

## ***CASE PREPARATION: EIGHT NEIGHBORS***

### ***Learning goals:***

The goal of this exercise is to provide opportunities for reflection on the factors that promote and inhibit success in sustaining collaborative partnerships. The “Eight Neighbors” case is in a different context: community economic development in Washington DC following the Great Recession, between September 2008 and August 2010. By taking a step back from the context within which you are working, the case provides opportunities to recognize and debate the challenges confronting nonprofit partners who work together to pursue joint goals.

### ***Case Summary:***

Started in direct response to the economic crisis in September 2008, the Eight Neighbors partnership has spent two years trying to build a collaborative, cross-sectoral partnership in the Washington Metropolitan Area. During this time, the group has undertaken several different activities and in doing so, has explored the ways that they can best work together. Some of these activities exceeded expectations and were a big success. Others provided some benefit, but did not leverage the full power of the group. And some work was spent on ideas that never were realized. The group has shifted over time from a relatively informal partnership driven by reactive impulses to one that seeks to be more strategic while preserving the strengths of the informal nature of the group. In August, 2010, the members of the partnership are at a critical decision point and have to decide how to proceed with the partnership. They must come to some agreement on how to move the collaboration forward so that their goals for the Washington Metropolitan Area and the power of the group can be more fully realized.

### ***Instructions:***

Review the questions below, and consider them as you read through the case. During the workshop, participants will be asked to discuss these questions and report back to the larger group. In reading through the case, consider how the lessons from this case might be applied in reflecting on your own collaborative partnerships. These lessons may include insights about agenda formation, patterns of collaboration and decision making, confronting and overcoming environmental constraints, and/or reconciling organizational mission with partnership goals.

***Discussion Questions:***

As you read the case, think about the following questions:

- What were the collaborative goals of the Eight Neighbors? What types of joint strategies did they pursue to achieve these goals?
- To what do you attribute some of the successes of the Eight Neighbors work? What do you think distinguished their more successful efforts (e.g., advocacy focused on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) from their experience with the coordinated giving campaign, which was ultimately abandoned?
- The literature on nonprofit collaborative partnerships suggests that most collaboration has an informal character. Yet, even informal relationships are governed over time by norms and patterns of interaction that are often unstated. What norms and patterns of interaction characterized the Eight Neighbors in their early work? How might these evolve over time?
- What caused the Eight Neighbors to take a step back away from their collaborative work? What do you think members of the partnership should consider in thinking about continuing their work together?
- How are the tensions that the leaders faced representative of those faced by other members of nonprofit partnerships? Do you see any lessons for your own collaborative work?