Using Technology to Change Communities

Presented by:
Kenya Crumel, Director
Organizational Development and Technical Assistance
Agenda

I. Introduction

II. Community Development Technology Environment

III. Sample Community Initiatives

IV. Conclusion
Technology in the Nonprofit Sector

• Computers and Internet allow for greater speed and efficiency, but early adopters of emerging technologies are in the minority.

• Financial and human resources are needed to access and use tech innovations.

• Nonprofits often lack the capacity to choose from among new tech products and apply technology tools to their organization’s problems.
Key Factors in the Dissemination of Community Development Technology

• Community Technology Intermediaries
• Innovation Champions
• Research on Tech Use
• Strong Communication Channels
• Policy and Program Supports
• Affordability, Low Complexity, High Maturity, High Relevance
Innovative Technology Practice Areas

- **Neighborhood Information Systems** – combine data, maps, and data analysis into a single system, usually available online.

- **Digital Inclusion Initiatives** – integrate different technologies into community building strategies.

- **Internet-based Microenterprise Support** – enables greater numbers of entrepreneurs to access credit more efficiently.

- **Electronic Advocacy** – integrate tech tools in advocacy campaigns aimed at policy change.
Neighborhood Information Systems

• Community Building Practice: geographic data analysis and use

• Successful Uses
  – The Providence Plan
  – Center for Neighborhood Knowledge at University of California, Los Angeles
The Providence Plan

- Mission: Citywide and Neighborhood Revitalization
- Worked with Brown University to build a one-stop information system
- System holds historical data on health, properties, education and vital statistics
- Available via website
- TPP trains community organizations on how to use the data resources
The Providence Plan

• Community Impact:
  - Early warning system to predict & prevent housing abandonment
  - Neighborhood policing using weekly crime-mapping analysis to target efforts
  - Greater understanding, communication, and advocacy around prisoner reentry issues
Center for Neighborhood Knowledge at UCLA

- Mission: Nonprofit Capacity Building
- Launched Neighborhood Knowledge California (NKCA) in 2002.
  - Statewide system aimed at promoting greater equity in banking, housing policy, and other metro issues
  - Assembles multiple databases into a web-based toolkit that can be used to document, analyze, and map demographic, housing, economic, financial and health indicators
  - More streamlined than desktop GIS, user-friendly
Center for Neighborhood Knowledge

- Community Impact:
  - Online public, govt agencies, and community organizations have access to powerful data and mapping tools to support community building efforts statewide
  - Census and mortgage lending data; check-cashing establishments and brownfields
Digital Inclusion

• Community Building Practice: Technology Access & Training

• Successful Uses:
  – East Baltimore Digital Village
  – Wireless Philadelphia (in planning)
East Baltimore Digital Village

- Vision: Technology as a Part of Everyday Living

- Partnered with Maryland Center for Arts and Technology

- Leveraged Fed Empowerment Zone designation and High-tech Focused Local Economic Development Strategy
East Baltimore Digital Village

• 300 residents received an HP computer, all-in-one printer/fax/scanner, and 10 hours of computer training

• Provided computer and Internet access and training at locations throughout the city where residents were already accessing social services

• Provided 185 teachers in 6 schools with a laptop and training which could be integrated into classroom curriculum
East Baltimore Digital Village

• Nearly 10% of community residents have benefited from the program

• Participating schools now exceed state standards for technology

• Website provides residents with info on childcare, employment and health
Philadelphia Wireless

• Nonprofit organization working in partnership with EarthLink and city leadership to make wireless high-speed Internet access available citywide

• Collaborating with other nonprofits to link financial counseling & tax assistance; a prepaid debit card; and wireless Internet, computers & training
Internet-based Microenterprise Support

- Developing Online Tools for Microentrepreneurs

- Successful projects:
  - Count Me In
  - CircleLending
Count Me In

- Internet-based model for credit scoring and lending to women with poor credit
- Makes business loans of $500 to $10,000
- Users can apply for a loan, ask questions, take workshops, join discussion groups, and donate to CMI
Count Me In

• Innovations
  - Adapted a FICO credit-scoring model
  - Added a credit bureau report and CMI’s own questions to supplement loan application
  - Created a credit-scoring model designed for lending to women
  - Streamlined application process by not asking for submission of complete business plan, etc.
Count Me In

- Community Impact
  - Reduced cost of lending to this population. $300 per loan vs. $7000 employing face-to-face programs
  - Serves larger numbers of borrowers than most other microlending programs in the US
  - Statewide partnerships in 14 states
CircleLending

• For-profit business that merges informal and interpersonal lending with microenterprise development

• Web-enabled loan-servicing software created with help of MIT grad students

• Users can download free materials and purchase some products and services
CircleLending

• Innovations
  – Tailors repayment schedules for each client
  – Keeps costs low by using Automated Clearing House (ACH) system of direct debit/deposit
  – Allows clients to report payment information to Equifax to build credit history
Electronic Advocacy

• Community Building Practice: Policy Advocacy

• Successful Campaigns:
  – Free the Schuylkill River Park
  – No on Proposition 54
Free the Schuylkill River Park

• Goal: to pressure large rail transport company to provide pedestrian access to park trail, currently blocked by freight trains

• Utilized Internet as central component for mobilizing constituents to pressure policy-makers and key decision-makers

• www.citizenspeak.org – free electronic letter-writing tool, allows users to tailor prewritten letters
Free Schuylkill River Park

• Technology Strategies
  - Building an Online Constituency
  - Activating Viral Dissemination
  - Using Constituent Feedback to Refine Campaign Strategy
  - Coordinating Online and Offline Tactics
  - Empowering the Grassroots with Decision-Making Authority
No on Proposition 54

• Goal: To persuade CA voters to vote against Prop 54 (Racial Privacy Initiative) on Oct 2003 statewide ballot

• Framed unique messages to different constituency groups

• Started campaign early

• Landslide defeat
Keep in Mind

• Include tech plan at beginning of your planning process, not after implementation.

• Technology is a tool, not an end in itself.

• Free or low-cost is just as good.
Using Technology to Change Communities

Presented by:
Kenya Crumel, Director
Organizational Development and Technical Assistance