

Testimonials -- NeighborWorks® Achieving Excellence in Community Development

“Our new five year plan of tripling our impact with numerical goals...is directly from AE.”

Dee Walsh, REACH Community Development, Inc.

“AE is about more than 'increasing the number of units produced/people served.' The numbers do not tell the story, as the funding marketplace changed drastically over the last four years. The better point to make is that we managed to serve about the same number of families with fewer resources -- by honing our focus, restructuring programs, realigning staff, etc... there were organizational capacity impacts that were profound for the organizations as well as the communities that they served.” **Marina Peed, The IMPACT! Group**

“I have been in this job for 15 years...but my participation in AE spurred me to be more assertive at the staff and board level to implement changes.... I had been thinking about implementing some projects before the AE program, but my experiences at the program spurred me to undertake them faster and more aggressively.” **Paul Mazarella, Ithaca NHS**

“I think about [AE] themes when I do the work that I have to.... They taught us that the degree of discomfort that we cause our staff is significant because we demand excellence from them. I wanted my staff to move from good to great. [The program] helped me to push boundaries.” **Dee Walsh, REACH Community Development, Inc.**

“I think that some of the biggest benefits of the AE program can not necessarily be reflected in just numbers; especially dollars. These include results such as building leadership; changing organizational culture; building morale; and creating enthusiasm. Granted, these are hard to measure, but they are important and shouldn't be ignored.”

Paul Mazarella, Ithaca NHS

“Everything we do is now about performance; it's part of the 100 percent change in the culture of this organization. Now we ask how we're doing on our production goals, at every staff meeting, as opposed to maybe once a year. This has certainly affected staff and how they go about their job every day. Ultimately the beneficiaries are getting...a lot better services.”

Kerry Quaglia, Home Headquarters, Inc.

“Our deliverables are better defined, more precise; outcomes are clear; staff are accountable to outcomes.”

Stuart Mitchell, Rural Opportunities, Inc.

“There is greater motivation of staff... Individuals (staff & board) feel more importance, more significance in what they do. They take pride in accomplishing something measurable. Staff has become more efficient. ...The staff and the board have really stretched more than they were doing before.” **Jerry Petrik,**

Neighborhood Conservation

“We're implementing an evaluation system based on the performance of the organization. Performance became a crucial way of evaluating our effectiveness.”

Yvonne Stennett, Community League of the Heights

“The AE program emphasized many times, if you don't ask, you won't get. You've got to be completely out of the box, and don't be afraid to be hanging out there -- that's really what leadership is about.” **Kerry Quaglia, Home Headquarters, Inc.**

“The AE Program helped us sustain and increase our funding base - which was the challenge to begin with. The threat of funding loss would have had major impact on our operations.”

Jerry Petrik, Neighborhood Conservation

“We are much more focused on important things, which have given clearer vision to staff, the community, and the board as well.” **AE2 participant**

“What was helpful was the emergence of what we're about, helping us to focus on each area, how they align with that goal. For staff it was initially a struggle to link back, but we did, and recognized what the core of the work we were doing was. As we started thinking about the core of our work and communicated it to the community, that has helped people see the connections.”

AE2 participant

Comments from staff members of AE participants:

- “The program was actually wonderful for the ED and the organization. Having been here many years, I've seen, in the last 18 months, that we are now poised for the future; the relationships we are able to build have been very beneficial to the agency. Especially in [one services] area which in the past has been difficult, the relationships that have been built have strengthened the bond with the community.”
- “The foundation started at Harvard that very first week. He had concerns about where he needed to take things to a new level, and that first week, all of the questions and doubts were answered. It made an impression on him that when he came, all his questions were answered. He has not looked back since he came and started to restructure the organization. He continues to challenge us daily. I don't know what happened that first week, but it made a big difference.”
- “The ED has come back with a broader understanding of how to align ourselves with potential partners and what the opportunities of such partnerships are.”
- “It could take our rehab department, from the time they accepted an application to the time they signed the final inspection, 6-8 months [to complete the] process. Now we've cut that in half. The application, from beginning to end, was also cut in half. Now there is a flow chart that the staff can see; they can measure their product, and each staff is responsible for their customer—this has created ownership. We are leaps and bounds ahead of other organizations—our rehab department is a model program for the entire city.”

Comments from board members of AE participants:

- “The numbers of how many we have helped have doubled if not tripled, in part due to a better accounting, but also partly due to our strategic participation; 200 families in homes last year compared to 30 families before the program.”
- “I can't help but believe that AE has helped him decide what needs to be done in terms of additional staff—the right kind of bodies to do particular things—he's added structure where there wasn't before.”
- “The coaching component has been very helpful. When the ED would have the coaching calls, if he would have a tough situation that wasn't going the way it needed to be going, then he'd talk to the coach. Input from other folks (on the calls), and his coach have been very encouraging. I think that's been very helpful in helping us meet the challenge for our organization.”

“Given that the program targets real change in the communities over five to ten years, it was remarkable to find that so many organizations were able to report some impressive quantitative impacts attributable to the AE program.” **Impact evaluation report by EnCompass LLC**