A League of Neighborhoods

Participating Organizations

- La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association, Inc, Flagstaff, AZ
- The Southside Community Association, Inc, Flagstaff, AZ

Please note that all data below was derived from the collaboration's nomination for the Collaboration Prize. None of the submitted data were independently verified for accuracy.

Formation
**Type of Collaboration:** Merger by which governance, programs and administrative functions have been combined but which may or may not have included the integration into a single corporate entity.

**Geographic Scope:** City

**Collaboration Focus Area:**
- Community Development
- Human Services
- Voluntarism

**Population Served:**
- Economically Disadvantaged
- Families
- Other

**Year Collaboration was Established:** 2006

**Goals Sought Through Collaboration:**
- Develop a stronger / more effective “voice”
- Expand reach and/or range of services / programs
- Improve programmatic outcomes

**Reasons Prompting Collaboration:**
- Difficulty in meeting external standards / requirements imposed on our organization
- Advancement of a shared goal
- Response to a community need

**Who Initiated Collaboration:**
- Board member(s)
- Executive Director(s) / CEO(s) / President(s)

**Number of Participating Organizations:** 3-4

**Nature of Funder Involvement:**
- Funded initial exploration
- Funded implementation

**Were Partners Added or Dropped?:** No

**Consultant Role:**
- To draft the governing agreement or provide other legal advice
- To facilitate negotiations or discussions that led to the formation of the collaboration
- To develop a business plan or strategic plan for the collaboration
- To assist in identifying or assessing partners
A League of Neighborhoods (ALN) began in the winter of 2005 when three neighborhood associations (the Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association, Inc. (LPVNA), the Southside Community Association, Inc. (SSCA) and Sunnyside Neighborhood Association of Flagstaff, Inc. (SNA) partnered to prevent the sale and possible demolition of the historic Murdoch Community Center (located in the Southside neighborhood).

Since 2005 the organizations represented within the ALN continued to work together on other such projects and neighborhood initiatives (e.g. voter registration and food drives, neighborhood clean-ups and beautification projects, etc.) and in co-authoring letters to the City of Flagstaff regarding funding processes (CDBG funds, etc.), the lack of a City-wide PMO and the need for enhanced Community Policing Activities within the neighborhoods.

It is important to note that the neighborhoods served by the organizations represented within the ALN are the three poorest neighborhoods in the City of Flagstaff. These neighborhoods and their constituents represent the most economically challenged and diverse citizens of the City of Flagstaff; the average income level for the residents of these three neighborhoods is $20,000 to $35,000 - lower than the average median income of the City overall.

In the spring 2009 it became apparent to the ALN, that alone, none of the organizations represented, had the capacity that needed to ensure that sustainability long term. The ALN felt that the sustainability of the three neighborhood organizations was vital as each is unique, being resident-driven and providing direct, unduplicated services and programs in their respective neighborhoods at a grass-roots level.

The ALN Collaboration applied for and received funding through the Arizona Community Foundation’s Open Grant Cycle in 2009 to conduct a strategic planning/visioning process for the ALN Collaboration. This has resulted in the creation of bylaws for the ALN, a signed Memorandum of Understanding for the neighborhoods represented within the ALN and a completion of a 5-year Strategic Direction for the ALN Collaboration.

The ALN Strategic Direction/Plan clearly outlines and details the three organizations intent to create a more streamlined, cost-effective approach to providing programs and services within their targeted neighborhoods. The ALN believes that this collaborative partnership will provide each organization increased capacity, long-term sustainability and ultimately enhance services to their residents in need, in addition to providing the organizations the ability to work more effectively with the City, Council and other community-wide organizations to improve community conditions.

Management

Management Structure: Board of Directors with representatives from each founding partner

The ALN management structure was determined through the ALN strategic planning/visioning process which included board members from the three agencies represented as well as their staff members. All individuals present were involved in these decisions. The decisions made are represented in the ALN by-laws (signed off on by the Board Chairs of all three neighborhoods represented in the ALN Collaboration) and the ALN Strategic Direction that was completed.

The oversight and management structure supports effective operations, sound decision making and allows for planning for the future of the collaboration. Again, all of which are clearly specified in the completed ALN Strategic Direction. The management structure has yielded improved outcomes for the ALN Collaboration; for example it has expanded funding opportunities and other resources needed.

Challenges

Challenges to Making the Collaboration Work:

- Defining and measuring success
- Lack of trust among partners
- Achieving shared vision
- Clarifying partner roles

The ALN Collaboration utilized techniques such as Strength, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Teambuilding, Brainstorming and Redefining during its Strategic Planning process to address the challenges that were encountered and to create the necessary partnership collaboration documents such as the ALN By-laws and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Solutions were arrived at through the redefining of such activities (e.g. Brainstorming, Teambuilding, etc.) during the process.

Impact
Internal Efficiencies and Effectiveness:

● Fund development - Access to new / more sources of funding
● Greater ability for each partner to focus on core competency - Greater ability to allocate resources to areas of need
● Reduced risk or greater capacity to take on risk - Reduced risk or greater capacity to take on risk

Community Impact:

● Stronger / more effective "voice"
● Collaboration has served as a model for others

ALN can measure the success of the outcomes of its collaborative partnership through the (organization efficiencies achieved) and the benefits of being in such a partnership (program effectiveness and impact on community) in many ways. For example, ALN meets on a monthly basis (meetings rotate monthly with each neighborhood within the partnership given the opportunity to “host and staff” the meeting). At such meetings members of the ALN plan and strategize joint neighborhood activities (including who will be the lead agency, the role of each agency involve, resources committed to the joint effort by agency, identification of possible external partners and resources needed, etc.).

City and County Officials have recognized the importance of the monthly ALN and requested standing time allocated on the agenda to update the ALN on different items that have a direct affect the neighborhoods represented within the ALN. The City and County has assigned specific staff members (e.g. code enforcement, neighborhood police officers, neighborhood planners, etc.) to attend the monthly ALN meeting to ensure that there is open dialogue between the City and County and the represented neighborhood.

Other neighborhoods within the City, who are in the process of establishing neighborhood organizations and block watches, also attend the monthly ALN seeking advice on how to obtain their 501 c 3 status, how to obtain funding from various sources, information on other community resources, etc. Due to the interest in ALN the City of Flagstaff created a “Neighborhood Services” page on their website. Here interested individuals can get information on how to start a block watch or neighborhood association, register to receive weekly updates on various neighborhood related activities, look up the bulk trash pick-up dates in their neighborhood, locate contact numbers for code enforcement, Firewise, Junk Car Removal Services, etc.

Model

ALN is a model of what can be achieved at a grass-roots level by residents who care about their neighborhoods. ALN has received recognized on a statewide level for its approach to neighborhood redevelopment. Such a partnership between three such resident organizations not only unique but a mind shift in how neighborhood groups operate. Rather than fighting against each other for limited resources within a small area, the three organizations represented within the ALN Collaboration have come together to strength the impact of the same resources. The ALN is currently being held as an example to be followed not only locally by the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County and United Way of Northern Arizona but also on the Federal-level by US Attorney Dennis Burke and the US Department of Justice’s Weed & Seed Program.

Efficiencies Achieved
The economic and operating efficiencies achieved by the A League of Neighborhoods (ALN) collaboration are numerous. They include shared staffing responsibilities (for example two of the neighborhoods in the partnership share an executive director and that person also provides oversight and administrative duties on ALN joint projects/grants for all three neighborhoods) and the neighborhoods have also partnered with the local Goodwill and a literacy agency to secure a VISTA position (this person will be developing a volunteer/project match database system), additionally the three neighborhoods combine efforts for outreach and neighborhood event efforts. Additional shared resources include office space, program supplies, information and resources. The A League of Neighborhoods have also managed to increase revenues; for example ALN was just awarded a $10,000 grant through the Flagstaff Community Foundation’s grant cycle for the purposes of continuing ALN efforts and full implementation of the ALN strategic direction/plan. Quantitative benefits to the community that have been realized through this collaboration include and can be measured by: the completion of a joint-three neighborhood strategic direction, additional grant dollars coming into the neighborhoods, the monthly ALN meeting (average attendance 25-30 people). Examples of joint activities that have happened since the completion of the ALN strategic plan include a community conversation (town hall) with over 337 attendees from all over the community regarding the ALN collaboration and strategic direction (this event was hosted by Northern Arizona University’s Office of the President), six (6) community sessions regarding the establishment of a city-wide property maintenance ordinance (PMO), two (2) candidate forums for the 2010 City Council Election, and two (2) neighborhood safety and communication summits. The Flagstaff City Council has now decided that the City is in need of a PMO and has placed the development of one at the top of its work priority list! The significance of this partnership has been realized communitywide by other neighborhoods within the City (who are in the process of establishing neighborhood organizations and block watches) and they now also attend the monthly ALN meetings seeking advice on how to obtain their 501 c 3 status, how to obtain funding from various sources, information on other community resources, etc. Due to the interest in ALN the City of Flagstaff created a ‘Neighborhood Services’ page on their website! (this website includes information on how to start a block watch or neighborhood association, people can register to receive weekly updates on various neighborhood related activities, look up the bulk trash pick-up dates in their neighborhood, locate contact numbers for code enforcement, Firewise, Junk Car Removal Services, etc.). It is important to recognize that alone, as single neighborhood, none of the three neighborhoods had the capacity or the resources (staff, volunteers and/or funding) or the clout to make any of this happen. It is only by working together as A League of Neighborhoods that a noticeable difference is being made!

**Evolution**
A League of Neighborhoods (ALN) began in the winter of 2005 when three neighborhood associations (the Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association, Inc. (LPVNA), the Southside Community Association, Inc. (SSCA) and Sunnyside Neighborhood Association of Flagstaff, Inc. (SNA) partnered to prevent the sale and possible demolition of the historic Murdoch Community Center (located in the Southside neighborhood). Since 2005 the organizations represented within the ALN continued to work together on other such projects and neighborhood initiatives (e.g. voter registration and food drives, neighborhood clean-ups and beautification projects, etc.) and in co-authoring letters to the City of Flagstaff regarding funding processes (CDBG funds, etc.), the lack of a City-wide PMO and the need for enhanced Community Policing Activities within the neighborhoods. It is important to note that the neighborhoods served by the organizations represented within the ALN are the three poorest neighborhoods in the City of Flagstaff. These neighborhoods and their constituents represent the most economically challenged and diverse citizens of the City of Flagstaff: the average income level for the residents of these three neighborhoods is $20,000 to $35,000 - lower than the average median income of the City overall.

In the spring 2009 it became apparent to the ALN, that alone, none of the organizations represented, had the capacity that needed to ensure that sustainability long term. The ALN felt that the sustainability of the three neighborhood organizations was vital as each is unique, being resident-driven and providing direct, unduplicated services and programs in their respective neighborhoods at a grass-roots level. The ALN Collaboration applied for and received funding through the Arizona Community Foundation’s Open Grant Cycle in 2009 to conduct a strategic planning/visioning process for the ALN Collaboration. This has resulted in the creation of bylaws for the ALN, a signed Memorandum of Understanding for the neighborhoods represented within the ALN and a completion of a 5-year Strategic Direction for the ALN Collaboration (which includes a mission statement, vision statement and seven specific projects with identified benchmarks). The ALN Strategic Direction/Plan clearly outlines and details the three organizations intent to create a more streamlined, cost-effective approach to providing programs and services within their targeted neighborhoods. The ALN believes that this collaborative partnership will provide each organization increased capacity, long-term sustainability and ultimately enhance services to their residents needed, in addition to providing the organizations the ability to work more effectively with the City, Council and other community-wide organizations to improve community conditions.

The ALN management structure was determined through the ALN strategic planning/visioning process which included board members from the three agencies represented as well as their staff members. All individuals present were involved in these decisions. The decisions made are represented in the ALN by-laws (signed off on by the Board Chairs of all three neighborhoods represented in the ALN Collaboration) and the ALN Strategic Direction that was completed. The oversight and management structure supports effective operations, sound decision making and allows for planning for the future of the collaboration. Again, all of which are clearly specified in the completed ALN Strategic Direction. The management structure has yielded improved outcomes for the ALN Collaboration; for example it has expanded funding opportunities and other resources needed. The completed ALN Strategic Direction (which includes signed copies the ALN By-laws and MOU) can be uploaded for your review!

The ALN Collaboration utilized techniques such as Strength, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Teambuilding, Brainstorming and Redefining during its Strategic Planning process to address the challenges that were encountered and to create the necessary partnership collaboration documents such as the ALN By-laws and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Solutions were arrived at through the redefining of such activities (e.g. Brainstorming, Teambuilding, etc.) during the Strategic Planning process.

It wasn’t always easy but WE DID IT! No matter what challenges surfaced when we talked about our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats with our Ground Rules (the rules that we established at the beginning of the process together) we stuck together and worked through them. Once three separate neighborhoods we are now a LEAGUE, united for the betterment of our community overall.

The success of the ALN collaboration can be measured through the organization efficiencies achieved and the benefits of being in such a partnership (program effectiveness and impact on community) in many ways. For example, ALN meets on a monthly basis (meetings rotate monthly with each neighborhood within the partnership given the opportunity to “host and staff” the meeting). At such meetings members of the ALN plan and strategize joint neighborhood activities (including who will be the lead agency, the role of each agency involve, resources committed to the joint effort by agency, identification of possible external partners and resources needed, etc.). The monthly ALN meetings average 25-30 people in attendance. Examples of joint activities that have happened since the completion of the ALN strategic plan include a community conversation (town hall) with over 337 attendees from all over the community regarding the ALN collaboration and strategic direction (this event was hosted by Northern Arizona University’s Office of the President), six (6) community sessions regarding the establishment of a city-wide property maintenance ordinance (PMO), two (2) candidate forums for the 2010 City Council Election, and two (2) neighborhood safety and communication summits. The Flagstaff City Council has now decided that the City is in need of a PMO and has placed the development of one at the top of its work priority list!

City and County Officials have recognized the importance of the monthly ALN and have requested standing time allocated on the agenda to update the ALN on different items that have a direct affect the neighborhoods represented within the ALN. The City and County has assigned specific staff members (e.g. code enforcement, neighborhood police officers, neighborhood planners, etc.) to attend the monthly ALN meeting to ensure that there is open dialogue between the City and County and the represented neighborhood.

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various sources, information on other community resources, etc. Due to the interest in ALN the City of Flagstaff created a “Neighborhood Services” page on their website. Here interested individuals can get information on how to start a block watch or neighborhood association, register to receive weekly updates on various neighborhood related activities, look up the bulk trash pick-up dates in their neighborhood, locate contact numbers for code enforcement, Firewise, Junk Car Removal Services, etc. Other community organizations and groups (e.g. Northern Arizona University, United Way of Northern Arizona, etc.) have also began attending the monthly meetings, providing additional channels of communication between the neighborhood represented in the ALN and them.

It is important to recognize that alone, as single neighborhood, none of the three neighborhoods had the capacity or the resources (staff, volunteers and/or funding) or the clout to make any of this happen. Together as A League of Neighborhoods we are making a difference.

Why should A League of Neighborhoods with The Collaboration Prize? Because to have this partnership validated in such a public way would be incredible. The three neighborhoods that are represented in this collaboration have historically been the neighborhoods on the “wrong side of the tracks”. They are the City’s historic segregated neighborhoods; the neighborhoods where no one wanted to live, visit, work or play in. The three neighborhoods represented in this collaboration were often referred to as the “forgotten neighborhoods” by the very public officials elected to represent the people in the neighborhoods! The A League of Neighborhoods collaboration has changed all of that; there is a renewed sense of civic involvement and engagement in the neighborhoods, there is a flow of people in and out of the neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and other people from other parts of town are joining in! The revitalization that is happening now is simply amazing. This is a movement of the people, by the people and for the people for the betterment of their neighborhoods. What follows is a poem that was written regarding the A League of Neighborhoods collaboration and was included in the ALN Strategy direction as the ALN anthem:

A League of Neighborhoods
Come One, Come All
Let our voice be heard
Come One, Come All
We will not be ignored
A League of Neighborhoods we are, A League of Neighborhoods we’ll be
Fighting to sustain and beautify all that remains.
We are different, yet the same
Individually we are weak, but together we are Great
No matter the obstacle, no matter the task
Together we’ll ask, together we’ll demand
Action will vary, Action will come
Respect will be given, respect will be won
WE WILL NOT STOP UNTIL SUCCESS IS ACHIEVED
FOR A LEAGUE OF NEIGHBORHOODS IS HERE AND WE HAVE JUST BEGUN

ALN is a model of what can be achieved at a grass-roots level by residents who care about their neighborhoods. ALN has received recognized on a statewide level for its approach to neighborhood redevelopment. Such a partnership between three such resident organizations not only unique but a mind shift in how neighborhood groups operate. Rather than fighting against each other for limited resources within a small area, the three organizations represented within the ALN Collaboration have come together to strength the impact of the same resources. The ALN is currently being held as an example to be followed not only locally by the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County and United Way of Northern Arizona but also on the Federal-level by US Attorney Dennis Burke and the US Department of Justice’s Weed & Seed Program.