced by the program participants and stakeholders. The outcomes described address the three focus areas of child success, community change and family economic security and include direct quotes from evaluation participants to reinforce the findings interpreted by Points of Light Institute evaluators. Through the analysis process, themes emerged that alluded to the key outcomes achieved through Neighboring work and the findings are organized to explain and support selection of these key themes.

Child success

Neighboring generates opportunities for children

Opportunities for children grow as a result of these Neighboring programs. Neighbors help by serving as tutors, mentors, and readers; providing meals, books, and child care assistance; assembling and often donating small gifts during the holidays; conducting workshops on healthy lifestyles and community issues; and ensuring safe spaces for children to freely play, spend time with friends and neighbors, and grow. Through programs that nurture through neighborhood-based caring connections, support networks for children and youth expand. Young people “gain a sense of something larger than their family” and interact and learn from “people they would not have known otherwise.”

These opportunities for children can be formal and informal. For example, a leadership training program in Lehigh Valley strengthens nonprofit boards, providing for institutional changes that affect children and families: “Community leaders that come out of the program help make sure agencies serve clients. These people understand clients...they have the life experience to make decisions about people, unlike many board members.” At the more grassroots level, informal opportunities naturally occur on a day-to-day basis. Neighboring opportunities for children are not bound by the walls of an agency. When the doors close at a center in Louisville, the children, as a group, move onto a neighborhood staff person’s home so they are still with a caring adult while their parent(s) are at work: “What follows from that is that certain people have an afterglow of programs. Kids come here and then they go to their house. It is extended community.”

Neighboring links resources and children

Resources travel byway of parents and guardians, with benefits spilling over to children. As one respondent suggested, “If you can help and comfort parents, then the children move along, too. The children suffer when parents suffer. These services affect the whole family.” An AmeriCorps*VISTA, for instance, organizes a block party for families to socialize and invites child welfare agencies to provide information and referral services to attendees. Tax

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assistance programs such as VITA and EITC are especially strong producers of external benefits from parents to children. As respondents noted, “Parents who get the income tax credit have more resources to support their children,” and “This frees up money to assist with things they need at home.”

Neighboring creates role models for children

Neighboring shifts the traditional paradigm of a role model: neighbors, parents, and peers are role models. Children “see caring and kindness modeled” when volunteers provide service; but more importantly, when volunteers are people to whom children relate, the notion of “helping ourselves” becomes more possible, imbuing self-reliance.

Parents become role models when they take an active role in their children’s life, respondents stressed. For instance, “Our parents are involved. They will call and offer help. The parent involvement is so important,” and “Any time a parent is involved with a child, the child does better.” Neighboring programs offer parenting classes and frequent opportunities for parental involvement to strengthen parenting practices.

Evidence suggests witnessing adults serve leaves a lasting impression, and respondents feel the same is true for Neighboring. One staff person from a Volunteer Center stated, “If youth see other role models doing things for other people in the neighborhood, they’re going to grow up to do the same thing and make it part of their lifestyle. A nonprofit representative whose agency has received minority board members that graduated from a leadership program said, “Youth can look at African Americans or Latinos and see them serving on boards.”

As with all Neighboring programs, the recipients of service (children) are also empowered to be service providers. Through their Neighboring experiences, children “gain a sense of pride,” “feel part of something bigger,” and become role models for their friends: “Volunteering is contagious. You inspire your friends to volunteer with you.” In effect, children become role models to their peers.

The accountability to children in Neighboring is different than a traditional social service model. Parents and neighbors have a personal stake, the data indicate. “These are OUR children,” one volunteer noted and then went on to say, “I love being around the people who helped my family grow up.” This sense of responsibility to children of the neighborhood is unwavering and, again, transcends institutional boundaries; see below:

- “I don’t drive. The kids come to the bus top and I talk to them about church. I do the best that I can,”
- “Parents are trying to put food on the table. We can help by reminding kids they are loved when we see them.”
- “Everyone was a Mom and Dad to [my troubled daughter]. They came to the house. They were there, right along with me.”
- “The kids have multiple sets of eyes looking after them in positive and meaningful ways.”
- “[Grown children] say ‘you were mean to us, but you cared about us.’”

Community change

Through Neighboring, sub-grantees encourage and support natural neighbor-to-neighbor helping that strengthens children, families, and communities. This helping does not replace the assistance provided by traditional volunteers, or those recruited by volunteer mobilizing organizations and placed in formal volunteer opportunities. Instead, Neighboring underscores that help need not come from outside a community, but from within.

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Neighboring gives power

Focus groups revealed that when individuals authentically shape a community agenda through participation in forums, discussion groups, and community meetings, both the desire to engage and self-efficacy are heightened:

- “These forums changed me. They broadened my understanding. I am more open to things.”
- “I realize power in the community. We never had that before.”
- “It works because it isn’t outside people coming and telling people what they need. Outside [organizations only] facilitate the dialogue.”
- “All these community members have direct access to a council person at one our sites because he is so engaged. It is almost that we have shortened the communication channel...It is trying to find answers instead of sitting at home and complaining.”

SES respondents recognize that engaging residents is “a long process” that often requires “time to educate people” to show them “they have power and they have a voice.” Yet, on all accounts, the dialogue indicates that benefits of capturing and using resident voice outweigh the costs. As one grantee stated, “When you spend that much time, there is a lot more buy-in. Things are more vetted out...They have a stake in it now.”

Neighboring connects neighbors

“We have open gym, but that is not going to change lives. It is the people met there that does,” was an example one volunteer used to illustrate that “programs are ways to create connections and relationships,” or the “things really valued in the neighborhood.” So while the programs are important, it is the “sense of family” and “camaraderie” cited by so many that speak to why a neighborhood approach works. By joining people in collective action, Neighboring helps people realize “they are not alone” and that their neighbors “care” and “want success for everybody.” In this, they see “potential.”

In addition to social networks, Neighboring also links people to support networks. Through Neighboring activities, people learn about resources and information that can help their families. For example, neighbors at block parties learn about local services and programs; parents dropping their children off for tutoring learn about enrichment programs for themselves; people receiving tax assistance learn about how to apply for utility assistance.

Neighboring supplies leaders

As one long time community activist said, “We don’t want to call on the same people all time...[this program] brings new people...it is extremely important that [minorities] are represented and that we create a long line of future leaders.” Youth obtain leadership skills early on, as one Neighboring volunteer noted, “This taught me a lot about leadership roles and life lessons that I wouldn’t have learned if I wasn’t involved so early. It helped me stay focused on doing the best I can for everyone around me and myself.”

Neighboring does not only count people who self select as leaders. In fact, numerous respondents referenced certain community members that unconsciously grew into a leadership role, whether they acknowledged it or not. “Sometimes people don’t know that they started something and that they are the leader,” one respondent explained. Another person told a story about a neighborhood watch volunteer that parents often call to ask him to “take special notice when the kids are at home by themselves. And if he sees the kids at someone else’s house, he’ll call the parent and ask if the child has permission to be there.” Another resident volunteer helps to “break the ice” when volunteer groups arrive at seniors’ homes for painting and yard work.

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Family economic security

Neighboring directly fortifies financial supports

The most apparent way Neighboring influences family economic security is by providing real resources to under-served individuals and families through tax assistance programs. Money is put back into the pockets of all types of people who otherwise would be forced to “go to a place that charges money,” including parents, seniors, and youth, the data show:

- Parents “have more resources to support their children.”
- Seniors “only got a stimulus check if they filed.”
- Youth “maybe only get \$98 back, but it would have cost \$150 to get their taxes done.”

Resident volunteers involved in tax preparation tended to view it as not just a service, but a “re-education” in how people think about getting their taxes done. “The [for-profit] places make taxes seem like a mystery. Demystifying things for people is really important...when people realize they can do something; it is empowering,” and “The motivation of the tax preparer matters. It’s not just what do I need to do to get my job done; it’s about making people’s lives better.”

Financial skills building was a focus of many activities overseen by SES sub-grantees. Through the same tax programs mentioned above, resident volunteers gain knowledge of taxes that affect their own knowledge base, as evidenced in the following statements:

- “I have a savings account now. I didn’t have one before. There is actually money in it!”
- “I’ve had a bank account; I didn’t before.”
- “All of us are a little savvier with how much we should be withholding.”

SES sites supported classes, workshops, and experiential learning sessions often led by resident volunteers and even resident staff members. Some of the topics intended to grow skills and knowledge that contribute to family economic security are:

- Budgeting
- Developing business plans
- Learning about financial literacy
- Managing money
- Opening savings accounts
- Reading financial statements
- Speaking with financial advisors
- Understanding taxes

Neighboring indirectly affects workforce participation

Respondents alluded to many other life skills that they gained, or helped others gain, which are thought to have *indirect* impact on family economic security. As a staff member in Macon said, “the one thing that we want the youth - and adults - to realize: a lot of things are transferable. Skills are transferable, attitudes are transferable, and behaviors.” Some of those life skills mentioned are:

- Computer, including social media
- Cultural
- Customer service
- Disaster preparedness
- Event planning
- Fundraising experience
- Leadership
- Management
- Medical (First Aid, CPR)
- Organizational
- Personal responsibility
- Time management
- Training and presenting
- Tutoring and teaching
- Volunteer recruitment



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Beneficiary knowledge changes through more traditional areas of education are also impacted by resident volunteers. One site serves a majority of resident clients at an “education level that is more about survival” and focus on building basic reading and math skills. A site in Florida “started an [English as a Second Language class],” which the volunteers believe “will help people finds jobs.” In intergenerational tutoring dichotomies in the city of Macon, benefits are often reciprocal. The elderly person (tutee) acquires knowledge in the topic; the young tutor gains interpersonal and teaching skills and compassion, as demonstrated in the following statements made by these young tutors:

- “When I started, I had to...remember that he was an older person. It made me have a lot patience with people...I need to remember that he doesn't learn as quick.”
- “I had to have the patience. I also learned to break it down from a harder level to an easier one. I learned how to make visual examples.”

There are instances when resident volunteers are offered employment as a result of their volunteering, especially volunteer tax preparers. In fact, Louisville creates an intentional connection between volunteers and potential employers by having corporate partners involved onsite. A neighborhood center in Manatee hires teen participants for the summer, in addition to some of the resident parents as regular employees.

Sustainability factors

As a system, it is critical to sustain Neighboring. It grows roots where HandsOn Network affiliates traditionally have no or little presence, coexisting alongside typical volunteer engagement. More than that, Neighboring will occur, supported or not. It is a natural extension of Points of Light Institute’s call to inspire, equip, and mobilize people to take action that changes the world. To sustain a Neighboring approach, SES evidence suggests sites must intentionally work to change perceptions and systems, define service area, identify leaders, increase accessibility, take time to build trust, and transfer ownership. Each of these sustainability factors is explained in more detail below.

Changing perceptions and systems—Neighboring requires organizational representatives to think differently about volunteer management. Some sub-grantees provide volunteer management and grassroots leadership training to “create a-ha moments when people realize clients can volunteer.” Another SES sub-grantee has enabled volunteers to report “informal hours,” “expanding the concept of volunteering” to include “mowing the lawn for the neighbor who can’t do it for herself.”

Still, there is a cost. Outside Neighboring it is common to assume that volunteer programs are low- or no-cost, and this supposition may be magnified when resident volunteers are the subject (e.g., reduced recruitment, screening, orienting). One staff member articulated this notion: “Just because the work source is free in time, it is that we still have to support them” including training, scheduling, and supporting. There are more tangible costs as well, such as supplies and resources necessary to work. This staff person went on to say, “One of the things [our volunteers] wanted was bottled water. That .50 worth of water is what may keep them from coming back the next time, which is of course an inherent cost.”



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People also noted that inter-organizational relationships fabricated through Neighboring are “more personal, which makes it easy to pick up the phone and talk about potential projects.” Further elaborating this point, one staff member in Macon described how territorial the sector can be outside of Neighboring, likening it to pie: “The partnerships now that we’re engaged with, we don’t try to take their piece of the pie. We say ‘what can we do to make your pie better? These are the ingredients we bring. We don’t want your pie. We want to collaborate with you to help the citizens and the residents here.”

Defining service area—Programs that best use Neighboring strategies face the reality of constraints and make hard decisions based on these facts. One volunteer-run program that provides holiday gifts to children stopped vetting donations. The process was hindering the amount of people that could be served and the burden could be placed on the recipient agency. Others never intend to move outside a neighborhood – depth is the objective over breadth. The point of these examples is not to argue quality over quantity but to underscore the importance of defining the service area Neighboring intends to reach.

Identifying leaders—The most successful Neighboring initiatives *always* made mention of one or two people who grew into positions of leadership. In jargon, these natural leaders are key to building trust, ensuring representation and participation, and bridging institutions and individuals. In life, these people are friends and neighbors. People feel compelled to help friends and neighbors, evidence indicates:

- “We get our fellow neighbors to come and volunteer by calling them and telling them what we are doing! It is easy for [name] to ask them to do certain projects.”
- “[Name] has an attitude of just get it done, and who cares who gets the credit, and who cares who does more work. You can’t say no to that. She just asks people.”
- “[Name] is always working and doing something, and others see that and they think they’d like to help her. It is come join me; it’s not ‘don’t do the work for me. If you are going to carry a box, she will carry two.”

Increasing accessibility—Perhaps it is obvious that Neighboring should take place in neighborhoods. Yet, the sheer number of times respondents mentioned the benefits of location makes it worth mentioning outright. This place-based approach reduces the need for transportation and keeps people in their physical comfort zone, while sometimes taking them out of their emotional one to ask for services. Some examples are:

- “Transportation is a big problem in this neighborhood. Having that service here, it is like a one stop shop. Many people don’t get out of the neighborhood.”
- “Instead of having white suburbanites come downtown to read.... We’re trying to deliver services in the neighborhoods... that are a walk, not a car ride or a bus ride.”

Taking time to build trust—Neighboring is time intensive. It requires time to understand the helping culture of a community. “You can’t just tell people what to do. You have to involve them.” It requires time to connect with the right people in the right way. “People don’t trust people they don’t know. It is all about relationships.” It requires time to change the mentality



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that “we are riding in on our white horses to save the day...and then when the sun goes down, we’re gone.” These are themes emphasized again and again by staff.

Once trust is built, the movement is self-propelling. People “don’t see this as a flash in the pan” and it becomes cyclical: “Parents bring the children into it; the children bring the parents into it,” and “A lot of volunteers are people who used the service in the past. The communities we serve participate in a proactive manner.”

Transferring ownership—SES sites often start as the lead with the ultimate objective of transitioning ownership to neighborhood-based stakeholders. One example that speaks to the successful transfer is an interfaith program started by one sub-grantee in which they went from leader to facilitator: “We were instrumental in the first couple of years and now serve as a resource for them....We spent a lot of time with them....They are taking ownership of it...and now have committees and subcommittees...and even some funding.”

It is important to remember that this list of sustainability factors was gleaned from close study of five sites – some factors were present at all, some were present at a few, and only two sites came close to achieving all of them. That said, it may not necessarily be practical to suggest that every factor be realized by every site that infuses Neighboring into its programs and services, which moves the discussion onto challenges and obstacles.

Challenges and Obstacles

Evidence acquired through this study indicates that the five sub-grantees applied Neighboring strategies according to their local vision of Neighboring. Given the license to locally define Neighboring, fidelity, as understood by Points of Light Institute as the authentic engagement of residents using an assets based approach, varied greatly by site. Some sites seem to have lost touch with their Neighboring roots, neglecting to infuse resident voice and deploying traditional volunteers as the bulk of power. Group thinking by some sites suggests that Neighboring is a program rather than an ‘attitude’ or a ‘philosophy.’ This tunnel vision unnecessarily limits what Neighboring is and how it can be used, confining it to a particular program or project. Other sub-grantees embrace Neighboring to its fullest and changed mindsets and systems to allow Neighboring to become part of the everyday course of action. That said, all sub-grantees contributed to realization of family strengthening outcomes. This finding may suggest that Neighboring can be a powerful tool even in the face of varied quality.

At the national level, Points of Light Institute and HandsOn Network have taken steps to ensure more consistent implementation patterns at the affiliate level, specifically through the operational processes and evaluation practices required in the MDS sub-granting program. The more rigorous granting model that emphasizes and even requires active resident participation will likely produce more intense family strengthening outcomes.