PROGRAM FOR THE RURAL CAROLINAS

FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAPIN HALL LEARNING PROJECT

Prudence Brown
Kendra Davenport Cotton
Danyelle O'Hara

March 2006

PROGRAM FOR THE RURAL CAROLINAS
FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAPIN HALL LEARNING PROJECT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRC set out to accomplish two goals: 1) increase the employment, income and wealth of people left behind by the economy and 2) build the leadership, assets and structures necessary for long-term economic renewal. It aimed to produce some tangible economic outcomes at the same time as building new community capacities that would lay the foundation for more far-reaching change.

MDC's reports capture the outcomes related to Goal #1—how many people were trained and found jobs, how many new businesses were started, how many people received EITC refunds as a result of PRC, and so forth. As in other community change initiatives, Goal #2 outcomes are more difficult to measure. And yet they are key to achieving one of PRC's overall objectives, leaving in place a "continuing partnership that is representative of the community and works together to strengthen the local economy."

The first part of this report reviews each of four community capacities that PRC helped to build: new and strengthened leadership, new relationships and networks, new and strengthened organizations, and new organizational partnerships and collaborations. The report identifies important contributions that PRC has made in each of these areas, as well as in two other very specific kinds of community capacity, the ability to work across racial/ethnic and geographic divides. The discussion also raises concerns about how robust and deeply embedded in the community these new capacities are and, therefore, how successfully sites will be able to draw upon them to help sustain and promote further economic renewal following the formal end of PRC.

The second part of this report addresses PRC's contribution to learning. A complex, multi-site community change initiative like PRC calls upon everyone to act in new ways. PRC demonstrated that rural hospitals and churches could function effectively as local intermediaries even though economic development is not their "core business." Limitations on the learning PRC has generated are also discussed along with some suggestions for addressing the challenge of measuring Goal #2 outcomes and developing a learning partnership among an initiative's key actors.

PRC's return on investment can only be fairly assessed some years from now. The question is whether there has been sufficient momentum created in each of these communities to continue to fuel development once PRC resources end. A significant concern is the potential lack of fit between PRC's ambitions and its relatively short lifespan. Three and one-half years may simply be too short a time for most teams to plan, implement and sustain new programs and new ways of doing business. Trying to move so quickly through these stages potentially undermines the very capacities—new leadership, new collaborations, and new ways of thinking about community renewal— most important to sustaining PRC. Ideally, however, as the initiative moves into its next phase, teams will continue to grow and exert the new capacities PRC's investment has catalyzed.

PROGRAM FOR THE RURAL CAROLINAS
FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAPIN HALL LEARNING PROJECT

INTRODUCTION
The Learning Project has sought to provide useful information and analysis designed to stimulate mutual reflection about key cross-site questions of interest to PRC's major stakeholders. Over the course of PRC, we have produced nine Working Memoranda intended to serve as interactive tools for collective learning about PRC's ideas, implementation and results (see Appendix A). Many of the issues addressed in the Memoranda—team effectiveness, leadership development, and the role of churches and hospitals in PRC, to name a few—are dynamic in nature and have evolved over the life of the program. This final report is an opportunity to revisit some of these key features of PRC's theory and experience.

PRC set out to accomplish two goals: 1) increase the employment, income and wealth of people left behind by the economy and 2) build the leadership, assets and structures necessary for long-term economic renewal. It aimed to produce some tangible economic outcomes—such as new or better jobs as a result of training or job development, or savings from IDA accounts—for a necessarily limited number of people at the same time as laying the foundation for more far-reaching change. The hope was that building new community assets—such as new relationships, new organizational capacities and new leadership at the table—could sustain and further promote economic renewal following the formal end of the initiative.

This report devotes particular attention to the experiences of the sites with regard to PRC's second goal. As MDC's periodic State of the Sites Assessment reports suggest, the outcomes of teams' work toward Goal #2 are much more difficult to measure than those for Goal #1. And yet PRC's long-term impact depends to a great extent on the success that teams have had in building new leadership and organizational capacities and in putting new structures and collaborations in place. So the report begins by an examination of the progress teams have made regarding Goal #2. We then turn to PRC's contribution to learning and highlight some observations that may be useful for future efforts with similar goals. The report draws upon previous analyses from our Memoranda and Mid-Term Report, our ongoing site visits, recent focus groups and phone interviews, MDC's December 2005 Site Assessment Report (covering data reported from sites through September 2005), and other materials from MDC and the Endowment.

PART I: BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR ECONOMIC RENEWAL
The theory behind PRC is that by working through diverse teams and fostering collaborative community relationships and structures, the community would develop an increased capacity to address barriers to economic renewal and to take advantage of opportunities and resources to build a more promising future for all of its residents. One way of thinking about this community capacity is to see it as the sum of the four components described in the following table:

	Capacity	Connection
Individuals	Leadership Development	Building Relationships, Teams/Networks, Community Organizing
Organizations	Organizational Development	Building Organizational Partnerships, Collaborations

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

In this chart, community capacity is a function of the strength of individual and organizational leadership as well as the reach, depth and durability of the relationships among people and organizations in the community. Each component overlaps with and reinforces the others to create an overall supply of community capacity that can be used to solve community problems and attract new resources.

Over the last three years, PRC teams have devoted considerable attention to developing community capacity through fostering leadership, building effective teams, creating new organizations or strengthening existing ones, and establishing organizational partnerships and collaborations. But assessing the scale and scope of these efforts and their impact on PRC's goals is very difficult. First, the teams did not systematically collect data in any of these four areas, most of which are notoriously hard to quantify in a useful fashion. Second, although many sites have anecdotal evidence about the short-term consequences of, for example, new leadership or partnerships, it will take some time to know whether these new community capacities yield specific economic renewal consequences for the community over time. Do the new leaders exert leadership in a way that benefits the community in general and the interests of people left behind by the economy more specifically? Are the new partnerships robust enough to outlive TDE support and generate enhanced economic opportunities on a continuing basis?

Despite these substantial constraints to drawing empirically-based conclusions about the progress PRC teams have made in "building the leadership, assets and structures necessary for long-term economic renewal," the discussion that follows aims to do three things: 1) describe the general dimensions of the scale and scope of each new community capacity; 2) consider the emerging evidence about the impact of this capacity for PRC's ultimate economic renewal objective; and 3) put forward our own commentary or characterization of the initial "story" with regard to each capacity. These "stories" are simply that, an attempt from our limited vantage point to make sense of what we observed at the sites and, especially, what we learned from the focus groups we conducted with all the Option 1 teams in November and December 2005.

The focus groups underscored the interconnections among the four capacities, but examining them separately here gives us an opportunity to pay particular attention to their individual dynamics and impacts. This discussion is followed by a look at the progress PRC sites have made in building two very specific kinds of community capacity, the ability to work across racial/ethnic and geographic divides. These capacities deserve attention because they have played such an important role historically in constraining effective community economic development. Further, PRC was intentionally designed to reduce these divides by working through diverse teams that were meant to "look like the community" and by structuring multi-county efforts when a regional approach seemed to make sense. Finally, Part I of the report ends with a discussion about the relationship of PRC's two goals to each other and to the sustainability and growth of PRC's efforts following the end of TDE support.

New and Strengthened Leadership

Scale and scope. Building new cadres of leaders in both informal and formal contexts has been fundamental to PRC's approach to improving the economic well being of rural communities. The primary vehicle for building leadership has been to develop strong teams, exposing members to new knowledge, networks and resources and offering them new leadership opportunities. A secondary informal kind of leadership development has been the skills acquired by lead PRC staff in a range of areas, including organizational development and management. In addition to leadership development of the team and staff, seven teams reported formal leadership development activities that reached a total of 208 individuals. These activities ranged from one-time leadership training sessions to multi-week programs to a statewide leadership program. These efforts were designed to build the overall capacity of the community to undertake long-term economic renewal and, unlike the Goal 1 focus, were not exclusively focused on people left behind by the economy.

Type of Program	Number of participants	Number of people left behind by the economy
Chamber-modeled programs	89	13
Leadership training sessions	71	4
Statewide leadership program	30	0
Other	18	10
Totals:	208	27

Three of the formal leadership programs, initiated at the start of PRC, used the traditional Chamber of Commerce leadership program as a base and modified it to highlight economic development and personal skills development. In total, 89 individuals, 13 of whom were people identified as left behind, went through the Chamber-modeled programs, which drew on participant recommendations from partners such as churches and nonprofits to ensure that their cohorts were not dominated by business and industry, as the traditional Chamber programs tend to be. Another formal program, initiated with support leveraged by PRC, designed a series of one-time training sessions around a variety of leadership topics and included 71 participants, 4 of whom were people left behind. Finally in the area of formal leadership development, PRC teams sponsored 30

3

individuals to participate in the Rural Economic Development Institute (REDI), a statewide North Carolina rural leadership program.

Impacts. Follow-up of formal leadership program graduates has not been systematic, however, some graduates are reported to be more involved in community events, activities, and boards. Those who participated in the Chamber-modeled programs gained exposure and contacts, which for some resulted in more opportunities for involvement in other community boards and committees. (See the Working Memorandum on *Leadership Development in PRC*). Although leadership development was not an explicit part of the curricula of programs like C.N.A., EITC, and IDA, subsequent to their completion, some graduates of these programs reportedly displayed new leadership qualities by serving as community recruiters for PRC programs and "ambassadors" for the PRC approach among the left behind. For example, one graduate of a C.N.A. program regularly makes announcements in her church about upcoming PRC training opportunities.

PRC team members often reported that participating in PRC increased their confidence in taking leadership in contexts that were new to them. For example, one person noted strengthened resolve and initiative to address and work across differences (particularly geographic and racial) in other work and volunteer settings. PRC staff, who played critical leadership roles at different points in the PRC process, will potentially continue using these valuable skills in the future for the good of their communities.

Perhaps most important, PRC was a vehicle for existing leaders to assume new leadership roles, a critical development in many rural communities where social and organizational roles can be tightly defined. In these new roles, community leaders provided focused energy in areas new to them, such as financial literacy, affordable housing, workforce development, and small business development. Opportunities to lead in these areas also resulted in new ways of relating with the community, including:

- Sensitivity and capacity to think more broadly across social and geographic boundaries resulted in a town manager being willing to form cross-county partnerships and the chair of a county planning process ensuring diverse racial representation on it.
- Motivation to assume initiative for reframing and expanding existing constituencies gave groups such as church congregations and arts centers broader communities of people with whom to work and serve.
- Willingness to leverage contacts on behalf of PRC enabled one elected official to encourage industry representatives to provide positive endorsements of the PRC agenda at key junctures.
- Enthusiasm to promote innovative economic approaches led a county chairperson to help organize community meetings and training on the topic of small business incubators.
- Expanded views and perspectives helped a public agency employee reach beyond the limits of her own institution to develop and implement programs in partnership with other institutions.

Commentary. PRC's leadership development efforts have encouraged new leaders and strengthened existing ones. Formal PRC leadership programs have succeeded in establishing a pipeline of new people into traditional leadership programs and into other venues, such as Chamber committees, which provide participants with visibility, connections, and know-how to make things happen and to open previously closed doors. Although these efforts include relatively few people left behind, in the long run, they have the potential to impact the way that business is done, by bringing new voices, new ideas, and "unusual suspects" to the tables where decisions are made.

Without a system for tracking graduates of the formal leadership development programs or for assessing the effects of participating on the team on subsequent leadership behavior, it is difficult to know whether the teams are accomplishing as much as they would like in this domain. One conclusion is pretty clear, however. The primary audience for PRC's leadership development activity, both formal and informal, has been established leaders—team members from various public and private agencies, local business people, and community volunteers. PRC has in many cases empowered these people to take on new roles and work more effectively for the interests of people left behind by the economy. However, only 27 of the people enrolled in formal leadership programs (less than one in seven) were people left behind by the economy. Because people left behind by the economy were also underrepresented on the PRC teams, the leadership development that has accrued to those identified as the focus of Goal 1 activity, the "left behind," has been has been very modest.

The focus on existing leadership is understandable given PRC's relatively short time frame and its strategy to focus first on the "middle third" of the community rather than starting with the "movers and shakers" who have more assets and power or the "moved and shaken" who lack such assets. Sites that considered grassroots leadership development and targeting those most left behind early on in PRC's evolution faced tough choices, given the tension between the length of time such investments take to mature and the need to show tangible progress. As PRC is winding down its first phase, however, it is interesting to note that two sites are preparing to make substantial investments in grassroots leadership development, one of which has already conducted introductory sessions for potential participants. Securing resources for this kind of investment at this stage in the initiative may, however, prove challenging.

New Relationships and Networks

Scale and scope. PRC has uniformly generated new relationships and informal networks among team members, between team members and various public and nonprofit leaders, and among citizens who are engaged in PRC activities as participants, volunteers or other interested parties. The more diverse the sectors represented on the team (e.g., employment and training, education, arts, agriculture, economic development, heritage tourism, church, health, etc.) and the more the teams drew upon representatives from across the private sector, government and nonprofit world, the greater the reach of the networks that developed over time. Although a formal network analysis was not feasible

5

in PRC, our interviews suggest that the <u>density, range and frequency of communication and interaction within the networks generated by PRC teams and their activities increased substantially over the last three years.</u>

Impacts. When they point to their accomplishments, teams underscore again and again that the work is "all about relationships," identifying as <u>one of PRC's most significant impacts their own new ability to get things done as a result of the access team members have to each other and each other's networks</u>. They cited much evidence to demonstrate how these new relationships have provided:

- New information about each other's "businesses" and new perspectives that enable team members to spend both PRC resources and the resources they each bring to the table more effectively.
- Wider and richer referral networks from which to recruit participants for employment, leadership development, and other PRC programs.
- Access to people, new ideas, and resources that can assist them with program development and sustainability.
- Legitimacy with a new constituency or buy-in from a key institution like the community college or a local or regional economic development agency.
- Fellowship, social support and the energy needed to fuel their often-taxing work together.

One team member summed up what she now understood as the potential power that can come from word of mouth and informal networking: *"What we have learned and gained by working together has been invaluable. The investment that has been placed in the group, I do not know how you measure what you get from that, but if you look at each of us and the number of fingers we have in so many different pies and our collective sphere of influence, it is really quite astounding. Each of us in our own realm and you look at the number of community organizations, boards, churches and volunteer activities that we are involved in and you will see a lot of impact."*

Commentary. <u>PRC has clearly generated new social capital (defined as relationships characterized by trust, reciprocity and respect) that constitutes an important community resource for PRC's rural areas.</u> We raise two concerns here about the reach and durability of this resource as the teams go forward. The first relates to the limited socioeconomic diversity within many of the networks. While PRC has served to expand existing networks across sectors, it appears in many sites to have had limited impact on making these networks more economically diverse, particularly with regards to authentic connections with PRC's target group, people left behind by the economy. For example, the networks may for the first time include community college, economic development, job training and social service representatives. But PRC's reach to people left behind by the economy tends to operate through these representatives, rather than directly with those most in need. This outcome is consistent with PRC's strategy to focus first on the "middle third" of the community as described above. Given this stance, it is also not surprising that few PRC teams have focused on building ties among people left behind by the economy through organizing or some other intentional strategy to develop these

connections. <u>But without more direct involvement over time of people left behind as central actors in PRC networks and decision-making, PRC is increasingly less well positioned to "do *with* rather than do *for* or do *to*" its intended beneficiaries</u>.

A second concern is that for many teams, in classic network theory terms, the staff person is the primary "connector" or "hub" of these networks. (See Working Memorandum on *Managing and Implementing PRC: The Role of Staff*). This person keeps information flowing within the team, coordinates team committee work, works to keep team members engaged, and facilitates connections with outside partners and resources. Experience from other initiatives suggests that few networks can sustain themselves without someone functioning in this role. As PRC comes to a formal end, and resources to cover staff costs diminish, teams should consider whether and how staff can off-load their network maintenance functions to others during this transition period. One strategy might be to get an existing agency to donate a percentage of a staff member's time to serve this coordinating function.

New and Strengthened Organizations

Scale and scope. PRC helped strengthen the infrastructure for community change by identifying needs and increasing the capacity of existing organizations and/or facilitating the creation of new community organizations to address them. Among the new "formal" organizations were 8 PRC teams that incorporated as 501©3 nonprofits. All of the teams leveraged and enhanced the capacity of both private and public organizations by brokering collaborations, commissioning studies, funding staff positions and consultants, and working through established organizations (churches and hospitals) as fiscal agents.

Impacts. Incorporated and unincorporated teams alike were often perceived as new community resources that, in addition to identifying needs and gaps, introduced ideas, convened players, and catalyzed action. Team members commented that <u>PRC teams offered a new model of collaboration – across sectoral, geographic, and social boundaries – that helped existing organizations more effectively problem solve, leverage partner capacity and public resources, and utilize resources by considering the whole community's institutional landscape rather than just their individual pieces of it.</u>

In addition to new ideas, coordination, and facilitation, PRC provided financial support to enhance organizational capacity. Increased staff capacity through PRC support helped nonprofits and public sector organizations alike extend their geographic reach to rural areas and populations falling outside of their regular service delivery. For example, a nonprofit agriculture organization increased its outreach to help a broader base of farmers expand into new markets. Other examples include community college workforce development and entrepreneurship programs that were brought to rural residents who, for distance and transportation reasons, did not previously take advantage of them. PRC also strengthened public agencies. In one case, for example, the team played a critical role in convincing county commissioners to create a new position, Economic Entrepreneurship Developer, which was very different from the usual economic development planning

position and increased the county's capacity to stimulate and support new entrepreneurial enterprise.

PRC commissioned and funded studies that touched on a variety of topics, including workforce, industry trends, economic development, and career ladders. The results of the studies lead to more strategically oriented economic development programs, community college programs more effectively focused on people left behind, and in some cases, the creation of a new entity, such as a small business incubator or a farmers market. More than just extending geographic reach, enhancing programs, or creating new ones, however, building organizational capacity has helped open the door for relationships with rural communities by giving organizations that have not previously worked in these communities an opportunity to show their commitment to doing so.

Two particular types of organizations that were strengthened through their involvement in PRC were the TDE-eligible institutions, churches and hospitals, neither of which had served previously as the leaders of community change and community economic development initiatives. Although not all churches and hospitals have integrated PRC into their "core business," in almost all cases, PRC has played a role in maintaining or improving the image of these institutions in the community. The positive impact PRC had on community perceptions was also true for other institutions, such as a Department of Social Services in one site that reported that it was much more highly regarded by its constituents as a result of its association with PRC.

Commentary. PRC has catalyzed changes that have resulted in increased capacity in a variety of organizations. Some will seek to sustain this change – for example, support from PRC for certain community colleges to serve as regional resources has generated commitment (sometimes with financial backing) from some college presidents to continue playing this role. This level of motivation and commitment came when organizations recognized concrete benefits, such as an opportunity to move closer to fulfilling their original mission, as a result of changes they made. Not all PRC-catalyzed organizational change led to such fundamental shifts, however. Some institutions benefited from PRC resources to, for example, add staff capacity to better reach left-behind communities, but it is unclear whether these organizations have sufficient incentives – whether the changes introduced correspond significantly enough with a recognized organizational need – to independently sustain staff positions or institutionalize changes in other substantial ways.

The question of incentives applies to the sustainability of new community resources, such as the formal as well the informal PRC teams. Team stances on incorporation have varied – some have been clear from the start that they didn't want to formalize through incorporation, some knew early on that they did, and many remained ambivalent on this point throughout the program, with some considering it seriously only here at the very end. Regardless of whether teams incorporate or not, however, their ability to survive will ultimately depend on the benefits that members (individuals and individual organizations) accrue from it. For example, one team that has opted for remaining informal has already committed to identifying means to keep the group at the table and

the agenda on track because the interests of those involved have been met enough to ensure their longer-term participation. With others, however, it is too early to tell if, without staff to coordinate and money for the programs, individual organizations would be motivated enough to sustain their informal affiliations. The question is identical in groups that have decided to incorporate, as the motivation to identify and procure funding for PRC will ultimately be proportionate to the benefits members receive from it.

New Organizational Partnerships and Collaborations

Scale and scope. PRC teams knew from the beginning that they could not work in isolation to accomplish PRC's ambitious agenda. Although considerable variation exists across communities (from 6 to 82 organizational partners per site), the MDC State of the Sites Assessments report indicate that collectively sites are working with a total of 552 organizations or an average of about 28 per site. Some of these organizations receive PRC funds for programs, some collaborate with PRC on programs, and some provide more informal co-sponsorship or support around a shared agenda. Teams attribute the relatively small number of serious conflicts over turf, power and control of resources to the reputation of the Duke-eligible church or hospital, team legitimacy in the eyes of the community, and effective staff leadership.

Impacts. Although it takes time and effort, collaboration often leads to a better product. Many PRC teams report that the programs they support benefit greatly from the expertise and resources that their partners bring to the table. Often cited are employment training programs that call for the involvement of multiple public and nonprofit entities like the community college, social services, the Council of Government, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. Heritage tourism is another arena in which PRC teams frequently report the benefits of working with a range of organizations to develop, market, and sustain various programs. Collaboration helps to coordinate planning, reduce duplication of effort, and promote shared responsibility and accountability.

The new organizational relationships established through PRC have catalyzed other opportunities for collaboration as organizations that have not worked together before begin to see each other as assets and potential partners for projects that may or may not have anything to do with PRC. By helping to decrease various turf barriers between organizations and demonstrate the advantages of working together, some PRC teams have also been able to attract new resources that would not have been available to any one of the organizations alone.

Commentary. PRC has catalyzed a large number of different kinds of collaborations and partnerships that would not have existed without PRC's efforts. Not surprisingly, they vary considerably in the degree to which they engage in meaningful work and produce tangible outcomes. However, even emerging collaborations constitute a new community resource that has the potential to generate new and improved services, new capacities within partners, and a reservoir of trust that can lay the foundation for future work together. Experience from other initiatives suggests that the sustainability of such collaborations depends on several key factors: shared vision and clear goals; members'

clarity about what they stand to gain from the partnership; members' ownership of both the way the partnership functions and the results or product of its work; flexibility in structure and adaptability to changing conditions; and, almost always, a skilled convener or leadership group. Money often serves as the glue for collaboration. As PRC moves into its final phase, teams will need to assess the range of both informal and formal organizational partnerships in which they are engaged. With fewer staff and financial resources to bring to the collaborative table, teams will have to prioritize, institutionalize, terminate, shore up, and/or strategize how to build on the community capacity that they have been so instrumental in stimulating.

Building Capacity to Work Across Racial/Ethnic and Geographic Divides

A community's ability to work across racial/ethnic and geographic divides depends a great deal on the strength of the connections among people and organizations in the community, as well as on leadership committed to working in new ways. PRC teams "set the table" for developing and strengthening relationships across these divides.

Race: Bridging Divides and Realigning Power

All of the PRC sites were successful in developing teams that reflected the racial composition of the community. In some communities, this level of diversity was unprecedented, or at least very unusual, and represented the first conduit for functional cross-racial collaborations some counties have had. As such, PRC created heightened awareness about the need for representation and voices from all sectors of the community and increased credibility in communities of color where this previously may not have existed. As one team member commented: *"I've lived in this community all my life and we've never had serious conversations about long-term values until about two and a half years ago. We never visited each other's churches, and now we've had the first bi-racial meetings in black and white churches in the last six months to talk about community problems. That whole process grew out of this project."*

Other consequences of operating through cross-racial/ethnic teams include:

- *Heightened consciousness about the role of diversity:* A hospital CEO who chairs a city's strategic planning process now knows whom to contact to make sure the process has broader representation.
- *Increased understanding of the need to build cultural competence:* In immigrant communities and communities of color, teams recognize the need to learn a new language, both figuratively and literally, to work across language and cultural barriers, identify indigenous leadership, and bridge differences.
- *More effective teams:* Racially diverse teams benefit from a diverse range of perspectives, enabling them to draw on a broader array of resources available to the community.
- *Enhanced team legitimacy within communities of color:* Previously, people of color were invited to participate in community processes, and often no one came. Now teams report developing stronger relationships and legitimacy in

communities of color that allow for increased participation from these communities.

- *Stronger relationships that affect racial attitudes:* Team members report that the relationships they have formed as a result of participation in PRC have affected their own personal attitudes about race and have made them more sensitive to nuances and eager to better understand racial dynamics.

PRC has helped lay an important foundation for cross-racial/ethnic collaboration. Teams facilitated cross-racial/ethnic relationships that in many places led to heightened consciousness, greater outreach to communities of color, deeper personal relationships, and stronger teams. A number of questions remain, however, including how will teams leverage their racial diversity to achieve other types of diversity, such as class and age diversity, not yet reflected in the PRC teams? How will teams' diversity translate into changes in the ways that power and access to resources are more evenly distributed across the community? While achieving and sustaining team diversity are necessary and critical first steps, if teams do not take subsequent steps to deepen their understanding of and ability to challenge systemic issues that undergird unequal distribution of power and resources, what appears now as significant good will risks being reduced to tokenism. To do such work, teams would need tools to help them navigate the process of developing an analysis of power, privilege, and oppression and how these dynamics operate in their communities, along with concurrent capacity to sustain the work already underway.

Working Across Geographic Divides
Isolation, competition and outright enmity among different areas in a county or different counties in a region have played an important role historically in constraining community economic development. The PRC teams served as a vehicle for people from different towns and counties to come together, get to know each other, develop trust, and understand better how regional cooperation would further their own personal, institutional, and county interests. The small number of PRC sites that worked across county lines demonstrated different degrees of success in instituting a regional approach, depending on previous histories of cooperation and competition, existing cross-county relationships, leadership, distance and terrain, and the presence of anchor institutions— like the community college—with a regional mandate. Working regionally is very hard. One team was asked to put together a proposal that covered four counties and the Qualla Boundary, a request that in retrospect seems too ambitious given the limited regional assets on which they were building.

Despite their difficulties, PRC teams could point to concrete examples of cross-county collaboration and the creation of new strategies for promoting the economic success:

- Social service departments that work together for the first time, saving resources and improving the quality of their services
- Town managers and county economic development staff that are better able to recruit businesses to their region because they have developed a unified regional plan

11

- County plans and proposals that have incorporated more of a regional perspective instead of being largely competitive with each other
- New markets for farmers and crafters who are less isolated and more connected to regional opportunities
- A regional heritage tourism guide for visitors coming to one region and a website to market products from another region

One member of a team that made particular progress on its regional agenda suggested that *"The biggest 'Goal #2' outcome of TDE's funding is the spirit of regionalism. It laid the foundation for what can be a much broader regional approach. We worked on getting the trust and buy-in from the different levels of power in all three counties, and this will have lots of ramifications down the line. It takes real leadership to work across old political boundaries that are so strong. You can see how much the culture has changed by how county leaders interact with each other, how they talk with companies coming into the area . . . We need to celebrate our successes so that this progress doesn't stop, and we don't let things slide back the way they were."*

Ideally, PRC teams have created enough momentum in bridging both racial/ethnic and geographic divides to buffer the forces that might cause them to "slide back" into old patterns. But these are not divides that get solved and do not need to be addressed again; rather, new patterns have to be shored up and reinforced again and again. Part of this momentum will depend on PRC's continuing role in helping to build local leadership and foster relationships and networks that engage diverse elements of the community in working toward common goals.

PRC's Two Goals: Looking Forward
MDC's December 2005 Assessment report indicates that <u>PRC sites placed 743 people in jobs following training, created 326 jobs in 152 new businesses, and provided EITC services to 3491 clients, among other accomplishments. These are important, tangible outcomes of PRC's Goal #1</u>, to increase the employment, income and wealth of people left behind by the economy. But PRC's goals are broader. Although these outcomes are impressive, they are modest in relation to need and would be unlikely to have much impact on the aggregate employment and income levels within PRC's 20 communities. Further, the programs that PRC communities have mounted to date have with some significant exceptions been modifications of existing programs (e.g., involving new partners or resources, serving new populations, reaching people in new places, etc.) that are unlikely to generate a powerful effect on local economies or the structure of opportunity for people left behind.

This is why Goal #2 to build the leadership, assets and structures necessary for long-term economic renewal is so important to PRC, and what makes PRC different from traditional approaches to economic development. PRC aims not only to improve the circumstances of people left behind by the economy but also to go about it in a way that builds the foundation for more far-reaching change. To "jump-start a new cycle of development" by "doing development differently," PRC has made a significant investment in bringing a diverse cross section of the community into the process of defining, designing and

implementing the PRC agenda. By working through teams, PRC hopes to leave in place a "continuing partnership that is representative of the community and works together to strengthen the local economy." While continuing to generate tangible income and employment outcomes for people left behind, the idea is that this partnership would also be part of the community's enhanced capacity—its leadership, its organizations and its collaborations—to undertake more far reaching economic renewal.

As illustrated above, measuring Goal #2 outcomes is inherently difficult in PRC as it is in its many counterparts around the country. This makes evaluating the effectiveness of sites' Goal #2 strategies, communicating their impact, or justifying their cost problematic. One response is a natural tendency to undervalue these outcomes, dismiss them as too "soft" to be worthy of investment, and overvalue instead outcomes that can be easily measured within a relatively short time frame. At the other end of the continuum is an alternative response that takes on faith the value of a community building strategy, making no effort to identify interim measures of progress. Such a stance is also problematic because it does not help initiative operators make informed choices about where to invest time and resources or develop a convincing case to most funders.

From our vantage point, PRC tried to find a middle ground that asked sites to keep a focus on both Goal #1 and #2 goals and strategies. From time to time, however, sites experienced some confusion: the pressure to produce tangible outcomes and strategies to sustain them within a three-year time frame tended to overshadow the goal of leaving an effective partnership or organization in place. Measurable project results seemed to some sites to trump community capacity building and informal leadership development activities. Disconnects among TDE, MDC and the sites regarding how success would be defined, measured and reported surfaced periodically, especially around times when sites were preparing proposals for refunding. (See Working Memorandum on *Managing and Supporting PRC*).

Ideally, two or three years from now, the capacity that sites have built and the momentum that they have stimulated will be evident. New leaders will be at the table, organizations will be working in new ways, people left behind will have new voice and new opportunities, the cycle of development will be working better, and churches and hospitals will continue to play an important leadership role in promoting an effective community development agenda. Our concern, based on experience in other initiatives, is that PRC's three years may be too short a period in which to expect these currently emergent capacities to be embedded deeply enough to gain increasing traction over time. But our "best case scenario" hope is that continued team engagement and support will sustain and grow the capacities PRC's investment has catalyzed.

PART II: PRC'S CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING
As a new approach to economic renewal in poor rural communities in the Carolinas, PRC has the potential to generate important lessons for foundations, intermediaries, evaluators, and communities interested in community change. Because its ambitions are great but many of its ideas untested, at least within the time frame and at the scale at which PRC operated, there is much to be gained from iterative learning cycles of implementation,

assessment and reflection. By *learning*, we refer to the broad range of structures, policies and practices through which all the parties gather, organize, interpret, integrate, assess, transfer and apply their information and insight in order to improve organizational performance. We emphasize the importance of the word *apply* as the fulcrum through which useful information is integrated and internalized individually, communally and organizationally to ensure that it is used.[1]

In this part of the report, we examine learning throughout PRC, starting with a discussion of learning and innovation at sites. We then look at how Endowment-eligible institutions fared as PRC's local intermediaries, one of whose potential roles was to help to institutionalize new community capacities. Next, we focus on a key question raised in Part I, which is the measurement of Goal #2 outcomes. Finally, we end with a discussion of institutional learning among TDE, MDC and Chapin Hall.

Learning about New Ways of Thinking About and Stimulating Economic Renewal
PRC started with the assumption that economic development strategies that have had limited success in building strong and equitable economies in North and South Carolina's rural communities in the past are even less likely to succeed in today's economic and social environment. MDC did not prescribe a standard set of strategies to achieve PRC's goals, but it did challenge teams to develop their strategies based on careful analysis of both local opportunities and constraints and of the evidence about what has and has not worked elsewhere. MDC staff and coaches exposed sites to an astounding range of learning opportunities through which to inform their work: coaching, cross-site learning events, technical assistance, structured phone calls, newsletters and program news memos, and periodic emails highlighting important articles, resources and opportunities (see Working Memoranda on *Doing Development Differently: Innovation and Learning in PRC* and *Managing* and *Supporting PRC*).

As PRC winds down in its current form, it may be too early to assess the degree to which sites have taken up the "ideas with power" brought to them by MDC. A review of the strategies adopted by sites to increase the employment, income and wealth of people left behind indicates that with some exceptions, the strategies are "new" for two reasons: first, because they bring in new resources and new partners or because they extend to new areas and new populations; and second, because rural communities have been disconnected from hearing about or seeing many ideas that are "old" in larger communities or other parts of the country. One unanswered question at this point is whether or not these changes represent a first step toward further innovation. Are there enough people in each site who understand the dynamics of economic renewal in new ways, are invested in seeing change in the community, and are committed to shaping and responding creatively to new opportunities in the future? Have the teams internalized a critical learning mode so that they look for results-based evidence on which to make decisions about which strategies are likely to yield positive benefits for people left behind? Will the pressures and incentives for learning be strong enough to institutionalize this capacity within the community?

---

[1] Learning for Community Change: Core Characteristics of Foundations that Learn (Chapin Hall Center for Children Discussion Paper, 2005).

Learning about Rural Hospitals and Churches as Local Intermediaries
A potential path for institutionalization of new community capacities is through PRC's rural hospitals and churches. One of the initiative's distinctive characteristics is its use of these structures as local intermediary organizations, rather than community development corporations, economic development or planning groups, various civic or social service organizations, or community foundations. PRC's planning period surfaced serious questions about whether rural hospitals and churches really could take on an economic renewal agenda and, as importantly, would they even want to? Could they collaborate with a diverse set of other community players? Could they "own" PRC enough to make their resources and expertise available to the initiative but not own it so much as to discourage others from becoming engaged and invested?

PRC's experience demonstrates that rural hospitals and churches did function effectively as local intermediaries: they assumed ultimate responsibility for managing the finances of a grant program even when they were not the primary beneficiary; they were for the most part able to avoid turf battles and share the credit with other institutions in the community; and they were able to operate in such a way as to create a community perception that PRC was a collaborative, non-denominational enterprise rather than a hospital or Methodist church project. Most of the participating hospitals and churches provided important leadership and in-kind support to PRC and most report having benefited institutionally from playing this role in PRC. Both hospitals and churches indicate that PRC has given them more visibility and enhanced their reputations in the community; enabled them to establish new relationships and partnerships with organizations with which they had not worked previously; and given them a new window on and in some cases connections to the people left behind in their communities.

Although the hospitals and churches devoted significant time and resources to PRC, the initiative was for most a "sidebar" to their core business of health care and religious service. While traditional economic development and community ministry were not new to many of the participating hospitals and churches, PRC's use of a collaborative community process and its focus on new strategies for increasing the employment and wealth of people left behind were new for most. Many of the hospital CEOs and UMC leaders can articulate the connection between PRC's economic renewal agenda and strategies and the interests of their hospitals and churches, but few actively involved their boards or their congregations in the work. This means that looking beyond TDE funding, the future role of these hospitals and churches is likely to depend to a great extent on the commitment and interests of the existing leadership. This reality has in fact been demonstrated in several of the cases in which leadership has turned over during PRC's tenure. The Endowment may want to consider these issues of leadership and institutionalization in order to realize the full potential of partnerships with its eligible institutions in the future. Our Working Memoranda on *The Role of Hospitals in PRC* and *The Role of Churches in PRC* provide some initial thinking toward this end.

Learning about Goal #2 Outcomes

Although we have reviewed the largely anecdotal evidence for sites' Goal #2 accomplishments, we have identified few metrics for assessing whether these accomplishments are robust enough to be sustained, let alone to lay the foundation for continued growth, following the end of TDE support. Efforts underway around the country to develop these metrics are struggling with how to construct low-cost and easily administered measures of the strength of a community's social capital, organizational infrastructure or leadership.[2] Sophisticated research strategies involving network analysis, periodic community surveys, comparison communities matched prospectively, or longitudinal ethnographic data collection were not feasible in light of PRC resources or priorities. In hindsight, however, there was one strategy that might have helped the teams get a better grip on the scale, scope and impact of their Goal #2 activities, that is a more thorough and disciplined use of MDC's Moving from Vision to Action curriculum.

As discussed in our *Doing Development Differently* Working Memorandum, a cornerstone of good practice is the ability to reflect systematically on whether the strategies undertaken are helping to realize progress toward intended goals. The Vision-to-Action planning process challenged teams to answer the following questions for each strategy the team developed: *When will we know if this strategy is successful? How will we know? What are some intermediate benchmarks we can shoot for? How will we measure effectiveness? Who will carry out the measurement? Who on the team will carry out which parts of the evaluation?* As the curriculum notes, evaluating their work in this way would help the teams assess their progress, learn from mistakes, and "*communicate their successes to the community and to past and potential funders, using hard numbers to back up their claims*." Taking such an approach does not eliminate the measurement problem, but requires that teams find acceptable proxies for establishing baselines and benchmarks of progress for both Goal #1 and #2 strategies.

Unfortunately, few teams and their coaches used the Vision to Action approach to self-evaluation as PRC evolved. Some teams never fully articulated their indicators of success, their benchmarks, or their measurement tools. Others filled out the worksheets but then put them aside as they began implementation. Perhaps because, given different histories and group dynamics, teams were at different stages of readiness for planning and implementation (one coach noted that most teams, rather than arriving "ready to go," instead were "starting from scratch"), MDC's coaches put quite different amounts of emphasis on the Vision to Action process both during and following the planning period. Further, the Goal #2 data that MDC collected from sites for its periodic State of the Sites Assessment reports had little relationship to the particular goals and strategies established in each site. (The two measures included the number of people involved in some sort of formal leadership program and the number of organizations with which the team had some relationship). These reports to MDC did not encourage sites to think more deeply about their Goal #2 strategies or measure their Goal #2 outcomes in a way that would enable them to know whether the strategies were yielding intended results.

---

[2] See, for example, EvaluLEAD (www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/EvaluLEAD4_00447_03740.pdf); www.leadershiplearning.org; www.aspenmeasures.org (sponsored by the Roundtable on Community Change).

Our own observations, based in part on the views of MDC staff and coaches, suggest that the short time period PRC allocated for planning played a significant role in limiting teams' use of self-evaluation. Often teams were so focused on getting their initial proposal done that they were unable to focus sufficiently on team building and learning about economic development. The limited time for planning compromised full use of the Vision to Action process, including development of systems for self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is not an easy capacity to develop, especially regarding "softer" community capacity outcomes like enhanced leadership and more effective collaboration. So all the players involved in such an enterprise need to be clear that investing in this capacity is worth the time and resources. Factors likely to help build and institutionalize self-evaluation capacity include: a competency-based planning period in which teams do not move on to implementation until some basic capacities, including self-evaluation, are developed; a technical assistance and coaching strategy that consistently requires and supports self-evaluation; and reporting requirements from both the intermediary and the foundation that reinforce the use of the same metrics that sites develop for assessing their progress.

Institutional Learning

Ideally, a functional learning system for complex, multi-site initiatives should have the following elements:

- Commitment to learning as a core objective of the initiative
- Engagement at all levels—leadership, board, staff—in the learning enterprise as appropriate and valuable
- Connection of initiative learning to field learning—being informed by lessons from previous initiatives and sharing lessons to inform the broader field
- Formal structures for periodic sharing and exchange
- Multiple vehicles for ongoing informal dialogue
- Co-design and participation in learning events
- A culture that values candor and takes a problem-solving approach to "bad news" rather than denial of problems, blame, withdrawal of support, or paralysis
- Trust, spirit of risk-taking, and ability to work through differences
- Commitment and ability to modify practice on the basis of feedback
- Accountability for learning
- Periodic review of whether the learning system is working so that mid-course corrections can be made

The Duke Endowment, MDC and Chapin Hall all had different vantage points from which to draw PRC's lessons. Endowment staff brought a deep understanding of and connection to the rural hospitals and churches involved in PRC, many of whom were previous grantees. MDC's contact with sites involved monitoring and supporting team functioning and program strategy development and implementation. Chapin Hall's relationships with sites were forged through a series of cross-site questions that shaped our Working Memoranda. Each institution also came to PRC with different experiences with community change, economic development and the local context of the Carolinas.

While opportunities for institutional learning existed at many levels, our sense is that they were not exploited to the full advantage of any of the three institutions. Somehow PRC failed to provide the structures or venues through which we all could become full learning partners. While individual conversations across institutions often involved productive exchange, and much learning did take place, a strong culture of learning and candid mutual dialogue did not develop institutionally. As the Learning Project, we were unable to stimulate critical discussion about PRC's ideas and experience to the degree or frequency we would have liked with either MDC or TDE. Perhaps we should have taken a more proactive role, trying harder to create or insert ourselves into various learning venues. The result from our perspective is that we all learned less than we would have liked individually and collectively for the field. If pushed, we might even suggest that none of the three institutions used PRC as much as it could have to develop its own capacity to take on a similar initiative in the future.

One area that would have benefited from ongoing exchange has to do with the role of people left behind by the economy in shaping and carrying out PRC's agenda. As discussed earlier, few teams had the time or capacity to make a serious investment in community engagement strategies, and people left behind by the economy were not well represented on the teams. As this became apparent, it would have been helpful to have an initiative-wide conversation about what success would look like with regards to engaging PRC's intended beneficiaries. Developing a consensus about what was realistic in this regard and then articulating clear expectations might have helped teams to focus more productively in this area. In addition, the initiative might have generated more collective learning about what strategies work and do not work for engaging people left behind by the economy in a three-year initiative that starts with a "middle-out" approach.

The limitations on institutional learning within PRC notwithstanding, we can pose for our colleagues and ourselves the question, *"if you had the same amount of resources that were available to PRC and its same overall goal and set of assumptions, what 5 or 6 things might you in hindsight do differently?"* Our list, which draws from our Working Memoranda, is presented in the spirit of stimulating dialogue rather than providing the last word:

- Cut the number of sites in half and use the resources to extend the planning period and double the length of the initiative

- Eliminate the two-tiered program structure and, instead, tailor the scale and pacing of funding for planning and implementation to the individual site's needs, assets and performance

- Continue to provide a rich array of learning supports and opportunities for sites with coaching as the centerpiece, but have fewer coaches taking a more consistent approach with more frequent opportunities for supervision and peer consultation

- Require teams to engage in their own self-evaluation and data collection and provide the supports and time necessary to do so

- At the same time as carrying out a "middle out" approach with teams, identify early on a strategy (e.g., organizing, leadership development, etc.) for directly engaging people left behind by the economy that best leverages wherever the energy and assets within this group exist in each community

- Invest in a series of learning exchanges among foundation, intermediary, and learning project staff that reward reflection and candid discussion and build knowledge within and across institutions, as well as more broadly

CONCLUSION

PRC has generated a range of programs and activities to increase the employment, income and wealth of people left behind by the economy. People have been trained, EITC refunds obtained, IDAs established, businesses started up, and new jobs created. Diverse teams have worked hard to produce both tangible results and new leadership to support more effective approaches to community economic renewal. Endowment-eligible hospitals and churches have served effectively as PRC's local intermediaries. Public and nonprofit organizations are collaborating in new ways across sectors, leveraging new assets for revitalization. Often working across racial/ethnic and geographic divides in new ways, many volunteers have devoted much time and energy to making their communities work better for all residents. These are important contributions that PRC has made to struggling rural communities over the last three years.

The Endowment spent about $10.8 million for planning and implementation grants at 23 (now 20) sites, MDC's management and support activities, and Chapin Hall's Learning Project. The question we cannot address at this point is whether *PRC was worth the investment.* Partly this is because at PRC's onset, TDE and MDC did not develop explicit and shared expectations about what indicators would be used to answer this question. Such a discussion might have helped all the parties involved better understand the realistic parameters of an initiative like PRC and appreciate the promise in these parameters. More importantly, PRC's return on investment can only be fairly assessed some years from now. The question is whether there has been sufficient momentum created in each of these communities to continue to fuel development once PRC resources end. Or will the communities revert to the way they used to function before PRC? If Goal #1 activities have been institutionalized and Goal #2 activities have built sufficient leadership and organizational capacity and connections, we should be able to find evidence of PRC's continuing impact several years from now.

The observation that we have made throughout this report is what appears to us to have been a lack of fit between PRC's ambitions and its relatively short lifespan. Three and one-half years may simply be too short a time for most teams to plan, implement and sustain new programs and new ways of doing business. Trying to move so quickly through these stages potentially undermines the very capacities—new leadership, new

collaborations, and new ways of thinking about community renewal—most important to sustaining PRC.

Making a credible case one way or the other about PRC's ultimate value at this point in time is impractical. We cannot say whether $10.8 million spent in an alternative way would have produced more results for people left behind, now and in the future. Perhaps the best way to think about PRC at this point is to view its initial results as the first step in what, if successful, will become a relentless sequence of progressively more powerful steps undertaken by rural communities working to improve their livelihood. As PRC moves into its next phase, we hope that teams will continue to develop and exert their new capacities to catalyze such improvement.
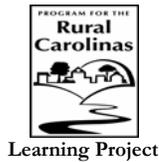
Appendix A
Chapin Hall Working Memoranda

Constituting Effective Teams for Rural Development in the PRC (November 2003)
This memorandum reviews the rationale for the central role of collaborative teams in PRC's design and then examines the composition and structure of the newly constituted teams. Although teams differ considerably in their composition, most are relatively diverse by race and background but less so by class and age. The memorandum reviews the committee and governance structure each team has put in place to help it make decisions, allocate resources, and carry out the work.   Even this early in PRC's implementation, about half of the teams are considering incorporating as a new nonprofit organization as a possible way to institutionalize the change process at the end of PRC. Teams also face the challenge of how to deploy staff effectively so that team members neither burn out nor reduce their much-needed engagement.

Doing Development Differently: Innovation and Learning in the PRC (November 2003)
The focus of this memorandum is on two challenges teams face as they translate new ideas about economic renewal into operational realities. First, how do they innovate without starting a large number of new programs that may neither maximize the use of existing community resources nor generate long-term support for sustainability? The memorandum describes how the teams are catalyzing innovation by creating and brokering partnerships and by strengthening the capacity of existing organizations to implement new programs. Second, how do teams build learning and evaluation into implementation in a way that enables them to reflect upon and refine their strategies as part of ongoing practice? Given implementation challenges, teams often have trouble finding the time to engage in iterative cycles of intentional learning, planning, doing, and evaluation that could improve their work.

The Role of the Duke Endowment's Eligible Institutions in the PRC (November 2003)
The rural Methodist churches and rural nonprofit hospitals that serve as team members and fiscal agents for PRC in each site face a number of challenges in PRC. They are expected to be leaders but not to be in charge, to produce results but to share that responsibility and credit with a range of other community partners, and to institutionalize the change process but not necessarily within their own structures. This memorandum examines what assets these churches and hospitals bring to PRC and how they have addressed the challenges inherent in their new roles. The potential for other rural churches and hospitals to develop increasing interest in playing leadership roles in promoting their community's economic renewal is also addressed.

Managing and Implementing the PRC: The Role of Staff (May 2004)
This memorandum reviews the role of staff in supporting the work of the PRC teams. It describes the central role of the project coordinator in facilitating, coordinating, and communicating; keeping team members engaged; and sustaining the pace and momentum of the work. What the coordinator and project staff actually do depends in part on what tasks the team members are willing and able to take on and what additional vehicles the team can create or access for carrying out the work—such as using consultants, partnering with other organizations, or involving community members on PRC committees or task forces. The memorandum challenges teams to use staff and other vehicles to implement their agendas in ways that both produce program results and build enduring community capacity and support for a continuing partnership.

Leadership Development in the PRC (December 2004)
This memorandum examines the different ways that teams have tried to identify and cultivate a cadre of people who are committed to working on behalf of PRC's goals. Potential leadership can come from PRC team members, as well as from diverse sectors of the community: ordinary citizens who express an interest in community improvement, traditional power brokers, people who work in organizations and agencies that serve the disadvantaged, and people left behind by the economy. All of these different kinds of citizens are necessary constituents of a long-term partnership to advance and sustain PRC's goals over time. But diverse strategies are needed to identify, engage, and develop these different leaders. The memorandum reviews both the formal and informal ways that the teams have fostered leadership and challenges teams to develop ways of monitoring the success of these efforts.

Public Sector Involvement in the PRC (December 2004)
The focus of this memorandum is on the different ways in which the teams have approached the complexities of engaging the public sector, both elected officials and those who work for various government departments or offices at the municipal and county level. Clearly teams cannot ignore the public sector and still access the resources and achieve the changes that are required for local economic renewal. But the timing and nature of the relationship involve strategic challenges, which teams have addressed in quite different ways with different results. The memorandum reviews the progress teams have made in garnering public support for their agendas, as well as for changing public sector policies to be more supportive of the interests of people left behind by the economy.

The Role of the Church in the PRC (May 2005)
This memorandum examines the experience of the eleven Endowment-eligible rural United Methodist Churches or church-related entities that are participating in PRC. The focus is on the role church leaders and their UMC institutions have played in PRC and the impact of PRC on these institutions. Overall, the churches—like their rural hospital counterparts—have been successful intermediaries and effective fiscal agents. In turn, PRC has had a positive impact on their reputations in the community and their capacities as community partners. Few of the churches, however, have engaged their membership in PRC in a substantial way. The memorandum outlines why this has been the case and

summarizes the emerging tools and strategies that UMC leadership is testing to get the laity involved in order to provide continuity and sustain the long-term commitment of the church to PRC's interests.

The Role of the Hospital in the PRC (September 2005)
This memorandum examines the experience of the nine Endowment-eligible rural hospitals or health entities participating in PRC. The focus is on the role hospital executives and their institutions have played in PRC and the impact of PRC on these institutions. Overall, the rural hospitals—like their United Methodist Church counterparts—have been successful intermediaries and effective fiscal agents. Despite increasing fiscal constraints, the hospitals have been able to draw upon their long history in the community, their stable leadership, and their close relationships to local business to help facilitate a broad community change agenda. As major employers, they have understood PRC's potential to address local workforce needs. A key question for these hospitals has been how much to engage their boards and embrace PRC as part of their core business. The memorandum ends with a strategic framework for leveraging health institution assets for community economic revitalization.

Managing and Supporting PRC (February 2006)
This memorandum examines the management and provision of support to PRC with an eye toward drawing lessons for other foundations, intermediaries and nonprofits considering similar multi-year, multi-site initiatives. As PRC's intermediary, MDC provided a rich and diverse portfolio of supports, such as coaching, cross-site meetings, and access to a technical assistance pool, that were intended to convey information, inspire, challenge, facilitate and connect sites to additional resources. For the most part, these supports complemented the Endowment's unique relationship with its beneficiaries. Both MDC and the Endowment report that it would have been useful to develop additional clarity at PRC's inception regarding how success in PRC was to be defined, measured and reported. Further, both organizations would have benefited from more structured opportunities for mutual reflection and learning about how the ideas behind PRC were playing out in practice.