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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

From its inception, the Better Beginnings, Better Futures initiative was meant to be different from other prevention programs. In the original document produced by the Technical Advisory Group (Rae-Grant & Russell, 1989), several defining features of Better Beginnings were identified: (a) a strong emphasis on resident participation and a community-driven approach to prevention, (b) a multi-sectoral approach emphasizing integration with existing community services (health, education, child welfare, children's mental health, and other social services), (c) a highly participatory and inclusive approach to planning and program implementation, and (d) a program model that was universal, high-quality, multi-year, and comprehensive (addressing multiple ecological levels, including the child, parent, family, preschool/school, and community). Moreover, whereas previous prevention programs focused primarily on program outcomes, the Better Beginnings research examined how the programs developed in each of the project site communities, as well as outcomes on children, parents, and the communities.

From 1991 to 1998, the Better Beginnings research included a qualitative, ethnographic component to examine the key elements of the Better Beginnings model outlined above. Through participant observation, individual and group qualitative interviews, a review of program documents, and a multi-year immersion in the eight Better Beginnings project sites, site researchers gathered qualitative data that were used to generate reports about: (a) resident participation, (b) service-provider involvement, (c) project organization and management, (d) the program model, (e) the original coalition and proposal development process, and (f) the stories of residents who participated in the Better Beginnings projects. All of these reports were written during the developmental and research demonstration phases of the sites, and these reports, with the exception of the last two, were updated in 1998. However, since 1998, there has not been any further qualitative research on program development and program model issues (see Table A.1 for a chronological review of program and research activity at the Better Beginnings sites).

One of the strategies used to evaluate outcomes on children, parents, families, and communities in the Better Beginnings research involves the use of comparison communities, that are demographically similar to the Better Beginnings communities, but which do not have Better Beginnings funding or programs. Communities do not stand still over time, and it is possible that community development initiatives or prevention programs may be developed in these comparison communities. Thus, to understand short-term and long-term outcomes of the Better Beginnings initiative, it is important to know about resident participation, school and community-based prevention programs, and service-provider partnerships in the comparison communities.

The purpose of this research is two-fold. First, this research seeks to determine what has happened at the Better Beginnings sites with respect to program development and the program models over the last five years since the sites moved to the sustainability phase. Second, this research aims to document any community and/or program development initiatives in the comparison communities.

**Table A.1
Chronological Review of Program and Research Activities of the Better Beginnings Sites**

Years	Program Activities	Research Activities
1990-91 1991-93	Coalition and proposal development. Hiring staff, engaging the community, planning programs.	Proposal Development and Resident Participation report; recruitment and collection of data from baseline comparison participants.
1994-98	Five years of implementation of programs during demonstration period. Announcement of ongoing funding.	Service-provider Involvement, Program Model, Project Organization and Management, Personal Stories, and Site-specific reports; updates to Resident Participation, Service-provider Involvement, Project Organization and Management, and Program Model reports; recruitment and collection of data from focal cohort and comparison site participants.
1999-04	Continuation of programs after the demonstration period.	No program development/program model research; continued collection of data from focal cohort and comparison site participants; recruitment and data collection from an additional following cohort sample.

The report is organized as follows: (a) a review of the literature and conceptual framework, (b) the questions that guided the research, (c) the research methodology, (d) resident participation, (e) service-provider involvement, (f) project organization and management, (g) the program model, and (h) conclusions and implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Life Cycle of Community-based Prevention Projects

To understand program development/program model issues in the Better Beginnings sites over the last five years since they have moved past the demonstration phase to one of permanent funding and ongoing service, we believe that it is important to look back at the development of the sites over the 13 years of their history. To do this, we think that it is important to adopt an organizational life cycle perspective. The study of the life cycle of organizations has been undertaken within the fields of program development and evaluation (Pancer & Westhues, 1989), organization development (Quinn & Cameron, 1983), community development (Jones & Silva, 1991), and community psychology (Bartunek & Betters-Read, 1987; Reinharz, 1984; Riger, 1984). As well, some research on the life cycle of organizations has focused specifically on prevention programs (Johnson, Malone, & Hightower, 1997). Most relevant to our purposes are a few articles and studies that have focused specifically on neighbourhood organizations that have an emphasis on prevention programs for children and families (Blum & Ragab, 1985; M'Timkulu, 1982; Powell & Nelson, 1997).

Different researchers have identified several stages in the life cycle of organizations. According to Johnson et al. (1997), the development of prevention programs in schools entails three stages: (a) planning and preparation, (b) implementation, and (c) maintenance. In an explication of a community development approach to prevention through the creation of neighbourhood centres, M'Timkulu (1982) identified four stages: (a) initiating, (b) building, (c) stabilizing, and (d) consulting. While these stages are similar to those proposed by Johnson et al. (1997), they are somewhat idiosyncratic to Lutherwood Children's Mental Health Centre in the Waterloo region of Ontario. Lutherwood's former Community Services department emphasized the creation of centres in low-income neighbourhoods, and the stages suggest Lutherwood's role vis-à-vis those centres. Lutherwood saw its mandate as helping to start the centres, bring them to maturity, and then spin them off, so that they would operate independent of Lutherwood (M'Timkulu, 1982; Powell & Nelson, 1997).

The stages of the life cycle of an organization provide a developmental perspective on how organizations deal with a number of issues. In the case of community development projects, Jones and Silva (1991) identified three key issues on which organizations must focus their energies across their life cycles: (a) problem-solving, (b) community building, and (c) systems interactions. Problem-solving is purposeful activity that is task and goal-oriented; it seeks to accomplish some type of change in the community. Community capacity-building entails the recruitment and involvement of residents, developing relationships with community members, building an organizational base, and operating in a highly participatory and democratic style. The focus on systems interaction brings a systems perspective to community development. Engaging all of the relevant stakeholders in the project, forging partnerships with other service-provider organizations, securing a project sponsor, and linking with funders and planners are all a part of systems interaction. Powell and Nelson (1997) summarized the Jones and Silva (1991) model as follows: "Problem-solving generates action; community building assures ownership of the action; systems interaction provides a broad base for the action" (p. 28).

For the purposes of this research, we have adopted the following conceptual framework that consists of two axes: phases and key components (see Table A.2). Adopting the phases identified by Johnson et al. (1997), the phases axis consists of the following: (a) developmental, (b) demonstration, and (c) sustainability. These phases or stages are meant primarily to indicate a timeline rather than fixed and inevitable stages of development leading towards some predetermined state. Sarason (1972) and Bartunek and Betters-Read (1987) have warned that while stage models can help to understand the process of organizational development, they may also distort these processes because stages are not neat, clean, and clearly bounded. Thus, we use the concept of stages with caution.

Table A.2
Phases and Key Components of the Better Beginnings Sites

Phase	Key Components			
	Tasks (Program Model, Administrative Structures, and Staffing and Supervision)	Processes (Resident Participation, Project Atmosphere and Management Style, and Decision-making Processes)	Systems Interactions (Service-Provider Involvement and Relationships with Sponsor Agencies)	Critical Issues and Themes
Developmental (1990-93)				
Demonstration (1994-98)				
Sustainability (1999-04)				

For the second dimension, we have adopted the key issues proposed by Jones and Silva (1991): (a) tasks, (b) processes, and (c) systems interactions. For each stage, we will also strive to identify critical issues facing the Better Beginnings organizations. The rationale for adopting these dimensions is twofold. First, these dimensions provided a good fit for the data from a previous cross-site qualitative study of somewhat similar community-based prevention projects in Ontario (Powell & Nelson, 1997). Second, the key features of the Better Beginnings initiative that were the subject of the earlier program development/program model research map on well to these components. Key tasks in Better Beginnings include the development and implementation of a community-driven program model and building an organizational infrastructure, including developing administrative units, hiring, training, and supervising staff, and developing policies for personnel and supervision. Important processes include resident participation and the utilization of a participatory and inclusive approach to project management. Systems interaction encompasses the involvement of service-providers and partnerships with other organizations, including sponsor agencies.

Stages in the Life Cycle of Community-based Prevention Projects

The Early Years: The Developmental Phase. As we see it, there are three important functions when it comes to the planning and design of prevention programs: (a) coming up with a sound prevention program model, one that is well thought through and has a good chance of success, and developing an organizational infrastructure that supports the program model, (b) building community ownership of the program, and (c) finding a suitable host organization and developing partnerships with other service-providers. In the case of Better Beginnings, these three functions correspond directly to the following key components: the development of high quality programs, the involvement of community residents, and partnerships with service-providers. Building the program model and organizational infrastructure are the tasks; building

community ownership and participation is the process; and partnering with service-providers and finding a suitable host organization is the systems interaction component.

Regarding the first function of developing a sound program model, researchers and evaluators often use what is called a program logic model in the design of a program (Pancer & Westhues, 1989; Rutman, 1984). There are three steps in developing a program logic model: (a) defining the outcome goals or intended impacts of the program (both short-term and long-term) in a way that is clear, concrete, and measurable, (b) specifying the components and activities of the program, and (c) providing a rationale that links the program components and activities with the program goals. A good program model indicates how the program should work, that is, how the program activities are supposed to lead to changes in the outcome goals that have been specified. Often those who design prevention programs have a theory of how a problem develops and can be prevented or a theory of how well-being can be promoted. It is also necessary to develop an organizational infrastructure to support the program model. This includes developing administrative units, hiring, training, and supervising staff, and developing policies for personnel and supervision.

The second function of planning is to build community ownership for the program. In this regard, researchers have pointed out the importance of collaboration between program planners and the different community stakeholders (e.g., Cherniss, 1997; Johnson et al., 1997; Peirson & Prilleltensky, 1994; Sarason, 1982). The process of planning is as important or more important than what is planned for community ownership of a prevention program (Johnson et al., 1997).

Regarding the third function, it is important to take a systems perspective and consider who the relevant partners are and how they can and should be involved in program planning (Kloos, McCoy, Stewart, Thomas, Wiley, Good, Hunt, Moore, & Rappaport, 1997; Nelson, Amio, Prilleltensky, & Nickels, 2000). As Kress, Cimring, and Elias (1997) stated:

“For this to work successfully, there must be a respectful balance for the expertise held by both parties; that is, the consultant knows certain techniques and approaches and used them effectively in many settings, whereas the consultee is the expert in this particular setting. It is the melding of these areas of expertise that is essential to a successful consultation. . . the ecological approach reminds us that the work of the consultation is aided by all parties recognizing and exercising expertise, and this will extend to the content of the interventions themselves because they will work better when the children who receive them experience themselves as ‘experts’ in managing their own behavior and in having areas of expertise to contribute to their classmates, classrooms, school, families, and communities.” (p. 244)

As we see it, the three critical issues that are the focus of the planning or developmental phase are the development of a sound program model, gaining the trust of community members, and partnering with other relevant service-providers. Often times, there is a tension between these different aspects of program planning (Nelson et al., 2000). On the one hand, an “evidence-based practice” approach to program planning emphasizes the development of a sound program model that is based on previous research. Collaboration with the host community and service-provider partners is seen as important, but the program model is mostly decided by professional experts who know what works and what doesn’t work. On the other hand, a community development

approach to program planning emphasizes the role of the host community and other service-providers in the development of the program model. According to this perspective, community members and local service-providers know best what they need in their community and what is likely to be effective. While there is tension between the evidence-based practice approach and the community development and systems approach to prevention, we believe that some integration of the strengths of these approaches is possible (Nelson et al., 2000). Rather than a top-down, professional approach or a bottom-up, community approach, a partnership approach entails researchers, community members, and local service-providers jointly deciding what the program model should look like.

One further point regarding planning and development that should be noted concerns the issue of time lines. Collaborative planning is very time-consuming. Johnson et al. (1997) suggest that the planning stage can take anywhere from six months to two years, while Juras, Mackin, Curtis, and Foster-Fishman (1997) similarly state that planning a prevention program can take a year or more. Juras et al. (1997) also note that there is a tension between time-consuming collaborative processes and the needs of some stakeholders, particularly administrators and funders, to achieve tangible results. There are dangers in going too fast or too slow in the planning process. If partners move too quickly, they typically fail to adopt a long-term time perspective on change and instead opt for “quick fix” solutions that do not work in the long run (Peirson & Prilleltensky, 1994). They may also not secure the trust of the stakeholders before moving forward with the prevention program. On the one hand, moving too slowly can lead to “planning to death” without making any changes. People become fatigued and frustrated when they feel that they are “spinning their wheels” and not achieving anything concrete. Some kind of balance is needed between collaboration and action.

The Middle Years: The Demonstration Phase. Implementation refers to how well the program components are put into practice. If a program is unsuccessful in achieving its outcome goals, this could be due either to a faulty program model or to a failure to implement the program in the way it was intended to be implemented. In a review of the literature, Durlak (1998b) found that adequacy of implementation is variable across prevention programs and that quality of implementation is directly related to achievement of outcomes. For these reasons, there is a growing recognition of the need to pay close attention to and study implementation processes (Durlak, 1998a; Gager & Elias, 1997; Lynch, Geller, Hunt, Galano, & Dubas, 1998; Zins, Elias, Greenberg, & Pruet, 2000a, 2000b).

Like planning, there are both task and process issues with respect to implementation. It is not just important that programs are implemented according to plan; the processes and context of implementation are equally important during the demonstration phase. Problems with the implementation may be due to resistance of those required to do the implementation (e.g., teachers), lack of training, support, and ongoing consultation for those doing the implementation, and lack of administrative and financial support for the program (Chamberland, Dallaire, Lindsay, Hébert, Fréchette, Beaudoin, & Cameron, 1998; Cherniss, 1997; Durlak, 1998b; Gager & Elias, 1997; Lynch et al., 1998; Peirson & Prilleltensky, 1994). Thus, there needs to be a sound organizational base to support high quality prevention programs.

The tension between evidence-based practice vs. community development approaches to planning continues to be relevant during the demonstration phase. In this phase, the evidence-

based practice approach stresses the importance of fidelity to an evidence-based program model, whereas the community development approach emphasizes adaptation of the program model to the local context (Blakely, Mayer, Gottschalk, Schmitt, Davidson, Roitman, & Emshoff, 1987). Research on the dissemination of innovative programs that have been shown to be effective has found that close adherence or fidelity to the original program model is directly related to subsequent demonstrations of success in new settings (Mayer & Davidson, 2000). Moreover, a recent study of the Canada's Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), which reported little to no effect of this program on child and family outcomes, suggested that this community-driven initiative used programs that had no clear evidence base (McLennan, 2004).

Again, we see the importance of balance and integration of these two approaches. Weissberg (1990) suggested that program outcomes can be improved if those who implement the program "introduced new strategies to augment the effects of faithfully implemented components" (p. 188). Similarly, Bauman, Stein, and Ireys (1991) and Mayer and Davidson (2000) argued that while some adaptation to unique contexts is inevitable, what is crucial for the ongoing success of a program is adherence to the key elements of the program model. In sum, most prevention researchers argue that there is a balance needed between fidelity to the program model and adaptation to local contexts. Rigid adherence can stifle local initiative, while adapting the program to such a degree that it no longer resembles the original evidence-based program model can lead to a program that lacks the basic program components that have been shown to be important for success. Hall and Loucks (1978) have suggested that some degree of adaptation is acceptable, but that adaptation should not pass into a zone of "drastic mutation."

With regard to systems interactions, it becomes important to clearly define the roles of service-provider partners during the demonstration phase, as the roles of other service-providers are likely to change from what they were during the development phase. Critical issues during the demonstration phase include refining the program model, finding ways to sustain the involvement of community residents, and redefining the roles of service-providers.

The Later Years: The Sustainability Phase. Once a program model has been successfully put into practice, the next task is to ensure that the program is maintained or sustained. In the context of school-based prevention programs, Johnson et al. (1997) noted the following:

"Several central elements should be sought in program maintenance: (a) district support and information networks, (b) integration of the program activities into the curricular structure and framework of the school, (c) site and district level commitment, and (d) program integrity and efficacy." (p. 85)

All of the work that has been undertaken in the developmental and demonstration phases to build community ownership and an organizational base of support should be helpful in maintaining the program in the long run. In this regard, it is important to communicate with policy-makers about the value, importance, and effectiveness of the prevention program, as policy-makers are key stakeholders with regard to funding prevention programs. Securing ongoing funding becomes a primary task for such programs.

Moreover, the transition from the demonstration phase (and its funding) to sustainability and ongoing funding is particularly critical for the longevity of prevention programs. Both community ownership and research findings about the effectiveness of the program can be useful tools in advocating for ongoing funding. For example, consider the well-known prevention program using nurse home visitors in rural New York developed by David Olds (1988). When the research project ended, the caseloads of the nurse home visitors were dramatically increased, severely diluting the program. All of the nurse home visitors quit their jobs in frustration (Schorr, 1997). The lack of institutional ownership led to a compromise of the program model. More active support of policy-makers and local systems is needed to ensure the continuation of proven prevention programs, such as the one by Olds and colleagues. Community members can play a vital role in advocating for ongoing funding for community-based prevention projects.

Aside from anecdotes such as the one noted above, there has been little systematic thinking or research about the sustainability of prevention programs for children. From the perspective of government, Akerlund (2000) argued that sustainable programs “. . . enhance state priorities and systems, are community driven, are high quality, have ongoing evaluation and strong management and fiscal practices. . . are of reasonable cost and have the potential for replication, modification to meet changing community needs. . .” (p. 353). Elias and Kamarinos (2003) conducted interviews with 21 participants representing 15 sites that had successfully implemented school-based, social-emotional learning prevention projects regarding the sustainability of these projects. They found varying degrees of sustainability of the projects. Some of the factors that promoted sustainability were: active administrative support and follow-through, intervention by program developers to engage new administrators, program consultation offered to school staff, ongoing training and professional development, deep involvement of teachers, etc. Dariotis, Duncan, and Bumbarger (2004) conducted qualitative interviews with 64 key informants representing 36 prevention programs that had received four years of grant funding. They found several different patterns of sustainability. Some projects ended after the grant for the demonstration phase ended, while others continued with various types of arrangements, including partnerships with other organizations, reduced operations with integrated funding, and full integration with existing programs. Various supports and barriers facilitated or impeded these arrangements.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that we examined for the Better Beginnings project sites pertain to the following key aspects of the overall initiative: (a) resident participation, (b) service-provider involvement, (c) project organization and management, and (d) the program model. Unlike some of the projects noted on the literature review on sustainability that lost their funding after the demonstration phase, the Better Beginnings sites all received ongoing government funding after the demonstration phase.

The main questions that we examined include the following.

Resident Participation

- What changes, if any, have there been in resident participation in the project sites and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors have sustained resident participation and what barriers have inhibited resident participation since the end of the demonstration period?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to resident participation?

Service-Provider Involvement

- What changes, if any, have there been in the visions for integration of services, the types of service-providers who have been involved, and the roles that service-providers have played, and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors have sustained service-provider involvement and what barriers have inhibited service-provider involvement since the end of the demonstration period?
- What have been the critical issues in the time since the end of the demonstration period with regard to service-provider involvement?

Project Organization and Management

- What changes, if any, have there been in the leadership, governing structures, approaches to management, organizational climate, decision-making processes, staffing and supervision, and the relationship with the sponsor organization of the project sites, and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors influenced changes in project organization and management?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to project organization and management?

Program Model

- What changes, if any, have there been in the program components of the demonstration sites since the end of the demonstration period and what are the reasons for any changes?
- To what extent was the program model and the program components based on a program logic model or previous research evidence (evidence-based practice approach) or on input from community residents (community development approach)?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to the program model?
- How do the budget allocations to the different program components in each of the sites compare during the demonstration and sustainability phases?
- What types of programs for children in the age cohort and service-provider partnerships exist in the Better Beginnings comparison communities?

METHODOLOGY

The Research Team

The research team consisted of two principal investigators (Geoff Nelson and Mark Pancer of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Coordination Unit [RCU] and Wilfrid Laurier University), a senior researcher (Karen Hayward, former site researcher for the Highfield Better Beginnings project), and several research assistants (Alexei Kissin and Nadia Hausfather, M.A. students in Community Psychology at Laurier, Jennifer Bernier, a doctoral student in Community Psychology at Laurier, Susan Palijan, an independent researcher, and Claude Lauzon, site researcher for the Cornwall Better Beginnings - *Partir d'un bon pas* site). Hayward, Kissin, Nelson, and Pancer conducted all of visits to the Better Beginnings sites (Hausfather assisted Kissin with the Cornwall site visit), and Hayward gathered all of the information from the comparison sites.

Better Beginnings Sites

A team of researchers was responsible for each of the eight Better Beginnings sites. There are three older child sites (Cornwall, Highfield [Metro Toronto], Sudbury) and five younger child sites (Guelph, Kingston, Regent Park [Toronto], Southeast Ottawa, Walpole Island). The socio-demographic characteristics of these sites are described in a report on the short-term findings of Better Beginnings (Peters et al., 2000). Each team completed a site report that included a summary of the developmental and demonstration phases (which we also refer to as the early and middle years) and current data regarding the sustainability period (which we also refer to as the later years). We want to emphasize the unique context of each site and the unique nature of Better Beginnings programming and infrastructure of each site. For a timeline of research activities, see Table A.3.

Table A.3
Timeline for Better Beginnings Sustainability Research

August-September, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formulate research plan - recruit and train researchers - form research teams for each of the sites - submit ethics review
October-November, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review previous site reports (1993-98) - complete first part of new site reports on the planning and implementation phases
December-April, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conduct site visits for Better Beginnings sites
March-May, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transcription of qualitative interview data - analyze qualitative data for site reports
June-October, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete drafts of site reports - submit site reports to sites for review - gather information from comparison communities
November-December, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - submit site reports to remaining sites for review - write and submit cross-site report to Better Beginnings RCU - submit cross-site report to sites for review
January-February, 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revise cross-site report based on feedback

Pre-work. Each team of researchers reviewed all of the original site reports and the update reports done in 1998 for the particular site for which it was responsible. Based on this review, the researchers generated the first part of a site report covering resident participation, service-provider involvement, project organization and management, and the program model during the early and middle years. These research teams then made contact with the Project Managers of each of the sites to apprise them of our desire to gather information for this report (see Appendix A).

Site visits. The teams arranged a time with the Project Managers to conduct the site visits to gather new information for the sustainability report. These visits began in December, 2003 and ended in April, 2004. We asked the Project Managers to organize focus groups for the site visits and to distribute information letters and consent forms to potential participants in advance of the focus group sessions and key informant interviews (see Appendix A).

We used a stakeholder approach to information-gathering. The groups that we interviewed included: (a) the Project Manager and program coordinators, (b) direct service staff, (c) community residents who have been involved in the project, and (d) key service-provider partners. The exact nature of the groups varied from site to site, but we gathered information from each of these stakeholder groups. The total number of people interviewed at the Better Beginnings sites was 248. The numbers of participants for the Better Beginnings sites are as follows: Cornwall (30), Guelph (31), Highfield (39), Kingston (38), Regent Park (35), Southeast Ottawa (24), Sudbury (31), and Walpole Island (20).

A semi-structured interview guide was used, covering each of the main topic areas (see Appendix B). The focus group interviews and individual interviews were all tape-recorded. As well as conducting interviews, each research team visited one or more of the program activities and had a chance to chat informally with program participants and staff. We also took photos of the different programs at each site, which will be used by the RCU in presentations about the project. Each site visit lasted 2-3 days with follow-up as necessary.

Data analysis and report-writing. All of the focus group and individual interviews were transcribed. The research team read these transcriptions and used them to complete the draft of a site report. The site reports were organized into sections that focus on the key dimensions that we studied: (a) resident participation, (b) service-provider involvement, (c) project organization and management, and (d) the program model. Each of these sections was organized into the life cycle of the project, beginning with the developmental phase, moving to the demonstration phase, and ending with the sustainability phase. One site report was completed for each site: Cornwall (Lauzon, Kissin, & Nelson, 2004), Guelph (Nelson, Kissin, & Palijan, 2004), Highfield (Pancer & Nelson, 2004), Kingston (Hayward, 2004), Regent Park (Hayward & Kissin, 2004), Southeast Ottawa (Hayward, 2004), Sudbury (Hayward, 2004), and Walpole Island (Bernier, Nelson, & Kissin, 2004).

Feedback. Draft site reports were sent to the Project Managers for review, comments, and approval by the different stakeholder groups in the settings. Feedback from the sites is being used to make changes to the site reports. At the time of the writing of this report, we have not completed the feedback and report modification process with several of the sites. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that this is a first draft of the cross-site report that will undergo revision.

Cross-site report. As we have done previously with the Program Development/Program Model research, we used the individual site reports to generate this cross-site report. The cross-site report is used to highlight similarities and differences across the Better Beginnings projects over time. Once again, this is a first draft of the cross-site report that we anticipate will undergo revision.

Comparison Communities

A similar though less extensive approach was used to examine activities in the four comparison communities: Etobicoke, Hamilton, Ottawa-Vanier, and Peterborough. Karen Hayward gathered data about program activities and service-provider partnerships in these sites via interviews and an examination of websites. In Etobicoke, Ottawa-Vanier, and Peterborough, one person was interviewed to provide information for the comparison sites. In Hamilton, we were unable to locate a key informant who could be interviewed about the comparison community. Therefore, we relied only a website for information about the project community.

Pre-work. Hayward made contact with key informants in the comparison sites, who were suggested by the RCU, to apprise them of our desire to gather information for a sustainability report.

Site visits. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone with key informants. We distributed information letters and consent forms to the key informants in advance of the site visit (see Appendix C). A semi-structured interview guide was used, covering each of the main topic areas (see Appendix D). All of the interviews were tape-recorded.

Data analysis and report-writing. All of the interviews were transcribed. The researchers read these transcriptions and used them to complete the draft of a site report.

Feedback. Draft site reports for the comparison communities were sent to the three key informants for review and comments. Feedback from the informants was used to make changes to the final site report. Each site report provided a thick description of alternative activities and programs in the comparison sites.

Cross-site report. The cross-site report entailed a description of both the eight project sites and the four comparison sites.

We now turn to the main findings of the report. We begin with the findings regarding resident participation.

RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

The main questions that this research sought to address with regard to resident participation at the Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites were:

- What changes, if any, have there been in resident participation in the project sites and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors have sustained resident participation and what barriers have inhibited resident participation since the end of the demonstration period?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to resident participation?

Nature and Amount of Participation

The Early and Middle Years. If anything has differentiated Better Beginnings, Better Futures from other prevention programs, it is the active participation of community residents in shaping and developing the programs and services available to families in their communities. Resident participation was a key element in the vision that became Better Beginnings. In the projects' early and middle years all sites were actively monitored by the provincial government to ensure that residents were meaningfully involved in site governance and programming.

Most of the Better Beginnings sites only achieved significant and meaningful resident participation slowly and with a great deal of effort. Though all sites had the goal of having at least 50% of their main governing or steering committee comprised of residents, most had difficulty achieving this goal, and maintaining this level of participation. The few residents who attended steering committee meetings often felt uncomfortable and intimidated by the service-providers who sat on the committees with them. Typically, it was mostly women who

volunteered with the project, and who agreed to sit on the steering and other committees. The few who volunteered frequently found themselves doing a lot of work, and many experienced burnout. All of the Better Beginnings communities were transient by nature, which meant that many residents lived in the community for only a short time. For many of the communities, this meant that residents were constantly leaving their volunteer and committee positions and new residents had to be recruited. Most of the Better Beginnings communities were the homes of many cultures and many different languages, and these cultural and linguistic differences had to be addressed in attracting residents to the project and engaging them in a comfortable and meaningful manner.

All of these factors meant that a great deal of attention had to be paid to recruiting residents, making them feel comfortable in participating, and getting them to feel that the projects were theirs. Through a combination of many strategies, including door-to-door outreach, making meetings less formal, providing child-care and transportation, translating documents and materials into the languages that residents spoke, and recognizing residents' contributions through gifts and awards presented at volunteer recognition dinners, resident participation in every Better Beginnings site increased, and residents began to feel that they owned the project in their community. By the projects' middle years, every Better Beginnings site had made significant improvements in resident participation. Larger numbers of residents were involved as volunteers and committee members, allowing the workload to be spread among them. Residents began to take leadership roles, chairing committees and organizing activities. More men were becoming involved (though women still comprised the great majority of volunteers). There was more diversity among the residents involved in the projects, as they reached out to the different cultural and ethnic groups in their communities. Many of the residents were hired as program staff, and these individuals, because they knew their communities and represented the key cultural groups in those communities, were able to attract more individuals to take part as program participants and volunteers.

Unlike most sites, two of the Better Beginnings communities had high levels of resident participation right from the start. Guelph Better Beginnings had hired a community developer with the seed money it received to develop a Better Beginnings proposal, and this community developer took on as her main goal the development of a grass-roots organization for the project. For a time, this project also paid community members for attending meetings. This site had large numbers of residents involved in the project's management committees, events and tasks from the very beginning. Residents constituted 50% to 100% of the project committees and teams. Participation increased into the project's middle years, with more men, teenagers, and members of different cultural groups participating in the project. Sudbury Better Beginnings, the other site with high initial levels of resident participation, also hired a community worker to help recruit residents and facilitate meetings. This site ensured a high level of resident participation by only allowing residents or individuals sponsored by residents to sit on its governing "council." This meant that residents played primary roles in the administration, operation and management of the project.

The Later Years. The key question to be addressed is this: to what extent were the Better Beginnings sites able to sustain their high levels of resident participation and ownership after the demonstration phase, when they had become permanent programs in their communities, with secure annualized funding?

Three of the sites were able to sustain and even increase their level of resident participation after the projects had moved to annualized funding. The Guelph Better Beginnings project still retained many of the core community leaders that had been working with the project for many years, some since the project began 10 years earlier. In addition to the women who had been the major volunteers during the project's early and middle years, there had been a steady increase in the involvement of men and of adolescents in the project through a kind of "snowball" effect, with the family members of those who were volunteering also becoming engaged in the project. There was also greater representation of the various ethnic communities in the neighbourhood. It was clear that the project considered resident participation a core feature of the project:

"I think the resident participation is the driving force Resident participation in the neighbourhood and on the board here and in the committees here ... is quite high. If an agency isn't doing something the way the community wants, they know about it ... you know it's an issue because the community tells you." (Guelph key informant interview)

Another of the sites that was able to sustain the involvement of community residents was Southeast Ottawa, which continued to have a core group of 10 to 20 active volunteers, with approximately 50 to 60 volunteers in total. There was little difficulty in recruiting volunteers, as the project had become a strong and visible presence in the neighbourhood, and word of mouth was enough to bring in a steady stream of new volunteers. Though women constituted the majority of those involved in the project, there were increasing numbers of men who became involved, and a greater representation of individuals from the various ethnic groups living in the community.

The pattern was similar in the third site that managed to sustain resident involvement, the Highfield Community Enrichment Project in the Etobicoke area of Toronto. Highfield experienced increases in resident volunteers, particularly among the South Asian population, which constituted one of the biggest ethnic groups in the community. More men and more students were also becoming involved, in part because of the 40 hour community service requirement required for high school graduation, and through Ontario Works, the program that required adults on social assistance to do community service. Even among the sites that sustained high levels of involvement, however, there was a concern about maintaining the excitement that drew people into the project when it was beginning:

While five of the Better Beginnings sites maintained significant resident participation, they also experienced a change in residents' roles in project governance. Part of the reason for this was that there was a natural streamlining of the programs, which lessened the need for ongoing resident input.

"It's a little bit harder maybe to think about having a creative role [for residents] the way it was in the beginning." (Highfield staff focus group)

Overall there is still substantial resident participation in these five sites, and some of these sites have developed new mechanisms for gaining resident input. In four of the sites, this change was attributed primarily to the fact that Better Beginnings underwent significant organizational restructuring after receiving secure, annualized funding. At Regent Park in Toronto, Better

Beginnings merged with a local community health centre and became accountable to the health centre's board of directors. The Better Beginnings steering committee was disbanded, resulting in a smaller role for residents in the governance of the project (even though some of the residents did serve on the board of the health centre). The merger also meant that any potential Better Beginnings volunteers were subject to the Health Centre's more formal supervision policies, which may also have negatively impacted on volunteerism at this site. At Walpole Island, Better Beginnings' programs were amalgamated with the Department of Social Services, again resulting in the dissolution of the steering committee. Parents who had participated on the steering committee have continued to play a role in governance by participating on the Social Services committee (which is the primary decision-making body) and several advisory and planning committees. Residents also continue to volunteer for activities and programs at Walpole Island. In Cornwall, the project's Coordinating Committee was also disbanded. Parents now participate on a newly constituted advisory committee to the sponsor agency. The Kingston site also underwent significant restructuring. Many of the sub-committees were discontinued because it was felt there was no longer a need, given that programming had been running smoothly for years. As well, the role of the key decision-making body (the Action Group) for the project shifted, as the Better Beginnings project became a program of their host agency (the Community Health Centre). That is, the Action Group no longer received financial reports and were no longer involved in decisions around staff salaries or other personnel issues; those issues were the domain of the Health Centre's Board of Directors. There were conflicting views, however, about what this shift meant: some interpreted the shift as a reduction in governance power for the Action Group (and, therefore, the residents). Others argued that the Board was always ultimately responsible for these issues and there was no reduction in power. In addition, there is currently no volunteer coordinator. Nonetheless, most residents, and other key informants, believed that residents continued to have that feeling of ownership of the program.

"My sense is that there is a strong feeling of ownership, like 'these are our programs for our community' ... especially for the people who are very involved." (Kingston key informant interview)

However, there were some who felt that the sense of community ownership had been greater in the earlier years than it was currently.

"... the community input, that strong community that used to be there, that's gone" (Kingston staff focus group)

"I always used to explain Better Beginnings as something that worked from the community up, and that the community had a say as to what decisions would be made, how staff would go, what programs would come out of that. I don't say that anymore." (Kingston staff focus group)

There were also fewer volunteer opportunities, as staff ran the programs, and there were fewer committees to volunteer with:

"I'm not sure how many different outlets there are for people to volunteer." (Kingston Action Group focus group)

The Sudbury site also experienced a change in resident participation. This change was attributed to the Better Beginnings project becoming somewhat “institutionalized.” Staff had been hired, and the project’s programs were running smoothly under staff direction. The project’s sub-committees were no longer needed for input into program development. This produced a reduction in the kind of excitement associated with developing new programs and a new vision for prevention that had been felt in the early years of the project:

“Resident participation at the beginning was very, very high of course because of the excitement and the energy of putting together a new organization that people could actually help to ... develop and design Then we sort of fumbled because then once we got staff in place and we got the programs going, then it became a matter of ‘where does the community continue to participate?’ ... So the place slowly starts to institutionalize itself, which is a natural kind of thing to happen, but we always have to be aware that we’re not ... just another institution that residents don’t have any input on.” (Sudbury key informant)

Residents’ Roles and Activities

The Early and Middle Years. Residents took on a great many roles in each of the Better Beginnings projects during the developmental and demonstration phases. They played a significant role in:

- project governance (serving on program and steering committees)
- planning and developing new programs
- managing and staffing programs, as both paid staff and volunteers
- reaching out to other members of the communities
- interviewing candidates for staff positions and hiring staff at every level (including the project manager)
- making presentations about the project to a wide variety of audiences
- writing articles and reports on the project for newspapers and other print media
- preparing snacks and meals for special events
- staffing community events and celebrations
- working with children in playgroups and classrooms
- translating and interpreting for individuals whose first language was not English
- raising funds for the project
- lobbying for health and safety improvements (e.g., stop signs and traffic lights)
- providing child care for parents during meetings and special events
- generating policies, reports and program documents
- cleaning and beautifying project and community facilities
- taking part in external boards and committees, and the task forces of local agencies
- a wide variety of research activities, including developing questionnaires and interview questions, conducting interviews, reviewing reports, etc., as volunteer members of research teams and paid research staff
- providing donations of clothing and food for those in need in the community
- creating and presenting workshops for other community members, service-providers and teachers
- advocating for the community through written submissions and oral presentations to politicians and other public bodies

As the projects moved from their early to their middle years, residents increasingly took on key leadership roles. They chaired committees, coordinated the development and management of programs, and represented the project in the wider community. Residents also engaged more widely in community advocacy and political activism, often in concert with other community organizations. Indeed, it seemed that Better Beginnings had become a training ground for community leaders.

The Later Years. The sites varied in the nature and number of roles available for residents. In many of the sites residents continued to take on a wide range of roles in the projects that they had undertaken in the early and middle years. These roles included participation in project governance; the planning, implementation, operation and staffing of programs and community events; and representing the project to the wider community. Residents who had had their “start” as volunteers, committee members and paid staff of Better Beginnings often went on to take volunteer and paid positions in other community organizations. For example, some became employees of the local Board of Education or served on other community boards and committees such as school councils. This helped established Better Beginnings as a “presence” in the community, a safe place in communities that were sometimes felt to be unsafe, and a model of community participation and leadership. Many of the residents who served as volunteers and staff of Better Beginnings became a core group within the project who were very knowledgeable about the project, having had experience with a wide range of project programs and activities over several years:

“Since I’ve been here in Guelph ... it’s been six years, I think, and I started at the little complex, K-45 as front desk and then I started doing the clothing and...I’m doing work for Family and Children’s Services, I help go in with the families that need help with kids And then I also ... do the front-desk here and that’s volunteer time and I also do the bread, every morning I come in.” (Guelph resident focus group participant)

Residents participated in numerous volunteer roles in the Guelph, Southeast Ottawa, and Highfield sites. At all of the sites, residents continued to sit on committees, provide feedback and advice about programs and policies, and helping out at special events. However, in some sites there were fewer roles available for residents in terms of project governance, and fewer opportunities than there had been for them to participate as volunteers in the projects.

Motivation to Participate

The Early and Middle Years. Residents participated in the projects for many reasons. They wanted:

- to improve their own lives, and that of their children
- to make their neighbourhood a better place to live
- to relieve the boredom and sense of isolation they were experiencing, and meet new people
- to use the skills they had and learn new skills
- to get some relief from the stress of caring for their children and families
- (for newcomers) to learn English, and to learn about Canadian culture

- to obtain paid employment with the project
- to have the opportunity to express their own culture (particularly in Walpole Island and Sudbury, which had significant First Nations communities, and Sudbury and Cornwall, which had large Francophone communities) and speak their own language
- to get a sense of having done something worthwhile, having made a contribution
- to learn more about their community
- to obtain more and better programs and services for their community
- to build connections with their children's teachers and the school their children attended
- to address concerns that they had about things such as neighbourhood safety, education, and other issues

While these were the major factors that underlay residents' desire to participate in Better Beginnings, most made their initial contact with the project through individual contacts with project staff or with other residents who were already participating in programs or as volunteers. As the projects grew and became more established in their communities, word of mouth from people who were already involved in the project attracted others to come out. The wide range of programs and activities, along with the many supports that the project provided (e.g., child care, food), also attracted people to the project. These features of the projects, combined with the warm and friendly atmosphere residents experienced when they first took part in programs or began volunteering, were the most significant factors in getting people involved. While their desire to improve their own lives and the lives of their children and family may have motivated their first involvements, it was their positive experiences with the project that made them feel a part of what was happening in their community. In addition, because the project was new, and because it was the focus of so much attention and research, residents felt that they were contributing to something important. They identified with the new spirit of participation that the project represented, and were gratified with the attention they received, and the way in which they seemed to be valued by service-providers, government officials and others. They began to find a strong voice, and were learning how to make it heard.

Later Years. In the projects' later years, the same factors continued to motivate residents to get involved with Better Beginnings. They wanted to better their lives, and the lives of their children and families; they wanted to improve their community; they wanted a chance to use their skills and learn new skills; and they wanted to reduce their isolation and meet their neighbours, among many other things. In addition, many residents who had benefitted from Better Beginnings programs indicated that they wanted to give something back to the project and to the community, in an attempt to repay the project for all it had done for them:

"I know for myself personally, the reason why I volunteered so much was because Better Beginnings gave me more than anybody else ever did There was support, they talked to you ... they tried to help you out as much as they could. So, I found once I was healthier and on my feet, I wanted to give back...." (Resident from Ottawa)

"With a lot of our new families I find ... that they do want to give back. Your kid's involved in this program ... they like the program, they enjoy it, they feel they got something out of it, they want to give back" (Regent Park staff focus group)

“I had gotten so much from Better Beginnings.... I participated in Better Beginnings I just wanted to say thank you, to give something back because we had gotten so much out of it.” (Resident from Kingston)

Residents were also motivated to participate in and work for Better Beginnings by the relationships they formed with other residents through the project, and with Better Beginnings staff. The majority of front line staff at the various Better Beginnings sites were themselves community residents, who came from the same cultural and ethnic backgrounds as the participants in their programs. This resulted in strong bonds of friendship and support between residents and Better Beginnings staff, and drew more residents into the program:

“I think I was motivated [to volunteer for Better Beginnings] by some of the staff that I got to meet in the community” (Regent Park resident focus group)

Though there was some indication that individuals may have lost some of the excitement they felt in the project’s early years at being part of something new and important, residents still identified with the goals and principles of Better Beginnings, and saw themselves as being part of something important. This continued to motivate them to work for Better Beginnings in its later stages:

“Having that welcome feeling and being ... appreciated for what they do. The little things they do bring in, even if it’s information or some kind of a help in any way. I think the appreciation is what keeps them strong. And also the visions, goals and principles of Better Beginnings. It’s beautiful, the reality of our visions, goals and principles and I think people, once they get the feel for what we’re trying to do, they get hooked ... they feel like it belongs to them ...” (Sudbury key informant)

In the project’s middle and later years, another set of factors became somewhat more prevalent in residents becoming involved with Better Beginnings. During this time, there were significant cuts to social assistance and to social programs. These cuts made life much more difficult for communities such as those in which Better Beginnings projects were located, where many families were having difficulties making ends meet. Families were more desperate to find new sources of income, and, consequently, the possibility of finding employment with Better Beginning became a much stronger motivating factor in getting people involved with the project:

“The motivation now [to get involved with Better Beginnings] is more for pay... The new people [who get involved], they’re looking for something [they will be paid for].” (Highfield staff focus group)

During this time, another factor that became important in terms of generating volunteers for the project had to do with provincial legislation which mandated community service for students in order to obtain their high school diploma, and for those receiving social assistance (the Ontario Works program). While some of the projects were somewhat conflicted about aspects of these programs, because they went against project values concerning social justice, a number decided to participate because they felt that they could provide a more supportive volunteer environment than many of the alternatives that were available. Some of those who participated through mandatory programs, however, did not feel the same commitment to the project as those who

volunteered to participate.

Barriers to Participation and Strategies Used to Overcome Them

Barriers in the Early and Middle Years. During the projects' early and middle years, there were several barriers that impeded residents' participation in Better Beginnings. Many of these had to do with the difficult life circumstances that individuals and families had to deal with, and with practical things like child care and getting to meetings and programs:

- being too busy with work, school and other activities
- poverty and daily life stresses
- health problems and sickness
- conflicts with work schedules
- lack of child care and transportation

- distance and weather if not living in the vicinity
- high turnover in the community

Other barriers had to do with residents' apprehensions about meeting new people, and interacting with service-providers:

- feelings of anxiety about meeting new people
- feelings of intimidation and discomfort that residents had about interacting with professionals from agencies and organizations
- the formality of project meetings, and the "big words" used in meetings that involved residents and service-provider professionals
- distrust and fear of certain agencies (e.g., Children's Aid) represented at meetings

For a number of sites, cultural and language differences served as barriers to participation:

- for newcomers to Canada – language and cultural differences, lack of familiarity with the neighbourhood and with Canadian society
- cultural and language differences among groups in the community
- conflicts among groups in the community

For some, characteristics of the Better Beginnings projects, and the other residents who participated, were felt to be barriers to participation:

- disappointment with early experiences in Better Beginnings
- lack of clarity about residents' roles
- the heavy workload that fell on the shoulders of active residents, causing feelings of burnout
- the length of time it took for programs to become operational
- lack of programs for certain segments of the community
- differences or conflicts with project staff and other resident participants

Another set of barriers had to do with gender:

- the reluctance of some husbands to have their wives participate in the project
- the fact that most of the project volunteers were women may have made some men reluctant to participate

Finally, one of the significant barriers to greater participation in many of the communities was simply a lack of awareness of the project. Many residents simply did not know about Better Beginnings, and what it had to offer to them.

Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers. All of the Better Beginnings projects put a great deal of effort into overcoming the barriers that stood in the way of greater and more effective resident participation. The strategies they employed included the following:

Life circumstance barriers.

- payment of volunteers to attend meetings (at Guelph, for a short period of time)
- paying for child care and transportation costs
- providing parents with child care while they took part in programs and attended meetings
- changing meeting times to accommodate residents' work and child care schedules
- encouraging service-providers to use simpler language, and to listen more to residents
- purchasing a bus to transport residents to meetings and other activities (Ottawa)
- providing lunches, snacks and other meals to volunteers and committee members
- having programs in a location that is easily accessible by public transit
- providing programs free of charge, or at minimal cost
- extending program hours

Meeting with new people and interacting with service-providers.

- setting a goal of having at least 51% or more (e.g., Kingston, 66%; Sudbury, 100%) of steering and other committees being comprised of residents; when larger numbers of residents were present, they felt more able to express their feelings and wishes
- forming groups consisting solely of residents (sometimes with one staff person as a resource); these groups made recommendations and decisions, and passed these along to the steering committee
- holding more informal events to allow residents and service-providers to get to know one another as individuals
- involving residents in more concrete, comfortable tasks, or on smaller, less formal committees, before being asked to participate in larger, more formal committees, like the steering committee
- service-providers making conscious attempts to solicit ideas and opinions from residents, and took time to deal with concerns raised by residents at meetings
- providing written materials that were written more clearly, in plain language
- using visual aids during presentations
- “buddying up” new committee members with old committee members, to ease the transition to committee work
- breaking down larger meeting groups into smaller ones that would be less intimidating

for residents, and make them feel more comfortable speaking

Language and cultural differences.

- hiring staff who represented language and cultural groups
- making project materials available in different languages spoken by community members
- project staff doing outreach with members of different cultural and language groups in the community
- providing translation and interpretation at meetings, events, interviews, etc.
- holding workshops on intercultural relations (Sudbury)
- creating committees to represent different cultural groups in the community (Sudbury)

Project barriers.

- taking steps to recognize and encourage volunteer participation (e.g., volunteer dinners to recognize contribution of volunteers)
- development of a volunteer manual to make volunteer roles clearer
- assigning a community development staff person the responsibility of coordinating volunteers, and ensuring that volunteers had a positive experience
- providing training opportunities to resident volunteers

Project awareness.

- staff and volunteers going door-to-door to inform residents about the project
- writing articles for the local media about the project
- providing welcome baskets and visits to new residents in some projects (e.g., Regent Park, Highfield)
- providing information about the project when children registered for school, or at community events and celebrations
- encouraging residents to bring friends and acquaintances to Better Beginnings programs, events and meetings
- “Traveling Road Show” brought to various public housing communities and isolated areas to make people aware of Better Beginnings (Sudbury)

While most Better Beginnings projects experienced growth in the number of men participating in the project, most did not develop strategies specifically designed to bring more men in as committee members and volunteers. Gender issues were often dealt with in things such as workshops on things such as parenting and family relations.

Barriers in the Later Years. The strategies used by the different Better Beginnings sites were often very effective, and produced some very positive effects on the residents, their children and families, and the project and community (these are documented below). A number of barriers to resident involvement still remained, however, and some new barriers were also experienced.

Financial hardship. Many of these reflected the day-to-day reality of residents having to meet their economic needs. Cuts to welfare payments and social programs exacerbated the hardship

that families were experiencing, and made it especially difficult to get involved in Better Beginnings:

“Lots of our families are like ships in the wind, the dad comes home and the mom goes out to work, you know, or vice versa, like I don’t know how much time they spend as families because they’re working so hard to, you know, give the kids shelter and all that kind of stuff.” (Highfield staff focus group)

“To go out there and seek volunteers I think is getting harder because many people are in the Ontario Works program. [They are] forced to go back to school or take on jobs that are low paying .. or take them way out, and then you’ve got the issues of day care I think the survival issues for the families are greater now than before ” (Regent Park staff focus group)

“I think another barrier might be that the day to day reality here in our community, for a lot of people, is that volunteering is something a lot of people want to do, but then the real life crisis of ... having severe maintenance issues in their home or being able to ... deal with a sick child, or being able to further benefit your own education take precedence and don’t allow you to volunteer as readily.... ” (Regent Park resident focus group)

“Parents are feeling extremely economically stressed, and they’re finding it even more difficult, not only just for Better Beginnings, but for all of the organizations they used to volunteer for Like I get this feeling when I’m talking to parents, they’re just hanging on. ‘Things are going to get better but ...we sold everything we’ve got to sell, we’ve got no more space for handling crisis.’ Five dollars is a crisis. Before \$25 was a crisis. So, that’s a big change I’ve seen in the parents. That translates into their ability to give, their ability to be leaders, their ability to be part of what’s going on, their ability to be stable ” (Sudbury key informant interview)

Related to this was an attitude that people sometimes had about volunteering, as being simply unpaid work. This is not surprising in a community where many were struggling economically, and where finding a paid job was their foremost preoccupation.

Changing communities. One significant barrier present in many of the Better Beginnings communities had to do with the changing and transient nature of the communities. Many of these communities experienced a significant change in the cultural diversity of their communities, or in the ethnic and cultural mix in their communities. This meant that there were not always staff or volunteers who represented major cultural groups, or who could serve as translators and interpreters. Also, new residents needed time to settle in and feel comfortable before they were able to get involved as volunteers with Better Beginnings:

“And ... some people are shy, I mean it can be daunting to walk into a place where everybody seems to know each other and not know anybody or something, and there can be language barriers and we try to address those with the group [with] our home visitors having different languages and things, and trying to translate as much of our outreach stuff as we can... But it’s still a barrier, I mean if you don’t have any English, you’d

probably feel uncomfortable.” (Guelph key informant interview)

The transient nature of the communities in many Better Beginnings sites posed a significant hindrance to getting people to serve on committees. It often took time to prepare someone to become a member of one of the project’s program committees, or the Steering Committee. They would begin volunteering on the front lines, and then, as they became more comfortable, would progress to more responsible volunteer positions. Often, by the time they were ready to take on these more responsible positions, they would have moved out of the neighbourhood. Often, it was the most successful and competent of the volunteers who moved out of the community to take on better jobs, or move to more affluent neighbourhoods.

“This is still a very transient community ... We still have almost a hundred percent turnover at the school between JK and grade five. And so it seems that by the time they evolve to the point that they’re ready to do committee work, they’re on the committee for six months or three months and they move away and then we start all over again. So, whereas we have a really large volunteer contingent, it’s still a challenge to keep people in the committee level.” (Highfield key informant interview)

The transient and changing nature of many of these communities meant that Better Beginnings had to work constantly to inform new residents of their existence and of the programs, services and opportunities it offered to the community.

Structural changes in projects. One of the projects (Guelph) had re-located into a larger facility, which created some confusion for community members. The new location, which was also home for local social services, felt a bit more formal and unwelcoming to residents.

“It’s a little more daunting I think, in this building, to walk in [because] it’s a bigger building, it seems a little more ... industrial ... big-business kind of bureaucratic ... even though we had partners on site there, Family and Children’s Services was there, it wasn’t maybe as obvious, so maybe people could be a little leery about that. And it is kind ... daunting, it’s big, it is a big space and it’s confusing sometimes, about which part is Family Gateway and which part is Family and Children’s Services and ... what programs are we allowed to go to.... But, I think once you come in and get to know it, it’s not so bad, but it can be, I think, a little big.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“It’s just bigger, it just feels bigger, so there were some perceptions from the community that being bigger would be a barrier ... that’s it’s harder to come into this building ... I think there were some community members that had a fairly strong perception that this isn’t what Gateway was and it’s different, and we’ve lost a lot.” (Guelph key informant interview)

Also, as mentioned earlier, some of the projects had undergone significant organizational restructuring in which the project’s steering group had been disbanded. This left fewer opportunities for residents to be involved in the governance of the projects. There was also a feeling in some projects that staff were there to run the programs, so volunteers were not needed. In Sudbury, some staff even felt that having residents participate as volunteers got in their way:

“Your whole workload becomes trying to get the parents to understand and ... they’re taking a lot more focus than the children. So it’s better not ... to have any parents [volunteer] in our programs.” (Sudbury staff focus group)

The “old” vs. the new. Some of the barriers to resident involvement had to do with the fact that the projects had now become established programs within their communities. When they had been in their beginning stages, the parents who were involved felt special, and this “bonded” them to the project. Now that the project was more established, some of this special feeling had dissipated.

“Those parents who had been involved [at the beginning], they knew ... they are being observed ... there is a rallying point at the time ... they all banded together for the project to become a reality, a living reality, not just a demonstration phase. I’m just thinking maybe that, the spirit, the timing also had something to do with it, and now that things have sort of leveled, settled down and they know that there are ...staff being paid to do all this, this and this, maybe the engagement is no longer as strong.” (Highfield steering committee focus group)

In addition, because of the strong bond developed among the “old” residents who had been involved with the project for many years, it sometimes became difficult for new residents to get involved, particularly when they were from cultural and ethnic groups that had recently moved into the community:

“This community was not the same, is not the same now as it was when the project first started. And then there’s a question of ownership, you know what I mean, because there’s still, there’s still staff, and there’s still some of the old volunteers, but then there’s also new people, they may be from a different cultural background, different linguistic background, and it’s a question of does that old group open up enough to let that new group in and have a voice ... even though people say that they’re being inclusive you go into a room, and everybody stares at you, nobody speaks your language, nobody looks at you, nobody’s wearing the same cultural dress as you, and they’re telling you ‘oh yeah, you can stay,’ well, how long are you going to stay.” (Highfield key informant)

“Même les grands-mères ne voulaient pas ça. Ils ont dit qu’on est tellement intimes après les huit semaines qu’ils ne voulaient pas rentrer un étranger parce que la ils se sentaient à l’aise pour parler. Mais s’il y avait quelqu’un d’autre, ils ne parleraient pas. Ils ont dit, ‘On est une famille là.’ Ils ne voulaient pas.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“Even grand-mothers didn’t want that. They said that after these 8 weeks they have become close and comfortable enough to talk that they didn’t want to include a stranger. If there is someone else, they would not talk. They said, ‘We are a family now.’ They don’t want that.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

Limited staff resources. Supporting residents to participate required a great deal of time; staff must spend time listening to residents’ concerns, helping them with their problems, and encouraging them to take part in project activities. For projects that had become larger, with many programs and administrative tasks, it became difficult for staff to find the time to support

residents at the level that was needed.

“I could sit and, you know, converse with the volunteers and take care of the volunteers all day and get nothing done in the office, you know, and I find personally, that very difficult to balance because I know I’ve got to get this budget done or I’ve got to get this done and people come by and pop in the office and they want to, you know, chat with you and you feel like you know, you’re not really giving them 100 percent.” (Highfield staff focus group)

Bureaucratic structures. Another barrier to participation had to do with the process that residents had to go through to volunteer with the project. In the earlier years, residents had just come straight into the project and volunteered. In the later years, volunteers often had to go through a police check before volunteering. With the large numbers of individuals volunteering through the Ontario Works program, there was often a long wait for volunteers to obtain these approvals. In Regent Park, because Better Beginnings had merged with the Health Centre, residents had to go through a bureaucratic process with the Health Centre before they volunteered with Better Beginnings. That is, they were subject to more formal supervision policies because of legal and risk management policies. This extra layer of bureaucracy may have made it more difficult to recruit new residents.

Lack of community or partner support. Some Better Beginnings projects experienced a lack of support from other community agencies or organizations that were critical to the work of volunteers. In Cornwall, for example, the project felt that some of the local school principals were not interested in supporting Better Beginning programs, creating a barrier for families of that school with regard to volunteering with Better Beginnings:

“Puis, la c’est à commencer. La direction de notre école, ils ne sont pas trop, trop intéresser. Comme ils gênent un peu du programme soit qu’ils ne sont pas intéressés, soit qu’ils ont peur, soit que ça leurs fait rien.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“Then we have to start over. Our school personnel is not very interested. They seem to shy away from the program. They are either uninterested, afraid or they just don’t care.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

Language issues. Some Better Beginnings projects continued to experience difficulties with regard to the languages spoken by members of their communities. As mentioned earlier, there was a need to accommodate to the languages spoken by new cultural groups within the community. In Cornwall, language was a difficulty in a somewhat different sense. Although Anglophone families were welcome to participate, Better Beginnings program’s primary target audience is Francophone families. Some Anglophone parents refused to participate due to the Francophone nature of the Better Beginnings programming. However, there was not an equivalent program offered to Anglophone parents. Therefore, due to a lack of funding for equivalent Anglophone programs, the Francophone nature of Better Beginnings posed a barrier for Anglophone families seeking to participate in the types of programs offered by Better Beginnings. Similar difficulties were experienced in Sudbury by Francophone residents, when meetings were held in English, or materials were sent home in English and not French.

Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers. Better Beginnings projects continued to use several strategies employed at earlier stages to bring residents into the project as program participants and volunteers, as well as employing a number of new strategies.

Informing the community about Better Beginnings. The high degree of turnover in many Better Beginnings communities meant that Better Beginnings had to reach out to new community members, and new groups within the community, to make them aware of the project. This was done by means of flyers in different languages, tours of the facility, special events such as community breakfasts and family movie nights, the use of promotional incentives such as Better Beginnings bags and t-shirts, as well as word-of-mouth:

“There’s fliers we put out...besides, people are curious, like they hear ... this is going on, ... and then they just come on in and have a tour and the next thing you know, they keep coming or they do their volunteer times.” (Guelph resident focus group participant)

“There’s more of an effort to be out there, for example, the movie nights, I think that’s a huge success, you know, they’re attracting three hundred people on a Wednesday evening to watch a video together, and then they get to see the staff there, and the breakfasts, there’s just more big time drawing events and they get that opportunity to sell what the program can do, and I think that’s a really good thing.” (Highfield key informant interview)

Creating a welcoming environment. The Better Beginnings sites also tried to provide a welcoming environment, to encourage new participants to come back and participate in programs or as volunteers. Particularly in those projects that experienced continuing high levels of resident involvement, staff were expected to support volunteers, and to make them feel welcome and valued. Indeed, when new staff were hired, their ability to relate in a warm and welcoming way to residents was considered a key qualification in hiring them:

“It’s gotta be an open friendly place or else it don’t work. So, we’re trying really hard to make everybody friendly (laugh) ... even if you don’t like it, right, sometimes you’ve gotta listen right and take it with a grain of salt. So, it’s a learning process too.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“What I really wanted to share with the staff was that we all had to be responsible for the project and for our volunteers all the time. That there was nobody that could say ‘that’s not my job.’ And so what I really tried to share with people was that, this whole idea that we are all ambassadors for the project ... for everybody we meet, we are all the face of the project.” (Highfield key informant)

Perhaps the key element in attracting residents to participate in any aspect of Better Beginnings was the personal relationships that residents formed with staff, and the support that staff provided residents:

“I think a key thing to retaining them [resident volunteers], engaging them with the project is really them knowing that really we care about them.” (Highfield staff focus group)

Recognizing volunteers. The projects continued to work hard to recognize volunteers for their efforts. They did this by providing gifts and honorariums for some volunteer services, giving “thank you” cards to volunteers, holding volunteer weeks and volunteer recognition dinners, among many other things.

“They’re very quick to acknowledge their volunteers here, and that’s a good thing... with the staff, it doesn’t matter what agency it is, they’re very quick to acknowledge. They say thank you, or give you a card. I’ve received cards. I’ve received gifts So that makes me feel good, and everybody else, ...they do appreciate everything you do ... and the staff here does make sure, ... they let them know that they’re appreciated.” (Guelph resident focus group participant)

Making resident participation a priority. For those projects in which resident participation was maintained or increased, it was clear that resident participation was made a project priority. This was done in several ways. In Highfield, for example, there was a change in the job responsibilities assigned to the Community Development Coordinator:

“I would say that her [the Community Development Coordinator’s] primary responsibility now is volunteer coordination, support and supervision. She still does the other stuff, don’t get me wrong, but that is the focus, and it takes up a lot of her time. She is basically available here for volunteers who come in four days a week, and that makes a critical difference.” (Highfield key informant)

Cultural and language issues. To make sure that individuals from all language and cultural groups were aware of the program and felt comfortable participating, the projects employed several strategies, including hiring programs staff who spoke different languages, translating notices into several languages, providing interpretation at meetings and programs, and initiating conversation circles and ESL classes.

Planning and visioning days. In order to encourage residents to participate in project planning and governance, some of the projects held planning or visioning days in which residents, staff, and other stakeholders talked about the project’s future, and dealt with any problems or conflicts within the program:

“Then there’s all the little concerns people come up with, like ... just a few weeks ago, we had a visioning day and everybody got to voice what we’re proud of, voice what we wanted to see.” (Guelph resident focus group participant)

Support of community partners. The support of partner agencies and organizations in the community played a key role in sustaining resident participation. At Highfield Better Beginnings, for example, Highfield School, the project’s key partner, played an important role in making parents feel more welcome. Support from and involvement of Highfield teachers in the project increased over the years, particularly with the hiring of the current In-School coordinator who was very successful at relating to teachers and school staff. The current Principal of Highfield School was formerly the Vice-Principal of the school when the project started, and consequently has a good knowledge of the project and has provided good support. All of this has resulted in the project being more integrated with the school:

“It’s [the project is] also more integrated with the school, so I’m not even sure sometimes if people really fully understand when they’re dealing with the project and when they’re dealing with the school and that’s actually a good thing because we’ve kind of strengthened each other.” (Highfield key informant interview)

Leadership development programs. A few of the projects developed specific programs to enhance community participation and leadership. Highfield Better Beginnings, for example, initiated a leadership development course that was offered to Highfield residents (and later, to all members of the community):

“It started out as a very sort of basic knowledge-based program and really expanded into this sort of community awareness group, where the participants would then take on projects that they thought were important in the community and implement them. And so that’s where the whole street safety thing came from, like putting in the new security lighting, so there was a lot of sort of community lobbying that came out of that group.” (Highfield key informant interview)

Impacts of Resident Participation

Early and Middle Years. In the early and middle years of Better Beginnings, residents, staff and other stakeholders reported many positive outcomes associated with the participation of residents as volunteers and program decision-makers. These impacts included the following:

For residents.

- greater confidence, self-esteem, and self-knowledge
- a sense of independence, assertiveness, and awareness of resources and rights.
- a sense of satisfaction from helping others
- greater knowledge of community
- greater political awareness and involvement
- enhanced skills, including enhanced public speaking skills, improved English skills, and employment skills, which encouraged residents to go back to school or find employment
- increase in paid employment, within and outside the project, as residents learned job skills
- concrete and emotional support in times of need; this support included clothing, food, transportation, respite from child care, having a shoulder to cry on, and knowing that someone cares about them
- enhanced ability to cope with stress and crises
- changed attitudes about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- improved access to medical attention and advice
- improved parenting skills
- increased practise of breast feeding and greater knowledge about child-rearing
- increased contact with other cultures, and a greater appreciation of what individuals from these cultures offer to the community
- increase confidence and assertiveness in dealing with social services and community agencies

For children.

- increased exposure to different play situations and activities, more social interaction with other children, greater confidence and independence, and enhanced emotional support
- improved development, behavioural and social skills
- better parent-child interactions and strengthened family bonds
- better health because of increased referrals for health problems and early detection
- enhanced feelings of cultural pride and awareness

For the projects.

- more and better quality programs because volunteers free up staff time, and because resident input ensured that programs were what community wanted and needed
- better staff who understood the needs of the community, because residents had participated in staff hiring
- better relations with residents, because most front-line staff lived in neighbourhood
- enhanced accountability of Better Beginnings for the programs it offers and the way in which it operates
- enhanced program relevance and organization
- increased program attendance
- greater integration and better relationships between residents and service-providers in the community
- increased visibility and credibility of project leaders in the community and wide recognition of their roles as leaders within the neighbourhood
- high regard for Better Beginnings in the outside community because of residents' involvement in the promotion and advocacy of the program

For the communities.

- residents are seen as positive role models for their children and for other community members
- more positive image of the community
- improvement in the safety and security of the neighbourhood through social action
- increased voice of residents in other community agencies and organizations
- decrease in the use of the welfare system as residents realize that they can contribute to the workforce in a meaningful way
- improvements in the physical appearance of the communities, and increase in the number of resources available to families through the cleaning and development of playgrounds and parks
- a greater sense of community, and of ownership and responsibility for the community.
- reduced sense of social isolation, boredom, loneliness, and fear
- improved relations among ethnic and cultural groups in the community
- improved contact and relations among service-providers in the community through their work together on Better Beginnings
- increased understanding and acceptance of different people, personalities, and cultures
- greater integration of schools and communities; teachers and community members are communicating more, and parents feel welcomed in the school

While the vast majority of outcomes reported by key stakeholders in Better Beginnings were positive, there were some negative outcomes that surfaced. These included the following:

- time away from children while volunteering had a negative impact on some families
- divisions between those involved in Better Beginnings and those not involved
- negative reactions of some men to their spouse's involvement and increased self-confidence
- burn-out in more active residents
- resentment by volunteer residents toward residents who became paid employees
- over-reliance on the same volunteers
- greater demand for volunteers than the projects had capacity for, resulting in disappointment and frustration among community members
- lack of staff time to train and coordinate volunteers

Later Years. Interviews with all those involved in the Better Beginnings projects in their later years continued to produce reports of very positive outcomes, and reinforced the reports of positive outcomes from the earlier and middle years of the projects.

Impacts on residents. Residents and those working with residents continued to report that involvement in Better Beginnings enhanced residents' feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence, gave them the chance to meet and get to know their neighbours, and gave them a sense of ownership in their communities:

"When I got involved, it added to my résumé, it gave me more confidence, I got to know my neighbours better, I knew all my neighbours, not just my next door neighbour, but the community." (Guelph resident focus group)

The increase in self-esteem, along with the concrete skills residents learned, often gave them the confidence they needed to pursue further education, work as volunteers with other agencies, or seek employment:

"I started my ECE [Early Childhood Education] because it [the project] influenced me and especially my children born here." (Highfield staff focus group)

"When I first came into PFBB [Parents for Better Beginnings], I was kind of disconnected. I wasn't really connected to anywhere else in the community. And ... I had two small kids at home and my confidence level wasn't very high. I had been out of work for a little bit. I got involved in PFBB and they ... really did assist me in recognizing what my skill level was and because of my work with them, I was able to get work at various other agencies within the community It really did encourage me, which was very good. It came at the right time in my life." (Regent Park resident focus group)

One of the key elements of Better Beginnings was the support that the project gave to residents while they were dealing with difficult life circumstances. This helped them cope with the circumstances and improve their lives:

“I believe it empowers the individual when they see that working together and sticking with it, that things can happen.” (Walpole Island resident focus group)

“Better Beginnings [helped me]. My counselling with [a staff person], my one-on-one with her. And then they had workshops, all kinds of workshops, coping mechanisms, stress mechanisms, parenting And they’ve never done any judging me. They stuck by me through thick and thin. Even with, I had my kids taken away for 10 months ... got my kids back, stayed on the straight and narrow path.” (Ottawa resident focus group)

“I came from a really abusive relationship as well, so I did a lot of counselling with [a staff person] and sort of... climbed back up the ladder and realized that ... it doesn’t matter what people think and it doesn’t matter what your ex-husband says, it’s what’s inside. And then just being around here, you meet a lot of friends and they’re very, very supportive and I don’t have any family here in Ottawa, so this is kind of like an extended family.” (Ottawa resident focus group)

Better Beginnings has been wonderful for me personally. Better Beginnings ... has changed my life personally and ... helped me become a better parent ... and more self-confident and just to realize that ... I can be something more than what maybe I thought I could be [I]t’s been a wonderful support for me.” (Kingston key informant interview)

Residents also became more comfortable dealing with service-providers and organizations, helping them to be more effective in advocating for themselves:

“Well, for me, it gave me an experience on, first of all, how a committee works, whether it’s a band-sanctioned committee, or if it’s something that’s community-driven.” (Walpole Island resident focus group)

“I can’t imagine how many people have come to me, or come to us, who would not have come to us because we’re this big institution [Housing], this big landlord, this big monolith with ... not the best reputation, unless they were encouraged by their PFBB worker to go....” (Regent Park service-provider focus group).

“Ça ma donne la confiance à communiquer avec le personnel de mon école parce que je trouve ça bien intimidant de rentrer à une école puis parler a la direction.” (Cornwall resident focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“That has given me the confidence to communicate with my school’s personnel. Usually, I find it very intimidating to enter a school and talk to the principal.” (Cornwall resident focus group)

Their connection with the Better Beginnings projects have also helped residents make friends and build support systems:

“ ... even myself and the people who came to my infant group, there’s two that I’m still very good friends with, and you know .. that’s ... six years later after, our babies [are] ... in school now. And there’s others ... with my second child that I met and there’s ... a few

of those that I've kept in contact with.... There's a core group of people that, we all met through Better Beginnings, and we still meet ... once or twice a month to do something with the girls...." (Kingston key informant interview)

Impacts on children and families. The involvement of residents in Better Beginnings continued to have a positive impact on residents' children and families.

"... when [my son] sees the facilitator who babysat him during the prenatal classes ... she remembers his name, she asks how he's doing ... he remembers her ... and he has a great affection for them They've made a lasting impact in the lives of the children, as well as in mine" (Kingston key informant interview)

Parents involved in Better Beginnings served as role models of community service. As the projects matured, and the children got older, many of them became project volunteers, like their parents. This began to produce a whole new generation of volunteers in Better Beginnings and other community projects:

"We have one here that started here when he was about 12, 13 and he's almost gone right up the ladder to working with the kids." (Guelph key informant interview)

Impacts on the project. Those involved in the Better Beginnings sites that were able to sustain high levels of resident involvement perceived that residents' activities were pivotal in supporting and maintaining the project's operations:

"Without the volunteers the place would crumble." (Guelph key informant interview)

This produced a strong feeling of ownership of the project among residents:

"[The Better Beginnings project is] what we're building, [and] that's what we're trying to build it up for, this is ours. This is the neighbourhood's, the community's." (Guelph resident focus group)

As the projects began to attract more volunteers, and as the volunteers had more and more positive experiences, they began to bring their friends, family members and neighbours along to project activities. This produced a multiplier effect with regard to volunteers, and helped increase the number of residents working with the project:

"If somebody's having a crummy experience as a volunteer with an organization, they're not gonna say to five other people 'gee, you should come too!' No, but I mean we all know what that looks like, if they feel really good themselves then they become an outreach arm in themselves for the project." (Highfield staff focus group)

Impacts on the community. Through Better Beginnings, residents have continued to make their communities more attractive, safe and secure. In Guelph, for example, residents worked with police to close down a drug operation in a community residence:

“We worked very hard to get a crack house out of our neighbourhood. We kept at them and at them and at them till finally they brought in nine cruisers and raided it. I mean that was the biggest thing the neighbourhood ever saw, right, was nine cruisers, but it works. People working together works to clean it up. So, we cleaned that up.” (Guelph key informant interview)

In the Highfield Better Beginnings community, residents were successful in lobbying for a crossing guard, and for traffic signs in an area where it had been dangerous for children. In Sudbury, Better Beginnings residents were responsible for a number of positive changes in the community:

“They’ve seen ... concrete changes like Better Beginnings buying the building ... they’ve seen local parks ... transformed ... they’ve seen art work go up in the community that wasn’t there before, so that there’s a very tangible sense of the presence of Better Beginnings in the community ...” (Sudbury key informant interview)

Similar changes occurred in Kingston, where residents fought to make intersections in their neighbourhood more safe:

“[T]here was a high speed chase, and a car was hit, went into the deli and hit [a] young boy. [A] petition was going around, they came to our area and our [neighbourhood] and the area where this happened. [We] grabbed the petition [and] rolled with it ... [and now] ... we have a four way stop down there ... and the flashing lights And ... after that ... we thought our kids are not safe crossing Montreal Street with the traffic, so we petitioned the city to have a crossing guard there.... Better Beginnings is bringing a lot of good into the neighbourhood” (Kingston key informant interview)

Residents in Kingston also worked with the city, Better Beginnings staff, and other community groups to develop a splash pad in the community. It is hoped that the plan will come to fruition in 2006.

Overall, those we interviewed indicated that Better Beginnings had helped the neighbourhood in which it operated become more of a community, with residents experiencing less isolation than they had before the project began:

“It breaks down the isolation. Our community can be very isolated because of the nature of the community ... people go to their home, their apartment or wherever they’re going and they tend to stay there because it’s, you know, it’s night time, it may not be the safest place in the world to be here, but ... this kind of thing, it’s a welcoming place and through the kids, the parents get to meet each other and they get to develop friendships and the community grows and the school and Better Beginnings is the hub for that.” (Highfield key informant interview)

Resident participation in the Better Beginnings communities also served as a model for other agencies and organizations within the community. Agencies are more and more being expected to collaborate with community residents, and Better Beginnings has begun to serve as a role model of how this can be done:

“One impact that I’m aware of is that you really experience a setting in which .. parents truly are partners ... you can talk about that all you want and you can tell people that’s what you do, but to actually experience ... and I think service-providers, when they come here, like the public health nurse and all that, it’s just such a different setting ... it gives you a sense that it’s possible ... whenever I talk to [agency] staff about this place and whenever they come [to Highfield] ... they’re just amazed at how many parents participate as volunteers in this organization. And they keep saying ‘how do you do that? How do you do that? We can never get that done.’ I said ‘oh, well, you’ve got to go and just spend a bit of time to really give parents a sense of ownership and it’s not a phoney exercise, it’s real ...’” (Highfield staff focus group)

Because of its stature within the community, Better Beginnings was often able to serve as a bridge between residents and community organizations. In Regent Park, for example, Better Beginnings helped improve relations between the local police division and the community, and aided in the development of programs for high risk youth to deter them from getting into trouble:

“It’s amazing what [our CD worker] has done. He’s broken so much ground with youth and the police in our community I think his job over the years has evolved to really focus on high risk youth and what their issues were So he and other service-providers, and police, and youth, worked together to develop a basketball program And it’s just amazing what he’s done, and it’s taken years to cultivate that” (Regent Park key informant interview)

Negative impacts. Very few negative impacts were reported with regard to resident participation in the projects’ later years.

Relations Between Residents, Staff, and Service-providers

Early and Middle Years. Initially, resident participants were somewhat uneasy and intimidated by agency participants. They were reluctant to contribute their opinions and ideas at meetings and planning sessions. However, after working together with service-providers in planning programs, most of these feelings disappeared. By collaborating on program planning, and having opportunities to get to know one another at lunches, community events and celebrations, residents and service-providers became more comfortable with one another, and some residents developed close friendships with service-providers. Also, as residents took on leadership roles, such as chairing committees, they began to be viewed with greater respect. At some sites, however, residents continued to mistrust some individuals, and some community agencies, such as Child Welfare. Also, it took varying lengths of time for a comfortable relationship to develop between residents and service-providers from outside agencies. For some sites, good relations came very quickly, while in others, positive relations were not evident until the project’s middle years.

Sudbury was the exception to the general process by which residents and service-providers moved from relations that were initially uncomfortable and unequal to relations that were more equal and trusting. Sudbury had decided, in 1995, to exclude service-providers from its governing council, allowing only residents or those sponsored by residents to sit on the council.

This meant that the relations between residents and community service-providers became (and remained) more arms-length at the Sudbury Better Beginnings site.

In general, residents were more comfortable with project staff than they were with the service-providers who partnered with Better Beginnings. Residents felt that the staff was friendly and approachable, and treated them with respect. In some of the communities, however (e.g., Guelph, Southeast Ottawa, Highfield, Sudbury), tensions arose among residents and staff when residents were hired for staff positions. These tensions came primarily from those residents who had been unsuccessful applicants for those positions. Another difficulty came from the fact that residents who were hired on as staff had often been individuals who had been active volunteers for the project. When these individuals became staff, they had to learn to relate to the project in a different way. Some of them experienced a loss of the kind of “voice” they had had as volunteers. At times, resident staff also experienced “boundary” difficulties, because their work involved dealing with their peers and neighbours in the community.

Later Years. In most of the projects, residents and service-providers learned to work well together, and formed a positive collaborative relationship:

“I sit on the partnership building committee here, and I have a fantastic relationship with the agency people that sit on those committees. And that’s one good thing because ... in most of the committees, there are some ... partnership people representing on the committees.... For the youth team, for instance, we have ____, who is an F&CS worker ... and the relationship building committee, we have one from ... public health, one from the Children’s Aid ... and that’s important because ... their feedback as well needs to be put in here, and, I find it’s great.” (Guelph resident)

Sudbury, because of its organizational structure, which continued to exclude service-providers, experienced very few contacts between residents and community service-providers.

In every one of the Better Beginnings sites, residents got along extremely well with staff. If anything, these relations had become even more positive during the projects’ later years, as the projects matured and people worked together over the years. Residents describe the staff as open, friendly and caring. They were also very appreciative of the positive relationships that staff had with their children. The few minor conflicts that arise between residents and staff are approached in a spirit of problem-solving:

“I think the trust that is there [between staff and residents] is because of the longevity... Better Beginnings have been there for many years, for the most part, and that allows for the trust...” (Walpole Island key informant)

“I think it’s [relation between staff and residents] much more positive and it’s partly because ... you have a staff now that more clearly works as a team and the whole project is just more focused and people’s roles and responsibilities are clearer, so it makes it easier for residents to know what to expect of certain people and what their role is.” (Highfield key informant)

“I think overall the relationship between the residents and the staff has been an excellent one. I think that the residents ... have been able to appreciate the work that’s being done with the children and the families in the community.” (Sudbury key informant interview)

“I think the relationship is basically good, I mean of course everybody, somewhere you’re gonna have some conflict when you’ve got a ton of people working together, and ... sometimes people just don’t like another person ... the normal kind of thing goes on, but I think in general, our staff is pretty good ...with getting along with people and working things out.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“It’s [the relationship between staff and residents] nothing but tremendous ... very, very highly valued by the residents. I don’t think, in all my years, to be very honest, I’ve ever really heard anything negative ... I think it’s ... seen as a very sort of equal relationship, as a very supportive relationship and a ... helpful relationship.” (Regent Park service-provider focus group)

“[The staff] all work very hard, they’re all very dedicated to doing the very best they can to help parents reach their potential and helping children ...feel loved and cared for and accepted and ...they all really ... love watching them grow and develop and evolve” (Kingston resident key informant interview)

The only negative aspect that surfaced regarding the relationship between staff and residents was the feeling among some staff that, because of job demands and program resources, they did not have the time they would like to have to interact with and support residents:

“There’s not as much time and energy available maybe to do it on a more structured basis as in the past ...but ...there’s still [a] commitment to at least get some sort of feedback from the parents” (Regent Park staff focus group)

Summary of Findings on Resident Participation

One of the key features that distinguished Better Beginnings, Better Futures from other prevention programs is the active participation of community residents in shaping and developing the programs and services available to families in their neighbourhoods. In every Better Beginnings community, residents were involved in project governance, serving on and chairing committees, participating in the hiring of project staff, and planning new programs. They helped reach out to other community members to bring them into the project as program participants and volunteers. They worked as volunteers in classrooms, community centres and playgroups. They advocated on behalf of their programs and their communities, making presentations, writing articles for the media, and lobbying for stop signs, traffic lights and better play facilities. As the projects matured, residents moved out from Better Beginnings to take positions on the boards and councils of other community organizations. In later years, it was the residents of the Better Beginnings sites who helped establish Better Beginnings as a presence in the community, and a model of community participation and leadership.

Most of the Better Beginnings sites achieved significant and meaningful resident participation slowly and with a great deal of effort. Though all sites had the goal of having at least 50% of

their main governing committee comprised of residents, most had difficulty achieving this goal, and maintaining this level of participation. It was only through a series of conscious strategies that sites were able to build meaningful resident participation in project development. Through a combination of many strategies, including door-to-door outreach, making meetings less formal, providing child-care and transportation, translating documents and materials into the languages that residents spoke, and recognizing residents' contributions through gifts and awards presented at volunteer recognition dinners, resident participation in every Better Beginnings site increased, and residents began to feel that they owned the project in their community. By the projects' middle years, every Better Beginnings site had reached a point where residents were active partners in every aspect of their site's program development, planning and operation.

To what extent were the Better Beginnings sites able to sustain their high levels of resident participation and ownership after the demonstration phase, when they had become permanent programs in their communities, with secure annualized funding? Three of the sites (Guelph, Southeast Ottawa, and Highfield) were able to sustain and even increase their level of resident participation after the projects had moved to annualized funding. All three communities increased their numbers of volunteers, brought in more men and young people as volunteers, and were successful in attracting individuals from the various ethnic groups in their community to Better Beginnings. Residents continue to constitute the majority of the steering committees for these three sites.

The other five Better Beginnings sites (Cornwall, Kingston, Regent Park, Sudbury, Walpole Island) maintained significant resident participation, but they also experienced a change in residents' roles in project governance. Part of the reason for this was that there was a natural streamlining of the programs, which lessened the need for ongoing resident input. Overall there is still substantial resident participation in these five sites. Three of these five sites (Cornwall, Regent Park, Walpole Island) underwent significant organizational restructuring after receiving secure, annualized funding, requiring the dissolution of the sites' independent steering committees. Each of these sites has developed new mechanisms for gaining resident input. In Kingston, residents continue to participate in the project's steering committee, but this committee's role has now shifted and there were conflicting views about whether the group's (and residents') decision-making power had been reduced. One other change in resident participation is that at some of the sites, staff members now run all the programs with little resident volunteer help.

The key factors that seemed to be necessary to maintain meaningful resident participation were program structure (maintaining a policy of having residents as the majority on all key committees and work groups), but more importantly, the project's determination to make resident participation a priority. Those sites that were able to maintain high levels of resident participation worked hard to continually recruit new residents and to ensure that they had a meaningful role and felt appreciated.

In the early years, residents participated in Better Beginnings for a number of reasons: they wanted to meet other people and reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation; they wanted to improve the lives of their children and families; newcomers to Canada wanted to learn English and find out about Canadian culture; in the First Nations and Francophone communities, they wanted a chance to express their own culture; and they wanted to learn skills that made them

more employable and helped them find jobs. In the projects' later years, these same factors continued to motivate residents to get involved. In addition, residents who had benefitted as program participants wanted to give something back to the community by becoming volunteers. By the projects' middle years, the province became a much more difficult place for those with low or limited incomes, and this had an impact on residents. Cuts to social assistance and social programs made families desperate to find new sources of income, and several of the individuals who became involved in Better Beginnings in its later years did so because they wanted to find jobs with the project. Other individuals got involved as volunteers because they were required to as part of the Ontario Works program, or because they had to complete 40 hours of community service to obtain their high school diploma.

Throughout the life of Better Beginnings, there were significant barriers to the meaningful involvement of residents in project planning, development and operation:

- cuts to welfare payments and social programs exacerbated the hardship that families were experiencing, and made it especially difficult to get involved in Better Beginnings.
- many of these communities experienced a significant change in the ethnic and cultural mix in their communities, and had to find ways of bringing new individuals into the project.
- the transient and changing nature of many of these communities meant that Better Beginnings had to work constantly to inform new residents of their existence and of the programs, services and opportunities it offered to the community.
- some of the projects had undergone significant organizational restructuring in which the project's steering group had been disbanded, leaving fewer opportunities for residents to be involved in the governance of the projects.
- because of the strong bond developed among the "old" residents who had been involved with the project for many years, it sometimes became difficult for new residents to get involved
- limited staff resources
- bureaucratic processes such as police checks of those wishing to volunteer
- lack of community support
- the different languages spoken by community members, requiring interpretation and translation

Better Beginnings projects (especially those that were able to maintain or increase resident participation) employed a number of strategies to maintain their base of resident volunteers, and to recruit new residents:

- outreach to community residents through flyers in different languages, articles in community newspapers and going door-to-door
- creating a welcoming environment at the project site
- recognizing residents' contributions through gifts, honorariums, volunteer recognition dinners
- making resident participation a priority by including the promotion of resident involvement in staff's job responsibilities
- hiring program staff that came from the major cultural groups in the community and spoke their language

- holding planning and visioning days in which residents played a key role
- garnering the support of partner agencies
- establishing leadership development programs for residents

The positive outcomes that meaningful resident participation produced were substantial, and grew with time. Residents experienced greater confidence, acquired new skills, made new friends, became better parents, and learned to appreciate other cultures, among other things. Their children showed improved behavioural and social skills, and enhanced feelings of cultural pride and awareness. The projects provided more and better programs because residents involved in planning those programs as staff or volunteers were more knowledgeable about community needs. The entire community benefitted from improved safety and security, with better parks and play areas, more traffic lights and cross-walks, and a greater sense of community. Better Beginnings played a key role in integrating the communities in which it operated, by serving as a bridge between residents and community organizations, and by bringing together individuals from different organizations.

One of the key elements in sustaining meaningful participation of community residents was the relationship residents had with project staff. In every one of the Better Beginnings sites, residents got along extremely well with staff. If anything, these relations became even more positive during the projects' later years, as the projects matured and people worked together over the years. Residents described the staff as open, friendly and caring. They were also very appreciative of the positive relationships that staff had with their children. These relationships were critical in making residents feel that they were appreciated and had something positive to offer the project.

SERVICE-PROVIDER INVOLVEMENT

The main questions that this research sought to address with regard to service-provider involvement at the Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites were:

- What changes, if any, have there been in the visions for integration of services, the types of service-providers who have been involved, and the roles that service-providers have played, and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors have sustained service-provider involvement and what barriers have inhibited service-provider involvement since the end of the demonstration period?
- What have been the critical issues in the time since the end of the demonstration period with regard to service-provider involvement?

Nature and Amount of Service-Provider Involvement

The Early and Middle Years. The Better Beginnings sites were mandated to not only provide prevention programming for children and families in disadvantaged communities, and to involve residents in program development and management, but also to work with existing agencies and organizations to integrate services. According to the original Request for Proposals (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, March, 1990):

“The Integrated Model requires that within a given community, services for children and families must blend and unite. Integration minimally means that service-providers and educators develop common goals, objectives and collaborative plans for meeting these intents. Conceptually, the Integrated Model moves beyond ‘coordination’ of services to as full a merging of service planning and delivery as possible.”(p. 4)

During the early years and middle years of the demonstration phase, researchers at each of the sites completed two reports on the involvement of service-providers and the extent to which the sites had been successful with their integration efforts. The first reports documented the successes, challenges and lessons learned in involving service-providers during the early period of project planning and development. The second reports, written at the end of the demonstration phase, documented what changes had occurred in the latter half of the demonstration phase with respect to service-provider involvement.

According to the cross-site report written after the demonstration phase, based upon the individual site reports, the vision of service-provider involvement at the project sites remained quite constant over the duration of the demonstration period. That is, service-providers were to be involved in project governance and in the development of programs. The changes that occurred during the demonstration phase concerned the concept of “integration” – in the early years the sites struggled with trying to operationalize this concept, whereas in the latter half of the demonstration phase, the sites’ attention turned more to “partnerships”:

“In the early years of Better Beginnings, Better Futures, the sites had great difficulty understanding how to translate the idea of facilitating service integration into practice. Over time, less effort was invested in defining service integration as attention turned to creating voluntary partnerships with service agencies in order to increase resources and programming in the demonstration communities.” (Cameron, Hayward, McKenzie, Hancock, & Jeffery, 1999, p.61)

By the end of the demonstration phase, all sites but one (Sudbury) continued to have a stable core of service-providers involved with the projects. The number of agencies and organizations involved with the Better Beginnings sites, and the diversity of exchanges, had increased in the latter half of this phase. We now turn to a more detailed examination of changes experienced by the projects after the demonstration phase.

The Later Years. The key question to be addressed is: to what extent were the Better Beginnings sites able to sustain the level of service-provider involvement after the demonstration phase ended?

All of the sites continue to partner with different service-provider agencies and organizations, to varying degrees. The nature of service-provider involvement at Walpole Island is unique. The Walpole Island site is the only Native community in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures project, and the only rural community in the project. At this site, after the demonstration phase, there was a restructuring of many different services in the community and an amalgamation between Better Beginnings and Social Services. The Steering Committee was discontinued, and Better Beginnings, as a distinct program, became less visible in the community. Because of the unique situation of Walpole Island, this site will be discussed separately at the end of the service-

provider involvement section.

The involvement of service-providers in project governance, program delivery, and in other ways, is discussed below.

Project governance. When the sites received annualized funding, many were required to become amalgamated with their host agencies. Some of the main decision-making bodies, and smaller committees, were dissolved in the process, as governance for the Better Beginnings programs came more under the jurisdiction of the host agencies. In other cases, those decision-making bodies held less power than they had during the demonstration phase. Therefore, in those sites, there was a reduced role for service-providers in overall project governance. In other sites, Better Beginnings programs continued to have a main decision-making body, and smaller sub-committees or working groups, and service-providers continued to serve on those committees and play a role in project governance. As well, the reduced role of service-providers in project governance may also be part of the natural evolution of these types of projects. That is, the involvement of service-providers in governance may play a more pivotal role during the demonstration phase, as projects are developing their programs. In Sudbury, the governing body consists solely of residents, as it did during the demonstration phase. There continues to be no role for service-providers in project governance at this site. Once programs are developed, and the management structure and operations of the project are relatively stable, the need for service-provider involvement may be diminished. Table A.4 provides a summary of service-provider roles in project governance across the six sites.

**Table A.4
Roles of Service Providers in Project Governance**

Site	Roles of Service-providers
Continued strong service-provider involvement in governance	
Guelph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main decision-making body for this site, the Management Board, remained in existence in the post-demonstration phase. • As well, during the early and middle years, the MB evolved to a ratio of 2:1 of residents to service-providers; therefore, there continue to be more residents than service providers on the MB. • However, the size of the MB increased during the later years, so there are now more service-providers on the MB compared with the demonstration phase.
Highfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers continue to serve on the steering committee; although there has been some turnover in which service providers are on that committee, there is still active involvement from different organizations serving the community. • Service providers also continue to be involved on other committees or working groups. • There appears to be little change in the roles of service providers in project governance since the end of the demonstration phase at this site.
Southeast Ottawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provider involvement on the steering committee continues; there has been a stable core of service providers for a number of years. • Service provider involvement on other committees or working groups also has continued post-demonstration phase. • There appears to be little change in the roles of service providers in project governance since the end of the demonstration phase.

Site	Roles of Service-providers
Reduced or limited role of service-providers in governance	
Cornwall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When annualized funding occurred, the main decision-making body, the Coordination Committee, was changed to the Consultation Committee; as well the Project Coordinator position was eliminated as the Executive Director of the sponsor agency (<i>Équipe Psychosociale pour Enfants et Adolescents de Stormont, Dundas, et Glengarry</i>) assumed responsibility over the Better Beginnings project. • The Consultation Committee is comprised of service-providers and residents and meets with the ED three times a year to provide input on the project. • There has been a reduced role for service providers, as the Consultation Committee does not have the same power as in the demonstration phase, and they meet much less frequently.
Kingston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the amalgamation with the Community Health Centre (the sponsor agency), the role of the Action Group (the main decision-making body) shifted and there were conflicting views among stakeholders about whether the Action Group had a reduced role in some management and governance areas. • Service providers continue to serve on the AG; however, as explained earlier, the AG <i>may</i> have less of a role in some governance areas. • With annualized funding, and stable programming, there was less need for the sub-committees, and the number of them was reduced; therefore, there may be fewer opportunities for service providers to play a role in project governance.
Regent Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the amalgamation with the Community Health Centre (the sponsor agency), the Steering Committee for the project was eliminated, as the project came under the jurisdiction of the Board of Directors for the CHC. • With the dissolution of the Steering Committee, the role of service providers in project governance has been reduced, but not eliminated, since service-providers are still represented on the Health Centre’s Board of Directors as well as on different Board committees.

Program delivery. All of the sites continue to be very successful in partnering with service-providers to deliver prevention programs to children and families in the Better Beginnings sites. Strong partnerships have developed with a number of agencies and organizations in each site. In many cases, Better Beginnings seeks out service-provider organization in which to collaborate to deliver a particular program or to fulfill certain needs within the community.

“They invite partners to come all the time, which is great. We’re always getting invitations to anything they do. And ... not just me in isolation, all the community partners.” (Sudbury key informant interview)

“We became aware of kids ... because of the stress these kids live in, and their families live in ... we couldn’t necessarily do anything. We worked on this partnership, so we had these kids coming to Better Beginnings and participating in a group that was co-facilitated by CAMH [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health] and [Better Beginnings]. And, after doing that for a year, we said ‘you know these kids are exhausted after school ends to come here’ And we knew that the schools were also struggling and wanting to know more So we ... met together At the beginning of the school year, all the

teachers from ... JK, SK and grade one were asked to come and present on the kids that they really felt need this kind of an intervention That partnership is important ultimately to the children in the community and their families, in that there are better outcomes for them” (Regent Park key informant interview)

“[Better Beginnings is] very proactive. It’s always interesting to see what they come up with next, you know ... I hope we see more of that.” (Kingston service-provider focus group)

In other cases, service-provider organizations and agencies seek out Better Beginnings – these organizations wish to partner with Better Beginnings to enhance Better Beginnings programs, to provide new programs, or to improve access and use of their own existing services.

“We depend so much on [Better Beginnings] ... to be a source of community [input] and being a part of the community and a place to send people where we know that they’ll get treated well and get listened to” (Kingston service-provider focus group)

“I see them ... as the umbrella for linking and coordinating the conflict sources so that they can be able to either communicate with staff, with the residents, about how to make the relationship. The police may have a difficult time ... coming into the community and trying to build a relationship, where now they can use [Better Beginnings] as a source to ... work together ... to create some sort of connection It’s a link and the community members can see [Better Beginnings] as a way to get their frustration out so they can table it with the other organizations and get some sort of positive linkage. ...” (Regent Park service-provider focus group)

In four of the sites (Highfield, Kingston, Sudbury, Regent Park), Ontario Early Years Initiatives, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, has enhanced programming offered to preschoolers. In Sudbury, Highfield, and Kingston, the local Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) sought out Better Beginnings projects when searching for locations for their programs. In Sudbury, the pre-existing preschool program the project ran, “L’arc en Ciel”, was provided with additional funding through the OEYC, to expand program times and programming offered, and to buy new equipment. In Highfield, the OEYC selected the Better Beginnings project as one of the program sites, and a new preschool program was subsequently born in this community. In Kingston, Better Beginnings was able to expand its programming through OEYC funding, and an additional playgroup and two parenting programs are now offered. In each of these sites, Better Beginnings projects were selected because of their good rapport with, and good reputation in, their communities.

Both the Regent Park and Kingston sites were also successful in acquiring Ontario Early Years 2 money, and Kingston was also successful in acquiring Early Years 1 funding (funding that was available to the Community Health Centres). In Regent Park, the Better Beginnings project used that funding to enhance existing programming. With that funding they have been able to offer more inter-disciplinary support to multi-need families that are identified through their home visiting program. In the Kingston site, the project began a School Readiness program and enhanced its prenatal program.

The partnerships and collaboration that have occurred across the sites have resulted in:

- the enhancement of existing Better Beginnings programs through the provision of expertise, resources, and space;
- more accessible services to the Better Beginnings communities by providing services offered by other organizations under the auspices of Better Beginnings; and
- the creation of new programs with other services.

All of the sites have had long-time collaborators; and, some have created new partnerships with organizations to deliver new programs or to enhance existing ones. Table A.5 provides additional information about the partnerships that have occurred in program delivery.

Table A.5
Program Delivery Collaborations and Partnerships

Site	Description of Program Delivery Collaborations and Partnerships with Other Service-Providers
Cornwall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools: main partner of Better Beginnings; the schools now manage the Homework Support Program which was initiated by Better Beginnings during the demonstration phase. • Centre de Ressources Familiales de L’Estrie: now manages the Playground community, toy library, and theme box programs • Family Activity Centre: was once a program of Better Beginnings; currently is an independent incorporated agency and Family Vacation Camp (a former Better Beginnings program) is one of their programs. • The organizations above have been long-time collaborators with Better Beginnings.
Guelph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guelph Shelldale Centre: Better Beginnings is now housed at two sites. One Site is the Onward Willow Centre, a townhouse in a nearby housing complex. The other site is at the Shelldale Centre (called Family Gateway) – where Better Beginnings is housed along with many other services in one location (e.g., Family and Children’s Services, Public Health). With the additional space, Better Beginnings was able to expand some of its programming (e.g., breakfast program, parenting programs). • Family and Children’s Services (F&CS): continue to be the host agency for Better Beginnings and a strong partner with the program; provides consultation and expertise to Better Beginnings, and is housed in same building. • Public Health: assists with the Baby Drop-In, provides consultation, and is housed in the same building with Better Beginnings. • Guelph Wellington Women in Crisis: runs support groups for women, in the Better Beginnings location, who were victims of violence. • Lutherwood: provides employment counselling. • Guelph CHC: has had a reduced role in recent years, because they are no longer in the same location, but still works with Better Beginnings in some of their programs. (See note below.) • Community Mental Health Clinic: infant/prenatal services assessment with children in Better Beginnings programs, and parenting group facilitation. • Willow Road Public School: joint Breakfast Club, Youth Mentoring Program, consultation. • Guelph Wellington Housing: donates the townhouse for the Onward Willow Centre, financial support for the summer camp program, they sit on the Safety Committee, and collaborate with the tenants. • City of Guelph/Neighbourhood Support Coalition: provide use of the gymnasium at the Shelldale Centre and financial support for school-aged programs. • Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Advocacy and Training (FASAT): facilitates a monthly parenting group for parents of children with FASD. • Guelph Police: support for school-aged programs by running one program a week (basketball or floor hockey), sit on Youth Drug Prevention Committee and on the Neighbourhood Safety Committee. • Action Read: facilitates various groups at different times. • “Let’s Grow Together”: regular outreach on issues of addictions and substance abuse (program of Stonehenge Therapeutic Community) with women parenting children aged 0-6 and they provide workshops. • With the exception of Shelldale Centre, which is a new location for the program, the other organizations are long-time collaborators with the Better Beginnings program.

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Site	Description of Program Delivery Collaborations and Partnerships with Other Service-Providers
Highfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highfield Junior School: continues to be the main partner for the Better Beginnings programs; school staff help with nutrition, social skills, and other in-school programming. • George Hull Child and Family Centre: is the sponsor agency for Better Beginnings and provides consultation and expertise via one-to-one communications, committee work, and workshops provided to participants. • Rexdale Women’s Centre, Albion Neighbourhood Services, Culture Link, and Micro Skills: all local community organizations that partner with Better Beginnings in providing programs for residents such as parenting programs, ESL instruction, and leadership development. • Settlement Worker: a settlement worker, funded through the federal government, provides services on-site (part-time) for residents. • Kiwanis club: volunteers play a major role in the breakfast program. • Braeburn Neighbourhood Place: runs the Ontario Early Years Centre through which Better Beginnings receives funding to run its preschool programs. • North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI): is the local high school and Better Beginnings has volunteers from NACI in their programs. • Culture Link and Micro Skills are new partners with Better Beginnings, as is Braeburn Neighbourhood Place; all other organizations are long-time collaborators with the program.
Kingston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Kingston Community Health Centre (NKCHC): continues to be the host agency; social worker provides consultation and expertise to front-line staff; CHC houses the school readiness staff and CD worker. • Kingston Literacy: brings programs to Better Beginnings; has partnered with them for a long time around literacy issues. • Schools: the recent addition of the School Readiness Program has resulted in close ties to several schools in which the program is offered. • Public Health: provides consultation in the perinatal program and parenting programs. • Pathways to Children and Youth: has collaborated with the Better Beginnings project for a number of years on various parenting programs. • Children’s Aid Society: often refers families to Better Beginnings and visits families during the parenting groups and play groups. • NKCHC, Kingston Literacy, Pathways, Public Health, and CAS are all long-term partners of the Better Beginnings program. The schools are newer collaborators with the program.

Site	Description of Program Delivery Collaborations and Partnerships with Other Service-Providers
Regent Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Public Health: long-time partner with the Better Beginnings program in the perinatal program. • St. Michael’s Hospital: provides a lactation consultant to the perinatal program; this enhancement to the program has occurred post-demonstration phase. • Toronto Speech and Language: a speech pathologist is on-site at the Better Beginnings program to provide consultation to families; this is a newly offered service post-demonstration phase. • Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH): co-facilitated the Incredible Years Parenting Program and Dinosaur Social Skills Program (Dinosaur School) at Better Beginnings, and at a local elementary school (Nelson Mandela Park Public School). This collaboration occurred post-demonstration phase. • Nelson Mandela Park Public School: partners with Better Beginnings and CAMH on the Incredible Years and the Dinosaur School. • 51 Division, Police Services: long-standing relationship with the Better Beginnings CD worker to help improve relations between the community and police. • Infant Hearing and Screening: audiologist is on-site one day per week to perform infant hearing tests; occurred post-demonstration phase. • Gerrard Kiwanis Boys and Girls club: is the site for one of the School Readiness groups; partner in applying for Ontario Early Years Centre funding. Long-standing relationship. • The Ontario Early Years Centres: Better Beginnings played a role with the local OEYC riding, from its inception, as a planning and coordinating body and in preparing a two-day visioning and strategic planning session. Better Beginnings is a satellite location for the OEYC and receives funding for one FTE ECE worker to do school readiness groups for 12 children. Post-demonstration phase. • East York East Toronto Family Resource Programs: Early literacy workshops and they provided School Readiness Program on site, and Better Beginnings trained EYET staff to run the groups. Post-demonstration phase. • The Creche Child Development Institute: joint programming providing the Mother Goose Program for children – secondment of an ECE staff to Better Beginnings one day per week. Post-demonstration phase. • EarlsCourt Child and Family Centre: joint programming providing the Stop Now and Play Program (SNAP), a behavioural management program for children. Training of Better Beginnings staff in SNAP. Post-demonstration phase. • Dixon Hall: long-standing relationship in community development partnerships and post-demonstration phase partnered on the Parent Education and Support Group. • Bond Street Nursery School: provides space for Parent Education Workshops. Post-demonstration phase. • Regent Park Community Centre: ongoing relationship; the Centre provides Saturday evening programs for youth beyond regularly scheduled hours and contributes space and maintenance staff one day a week. They also provide space and staff support on community and cultural events. • Regent Park Resident Council: PFBB provides support and staff resources for the revitalization/redevelopment and Safety/Security Committees. • Regent Park Focus Coalition Against Substance Abuse: ongoing collaboration; collaborated in the early years on Welcome Baskets and ongoing use of the media arts program for Better Beginnings promotion and publicity. • Some of the relationships listed above have been long-standing (e.g., Toronto Public Health, 51 Division); others are new post-demonstration phase.

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Site	Description of Program Delivery Collaborations and Partnerships with Other Service-Providers
Southeast Ottawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC): continued as the sponsor organization; two staff from the CHC provide services on-site at the Better Beginnings Community House, a nurse who works with the prenatal/postnatal program and a Multicultural CD worker, who used to be an employee of Better Beginnings. • Andrew Fleck Child Care Services: partners with the program in playgroup and in parenting workshops. • City of Ottawa: Better Beginnings has worked with the City to help improve access to programs for community residents and the City of Ottawa provides space for Better Beginnings events and activities. • Children’s Aid Society: the CAS and Better Beginnings have met and planned together when trying to meet the needs of different families in the community. • Housing: provides the Community House, which houses the administrative offices, drop-in space, clothing bank, and the food cupboard. The facility when the playgroup is run is also property of Housing. The program has good relations with the property manager, grounds person, and community worker. • Police: an Ottawa/Carleton Police Services Officer previously co-facilitated (with the Program Coordinator) the Kids in the Hood program, a weekly drop-in program for 10 to 14 year olds. Currently, police officers do participate but do not co-facilitate. • Local churches: assist with the Extras Neighbourhood Food Cupboard, help with the income tax clinics, and they participate in the annual toy drive. • Local businesses: help with the annual toy drive. • All of the above organizations are long-time partners of the Better Beginnings program.
Sudbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudbury Housing: provides a townhouse for Better Beginnings programming. This additional space was provided post-demonstration phase. • Native Friendship Centre: the relationship has been a longstanding one, as the Friendship Centre used to be the host agency prior to incorporation. There is a strong link between that Centre and Better Beginnings’ Native CD worker. • Schools: there are several schools in the community that house the before and after-school programs of Better Beginnings; these schools have been long-time partners of the program. • Laurentian University, Cambrian College and College Boreal: Better Beginnings takes in placement students from these institutions.

Note: Other service providers were mentioned but did not include any specific information about the nature of the collaboration/partnership, including: Guelph Police Services, Conestoga Job Contact, Victim Services, AIDS Committee of Guelph, Community Mental Health Centre, and Wellington County Social Services.

Inter-organizational networks, committees and coalitions. Most of the sites also worked with other organizations or agencies on networks, committees or coalitions to address concerns of children and families in their communities. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) is a provincially funded program (the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services), which provides services to families with new babies, delivered by Public Health Units across the province. Staff at the Kingston, Southeast Ottawa and Sudbury sites are all involved with HBHC coalitions in their communities. Success by Six is a United-Way funded program that focuses on early child development. Staff from the Kingston and Southeast Ottawa sites are also involved with Success by Six coalitions in their communities. Some examples of other inter-organizational networks, committees or coalitions, that are site-specific are listed below:

Highfield

- Brighter Futures Coalition: Brighter Futures was formed with a partnership of 23 agencies in 1994. Its purpose is to jointly develop and implement programs for children, aged 0 to 6, and their families. There are three teams in Etobicoke (north, central, south) and the Better Beginnings program is involved with the north team.
- Rexdale Partners: is part of Albion Neighbourhood Services and is a coalition of service agencies, government departments, elected officials, and residents.

Kingston

- Early Years Coalition: founded approximately five years ago by Better Beginnings, the coalition is a group of service providers and interested community members who meet to further the cause of early child development.
- School Readiness Network: also founded by Better Beginnings and came out of the Early Years Coalition. The School Readiness Coordinator is a leader of the group which discusses what is going on in the area of school readiness in Kingston and the surrounding area.
- Success by Six Leadership Committee: program coordinator sits on the committee.

One staff person from this site felt that Better Beginnings had influenced other networks or coalitions by following their way of working with communities:

“I think other programs, networks and coalitions have followed the [Better Beginnings] model by engaging the community [and] by involving them – giving them a voice Also following [Better Beginnings] lead, I have seen other groups start to offer childcare, transportation and food for community members” (Kingston personal communication)

Regent Park

- School Community Action Alliance for Regent Park (SCAARP): brings together all service-providers in the community. The group was initiated in 2000 by a few key service-providers in the Regent Park community, including Better Beginnings, who are like-minded and had a vision of providing services in the community. The coalition was described by one key informant:

“There are a lot of amazing leaders who live in this community, but we were not terribly well connected at that time, or we don’t seem to be very well connected. So there are these holes between where ... one service-provider ends and another service-provider begins and we’re finding that families and individuals are falling in between. So, what if we all kind of pull together and talk about what everybody was doing, shared ideas, met on a regular basis, what would happen ... if we sort of closed some of those loopholes? So ... I guess they started putting feelers out and they arranged the first meeting, just to see who’s interested and what people thought We all sort of sat down at the table” (Regent Park service-provider focus group)

Other service-provider roles and activities. In addition to the roles and activities described above, key informants also mentioned that there are a lot of cross-referrals occurring between Better Beginnings and other service-provider organizations. As well, service-providers help promote Better Beginnings programs and provide their clientele with information or brochures. Finally, service-providers have also volunteered at various special events or celebrations.

Motivation for Service-provider Involvement

The Early and Middle Years. In the updated cross-site report on service-provider involvement (Cameron et al., 1999) many different motivations were reported across the sites as to why different organizations and agencies had become involved with the Better Beginnings projects, including:

- similar goals and values;
- similar mandates;
- commitment to enhancing service delivery and to developing a collaborative model;
- to be able to provide more services to children and families in the community;
- involvement with the Better Beginnings projects allowed for greater access to services and to quality programming for children and families;
- to better carry out their agency's mandate; and
- the positive reputation of Better Beginnings encouraged service-providers to become involved

The Later Years. Many of these same motivations were still reported in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this report. As well, a few sites also mentioned that partnering and collaborating is more expected, and there is less resistance, than there was in the early 1990s. There was a sense at each of the sites that service-providers saw the benefits of collaboration and partnerships:

"We are focused on youth and Better Beginnings targets these groups as well. It's mainly because of the clientele they target, they are similar in age to the people we are trying to reach." (Cornwall staff focus group)

"I think there are a lot of mainstream agencies whose mandates have changed, and there are institutions that didn't used to do that, but used to sit in their buildings and expect people to come to them. And so, I don't think this is a negative thing at all, but realistically, I think some of them are here because they're operating differently and so it's a very happy marriage of change." (Highfield service-provider focus group)

"I think, for the most part, the organizations work together to offer the best services they can...." (Kingston key informant interview)

"I think they're very reputable in terms of providing services to this area.... I really believe they have a good reputation in the community." (Sudbury key informant interview)

At the Southeast Ottawa site, the service-providers interviewed believed that the Program Manager's style and way of working encouraged them to become involved:

"I think she's the way that a lot of people become involved." (Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

"She looks after us all." (Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

"That's where there's a difference. You can feel the warmth in a Steering Committee meeting." (Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

In the Highfield site, one key informant believed that the parents in the site encouraged service-providers to become involved:

"Part of the reason that some of these agencies get involved is when parents get involved and go and speak to people that we hear about" (Highfield resident focus group)

Barriers and Challenges to Service-Provider Involvement

The Early and Middle Years. In the updated service-provider cross-site report (Cameron et al., 1999), a number of barriers or challenges to service-provider involvement were identified, including:

- Funding cutbacks: many of the sites reported that organizations and agencies had experienced funding cutbacks that limited their resources in collaborating with others;
- Trust and time constraints: many of the sites also alluded to problems in developing trust with certain organizations, and the length of time that was required to build good working relationships;
- Different philosophies: at two of the sites, there were problems establishing common objectives due to different mandates; as well, the limited catchment areas of the Better Beginnings communities also presented a challenge;
- Perceptions: several sites reported that the negative attitudes of some community residents toward service-providers and the attitudes of some professionals were identified as obstacles.
- Power and balance: issues of power and control were difficult to resolve and trying to maintain a balance between resident and service-provider participation were identified as challenges at a couple of the sites.

The Later Years. Some, but not all, of these same challenges were identified in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this report. Two of the sites recognized that some service-providers may be over-worked or stretched too thin to become involved with Better Beginnings:

"Everybody has no money. Everybody's got waiting list or issues of space ... they have issues of not meeting the diverse needs of the community.... They may focus on their own areas, and that's a good survival technique, so that they're not feeling the need to do too much" (Regent Park key informant interview).

“As a volunteer in all of this, I think many of the service-providers are working for nonprofit operations and I think all people who work for nonprofit operations are overworked, so probably, if there’s not as much involvement, it’s a case of lack of time” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

Trust and time issues were also mentioned at a few of the sites. It takes time to build trusting relationships, and time to maintain those collaborations as well. As well, when there is turnover among individual service-providers that Better Beginnings has worked with, it takes time to build new partnerships with the new individuals.

“You’re working with a very small core staff that works incredibly hard If you have effective partnerships with service-providers somebody has to put a lot of time into working on the relationship and providing support for it and making sure that programs run smoothly and the staff has a limited ability because there just aren’t enough of them, and there aren’t enough hours in the day.” (Highfield Steering Committee focus group)

“There’s a restructuring with [one large organization] and there’s two new people who really don’t have a clue what it’s all about and ... it’s like we’re training other people about how to work within the culture of Regent Park. And it takes a lot of time and energy.” (Regent Park focus group)

In Cornwall, changes in school principals has posed challenges in developing and implementing programs, as they may have no knowledge of Better Beginnings:

“Nous avons travaillé avec au moins 20 directions d’écoles pendant les 10 dernières années. Juste les orienter, expliquer les programmes, ça traîne.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“The past ten years we’ve worked with at least 20 school principals. We’ve been orienting them and explaining programs. In fact, things don’t seem to be moving ahead.” (Cornwall staff focus group)

The importance of “fit” and the challenge that is posed with differing philosophies or objectives was also raised at a couple of the Better Beginnings sites. The “fit” may be with the organization or with the individual:

“Some of it could be ... maybe it’s just not a good fit ... maybe because their [goals] are a little different, or their methods are a little different....” (Regent Park key informant interview)

“You may want the organization but if there isn’t the right person, it won’t be helpful. The wrong person isn’t helpful and may be destructive.” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview).

At the Guelph site, the change in location and the increase in agencies housed in one building, posed a number of challenges to service-provider involvement. There was some tension in the

new location, as there was more formality, due to confidentiality issues (Family and Children's Services and Public Health are in the same location), and boundary issues between clients and professionals:

“We do stop people at the door ... for the same issues, confidentiality. We've got charts, the nurses are on the phone, our charts are on our desk So there's been some struggle with the community about that as well, that they get stopped at the door” (Guelph focus group)

“What I struggle with ... are the boundary issues between client and professional, and sometimes between professional and professional I do think there needs to be ... a level of respect where our role is understood ... because ... it can be adversarial. That it's to be respected and understood ... and there should be mechanism in place by which we can approach one another when there are discrepancies in practice or views.” (Guelph focus group)

Strategies to Overcome Barriers and Challenges to Service-provider Involvement

The Early and Middle Years. In the updated cross-site service-provider involvement report (Cameron et al., 1999), the importance of interpersonal relationships, connection and commitment to the community, time to develop relationships, specific formal mechanisms, and having a balance of front-line staff and administrative staff involved were all mentioned as strategies that worked well at the sites for maintaining the involvement of service-providers.

The Later Years. In the interviews and focus groups conducted for this report, key informants reported some of these same strategies to overcoming challenges to service-provider involvement. The importance of the interpersonal relationships was again reinforced, as sites talked about the fit between service-providers and Better Beginnings (mentioned above), and keeping things informal and light. For example,

“We're all coming from a different place that day. We're at the table for a little bit of food and talking and everybody's [asking] 'how are you doing?' It's a good [feeling]. Warm....” (Ottawa service-provider focus group)

Some sites still do things as a way of appreciating service-providers who work with the project. At Highfield, there is an annual “Appreciation Dinner” and both service-providers and community residents who volunteer with the program are invited. In the Southeast Ottawa site, the Better Beginnings program also sends out thank you cards to service-providers and they are invited to the annual June Celebration, where they often also volunteer to help set things up.

Also at Highfield, Better Beginnings continues to pay for teacher release time, to allow teachers to attend the In-school Committee, because their involvement in the program is crucial, since many of the programs are provided in-school. A key informant from this site also believed that by being involved with various coalitions, networks and committees in their neighbourhood and wider community, that also helps to overcome barriers to the participation of the service-providers:

“I try to make sure that myself, or someone in the project is involved in every, every partnership that has relevance to [Better Beginnings] try to be out there as much as I can, be visible, make sure that people know that [Better Beginnings] is active in the community....” (Highfield key informant interview)

As mentioned previously, many of the sites are involved with coalitions, networks and committees in their communities; thus, this is another strategy for continuing and maintaining relationships with service-provider organizations and agencies.

Impacts of Service-Provider Involvement

The Early and Middle Years. During the demonstration phase, researchers documented a number of benefits that resulted from involving service-providers in the Better Beginnings programs. First and foremost,

“The most dramatic impact of Better Beginnings, Better Futures partnerships has been the increased level of programming available to residents. Besides delivering programs directly through Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects, agencies were drawn in the community by the projects’ space, resources, and auspices. All of the sites described many examples of programming and resource benefits from service-provider partnerships with Better Beginnings, Better Futures.” (Cameron et al., 1999, p. 56)

Other benefits of these collaborations and partnerships included:

- Increased visibility: participating agencies in these partnerships spoke about having increased visibility in the communities;
- Sharing of resources: greater efforts at joint programming and sharing of resources expanded programs offered to the communities;
- New structures: Some sites developed new coalitions or non-Better Beginnings structures that enabled other organizations to cooperate, and to look at issues that may have fallen outside of the Better Beginnings mandate;
- Changes in attitude: Service-providers at some sites reported that they learned more about the communities and involving residents, which led to some assessment about how accessible their services were; some sites also reported a greater level of commitment among service-providers to collaboration;
- Changes in ways of working: service-providers at some sites reported that they had learned to work more cooperatively with other service-providers; as reported by one site:

“Our organization has gained a new idea of how to work in a relationship mode ... this has had a positive effect on our ways of working.” (Cameron et al., 1999, p.60).

The Later Years. Many of these same benefits were reported for this report. Key informants spoke of increased programming and sharing of resources. In many of the sites, Better Beginnings is credited with having created opportunities for service-providers to collaborate and partner on different programs or projects. Through their involvement with the Better Beginnings programs, service-providers also believe that their attitudes have changed (e.g., greater respect for community development, and involving residents in decision-making),

as have their ways of working (e.g., try to work more collaboratively, involve residents to a greater degree). Finally, some site-specific benefits or impacts were also reported.

Increased/improved programming and sharing of resources. In each of the sites, collaboration and partnerships with other organizations and agencies have resulted in increased or improved programming and a sharing of resources. As shown previously in Table A.5, there are many examples of increased or improved programming, and a sharing of resources across all of the sites. Readers are directed to that table for more detailed information.

In Cornwall, Better Beginnings was credited with keeping the door open of a Francophone non-profit organization through mobilizing community resources:

"If it wasn't for Better Beginnings, there would not be a 'La maison des jeunes.' It's because of their involvement that our organization is still around today." (Cornwall focus group)

In other sites, key informants spoke of a greater range of services, improvements to programming by enriching activities, improving access, and using Better Beginnings as a rich source of information.

"I think the agencies have contributed to enhancing and strengthening the quality and the level of expertise in the program." (Highfield service-provider focus group)

"I think it has helped because we're not doubling ... up and then leaving slack in another area. We aren't still trying to do everything." (Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

"It can provide a lot of accessibility as well because the programs have mostly been running in ...[the community], so [residents] are not having to go over to CAMH to get this service So anything they need to access has been right at their fingertips. They didn't really have to travel far to get the services, and they haven't been having to wait long periods of time on wait lists to get the services, like for speech and language So that's been very beneficial." (Regent Park key informant interview)

"[The involvement of other service-providers] allow [Better Beginnings] ... as a team to get a broader perspective and a more in-depth perspective That's been helpful" (Regent Park service-provider focus group)

"I just think that they always draw in a good cross section of people who are involved in the area that we're targeting. I think it's a richer process, a richer outcome because of that." (Kingston service-provider focus group)

"We consult here, but we give a lot back to Better Beginnings and ... we use them all the time to consult on information that's happened in the neighbourhood or just their vast knowledge in children 0 to 6, so it's a two-way relationship for us, for sure ... we use them as a resource, and we partner with them" (Kingston service-provider focus group)

Improved visibility and relationships with community. Some of the sites also reported that through their partnerships with Better Beginnings, their organizations or agencies have benefitted by improving their visibility with the community. As well, in their dealings with residents through Better Beginnings, residents have come to trust their organizations and agencies more and there have been improved relations with the community.

"One impact that I'm aware of is that you really experience a setting in which parents truly are partners because sometimes you can talk about that all you want and you can tell people that's what you do, but to actually experience [it] I think service-providers, when they come here ... it's just such a different setting, and so they experience it and so it gives you a sense that it's possible. This is possible when you create that kind of culture." (Highfield service-provider focus group)

"For us I think the big, big thing is outreach.... With Better Beginnings we have an opportunity to meet a lot of participants It's ... been an incredibly great outreach vehicle for us because ... we've developed that sort of longstanding relationship and the trust of the participants because we've met them through Better Beginnings ... and they feel comfortable." (Kingston service-provider focus group)

"... to have parents involved in deciding how the services should be shaped. To me that was a reminder for our agency, you should have this at every level, and it shouldn't be just something you do at the beginning, there should be parent and community input all the way through, no matter what you do...." (Kingston service-provider focus group)

"The fact that we're providing more community-based programming on more of a clinical basis, like [service-providers are] coming here. [Better Beginnings] ... is taking ... the lead ...in developing partnerships and changing our perspective and I think that because of [Better Beginnings] leadership, there's a trust that [Better Beginnings has] ... with the community that may not be there if there's someone else taking the lead, so residents would most likely participate and be more involved" (Regent Park key informant interview)

"I'm in charge of the Community Relations Committee at [my organization] and this feeds into that because we're more able to see some of the needs here." (Southeast Ottawa service- provider focus group)

"I need to know as much about community resources as possible, so just being on this committee ... enhances my job It's just a positive." (Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

Created opportunities for collaborations and partnerships. Better Beginnings programs in many of the sites were credited with creating opportunities for collaborations and partnerships, and through those opportunities had improved services and working relationships. In Cornwall, it was reported that through the collaborations that occurred through Better Beginnings, agencies no longer viewed one another as competitors for the same clientele; rather, they are more willing to participate on joint ventures and enter into partnerships. Cornwall has also been successful in "spinning off" some its programs to partner agencies.

In Kingston, service-providers reported that through their partnership with Better Beginnings, they had developed relationships and collaborations with other organizations and agencies outside of Better Beginnings. And, they've been able to collaborate to better meet the needs of children and families:

" ... When that part of the program finished with Better Beginnings ... I connected with [name of service-provider] and ... [she's] .. been able to help us at [at our organization], to set up a similar program for parents and children, so that's a great connection. And the other way that we've been helped at [our organizations] is that because I have a relationship with Better Beginnings, we can call each other. Better Beginnings will call me and explain that there's a parent that would like to take a parenting class here, and it could be that their three days a week are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and would I be able to change that so that they can come whatever day of the week that they need to be at Better Beginnings. And, I can look at the schedule and I can change it so the parent is able to participate in the program they want to take here, and I can just switch the day at [our organization] to make that possible, so.. we can work together that way. And ... our parents are also involved with Better Beginnings, and so if they have something that they may feel uncomfortable discussing with myself or one of the staff, they'll talk to their [Better Beginnings] home worker about it and then with permission they call me and they ...say this is what happened, can we ... discuss this and get a little more information on it and then we work things out It's a great way for parents to express themselves in a comfortable situation here at Better Beginnings where they may not feel quite as comfortable or they feel that there isn't as much of an opportunity to discuss it at [my organization] because there's a room full of children and there's two staff who are busy, and so, we're able to work things out that way." (Kingston service-provider focus group)

In Guelph, service-providers also appreciated the connections that they had made to other agencies and organizations through their involvement with Better Beginnings:

"For me, I run the support group [every Friday] for women who have experienced violence Coming here physically to Shelldale [Better Beginnings] to use ... this room. This is where we have the support group. So, for me, it has been a very positive experience in terms of connecting with other agencies, with workers in terms of connecting women with whoever and getting to know ... different partners...." (Guelph service-provider focus group)

Changed attitudes and ways of working. Service-providers at some of the sites also spoke of having their attitudes changed, or the way they work changed, as a result of their involvement with Better Beginnings. In Southeast Ottawa, a nurse who worked on-site at Better Beginnings two days a week, spoke of the incredible changes in work style as a result of her partnership with Better Beginnings:

"I'd like to speak to how it's helped my work Before working with Better Beginnings, I was in the community health centre - so clients would come to me and they'd have an appointment and I would be kind of the authority I believe that seeing people in the context of their daily lives has really helped me work more efficiently and to help them

better. I now feel that I really do help people and I'm wondering what I was even doing [before] I realize that if you tell a mother to take a child home and give her popsicles for [her] sore throat, they don't have any money, so how are they going to buy popsicles? Most of our positions in nursing ... don't know that ... so it just ... makes their self-esteem go down more when they're given direction that ... [are] not in the context of their living. So I feel that there's nothing more valuable for me than to go and help these people. And though it takes more effort and more time ... when I see them later ... I understand the family and dynamics of the family situation in a much [better] way and I can give them concrete help Wherever I go now that will help me, so I think it has given me a lot."
(Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

Another service-provider in Ottawa reported that her involvement with Better Beginnings had given her a new appreciation of community development:

"I think the community development aspect is something that I've really come to respect and appreciate through this People just blossom when you give them the tools."
(Southeast Ottawa service-provider focus group)

In Regent Park, a service-provider believed that her colleagues had gained a new respect for Better Beginnings and what they do:

"We have always kind of known what [Better Beginnings does] here. Known what types of families home visitors are working with and the types of things that they see. But some of my colleagues weren't really aware of that, so I think for them it's creating ... an appreciation and an understanding of how hard the staff here work and how much they care about and support a family." (Regent Park service-provider focus group)

Walpole Island

The Walpole Island site has taken a different approach to service-provider involvement than the urban sites. Whereas the urban sites have emphasized partnerships with other agencies, the Walpole Island site has emphasized the original Better Beginnings' concept of service integration. As a result of the restructuring process, the Better Beginnings Steering Committee and the Better Beginnings Project Coordinator position were terminated. Staff members were reallocated to different positions within Social Services, and the Social Services Committee assumed the role of the primary decision-making body for programs funded by Better Beginnings, along with the other social services programs.

The motivation for the restructuring was so as to provide the best possible services in a more holistic and integrated way to children and families. Prior to the amalgamation, programs were separate and distinct; now, they are integrated.

"We had a series of very separate and distinct programs that were operating more or less in isolation of each other." (Walpole Island key informant interview)

"And every program that we get, like we used to have, in my youth, an Indian Agent and a nurse who told us what to do, thought they were God. We had no programs, no power over our own lives .. and it's just been such a mushrooming of all these programs. . . and each one just fractures the community even more. They do a little bit of good, but it's really. . . fracturing the community." (Walpole Island resident focus group)

The home visitation and parent and child-focused programs of Better Beginnings were integrated with other parent and child programs, and they are now housed with the Children's Services Unit of Social Services. Moreover, there is now a single point of access to all child and family services. Following the amalgamation at Walpole Island, the number of staff who do home visits has increased from 1.5 to four full-time staff equivalents, thus strengthening this program component.

Community-focused programs and community healing are now housed with the Community Development Unit of Walpole Island Social Services. One of the main functions of the community development team leader is to consult with community members and service-providers about the need for new services and initiatives and to write grant applications to secure funding for such programs and initiatives. Like several of the urban sites, the Walpole Island site has been successful in obtaining funding from the Ontario Early Years Initiative. As well, funding was obtained to hire a Native Language Coordinator, who coordinates all native language programs.

During the sustainability phase service-providers outside of Social Services who were involved with programs funded by Better Beginnings included: the Bkejwanong Children's Centre, the Walpole Island Health Centre, the Walpole Island Heritage Centre (language advisory group), Walpole Island elementary school, Special Needs Advisory Partners, and the Bkejwanong library. They have been involved in participating at meetings as key resource people to the Social Services Committee, engaging in community development, coordinating services and training through team leader meetings, jointly staffing and operating programs, consulting and planning new initiatives, and keeping informed about Better Beginnings activities and research.

Summary of Findings on Service-Provider Involvement

In addition to the meaningful participation of residents in program development and governance, another key feature of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures model was the collaboration and partnerships between the project sites and other organizations and agencies. During the demonstration phase, each of the sites was successful in involving other service-providers in program planning and development. Service-providers played key roles during the proposal development and early planning stages of the projects. They lent their expertise and provided consultation in developing program components. They were also involved in program delivery, through joint programming and the sharing of resources. By the end of the demonstration phase, 6 of the 7 urban sites continued to have a stable core of service-providers involved with the projects. The number of agencies and organizations involved with Better Beginnings sites, and the diversity of exchanges, had increased in the latter half of this phase.

In many sites the initial group of service-providers who had collaborated to develop the proposal had known each other in the past, and their relationships continued post-funding. In other cases,

partnerships with service-providers were developed over time, and with considerable effort. It helped if the agencies or organizations involved shared similar values, goals, and mandates. There was also a recognition that developing trusting relationships, among professional organizations, as well as between professionals and residents, takes time.

To what extent were the Better Beginnings sites able to sustain the high levels of involvement of service-providers during the sustainability phase? Three of the sites (Guelph, Highfield, Southeast Ottawa) were able to sustain the involvement of service-providers in project governance, while three of the sites (Cornwall, Kingston, Regent Park) saw a reduced or limited role for service-providers in project governance. Amalgamation with their host agencies, and the discontinuation or reduced role of their main decision-making bodies, was the main reason for this reduction of service-provider involvement in governance. It should be noted that at the Kingston site, not all stakeholders agreed that there was a reduction in decision-making power of the main decision-making body, as explained previously.

In all of the sites there continued to be strong partnerships with regard to program delivery. In four of the sites (Highfield, Kingston, Regent Park, Sudbury), Ontario Early Years Initiatives, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, has enhanced programming. In four of the sites (Cornwall, Highfield, Kingston, Sudbury) the project sites have partnered with schools in order to provide in-school programming. The Public Health Department has collaborated with three of the sites in their prenatal or parenting programs (Guelph, Kingston, Regent Park). Staff from Community Health Centres have also collaborated in several sites (Kingston, Regent Park, Southeast Ottawa). The child welfare agencies in several of the communities are also important partners to the Better Beginnings projects (Guelph, Kingston, Southeast Ottawa). Children's mental health services, family counselling services, or broader mental health services, have also been involved with programming at three sites (Highfield, Kingston, Regent Park). Public Housing organizations have provided space at three of the sites (Guelph, Southeast Ottawa, Sudbury). Finally, in each of urban sites, Better Beginnings projects have developed relationships with other community-based organizations in their communities to increase or improve programming, improve access to services, or to share resources.

The Walpole Island site has taken a different approach to service-provider involvement than the urban sites. Whereas the urban sites have emphasized partnerships with other agencies, the Walpole Island site has emphasized the original Better Beginnings' concept of service integration. After a lengthy and challenging planning and consultation process, Walpole Island amalgamated many different programs for children and families, including Better Beginnings, Better Futures, under the umbrella of the Social Services Department of Walpole Island. The motivation to integrate services was to provide the best possible services in a more holistic and integrated way to children and families. Prior to the amalgamation, programs were separate and distinct; now, they are integrated. The home visitation and parent and child-focused programs of Better Beginnings were integrated with other parent and child programs, and they are now housed with the Children's Services Unit of Social Services. Moreover, there is now a single point of access to all child and family services.

Community-focused programs and community healing are now housed with the Community Development Unit of Walpole Island Social Services. One of the main functions of the community development team leader is to consult with community members and service-

providers about the need for new services and initiatives and to write grant applications to secure funding for such programs and initiatives. Like several of the urban sites, the Walpole Island site has been successful in obtaining funding from the Ontario Early Years Initiative. As well, funding was obtained to hire a Native Language Coordinator, who coordinates all native language programs.

The factors that have helped sustain service-provider involvement included: the interpersonal relationships that developed between residents, staff and service-providers, having similar goals or mandates, and keeping involved with community networks or coalitions. Service-providers were motivated to become involved with Better Beginnings because they saw the benefit of partnering - they wished to provide the best services to their communities. Better Beginnings' reputation as a community-based organization also helped develop those partnerships. Service-providers recognized the value of Better Beginnings - their connection to the community and the quality programming that they offer. As well, at this time there is more an atmosphere of collaboration than there was in the early 1990s when Better Beginnings was initiated.

Nonetheless, some challenges or barriers were identified to involving service-providers. There was a recognition at two of the sites (Regent Park, Southeast Ottawa) that service-providers may simply be overworked and stretched too thin to be able to contribute. Trust and time issues were also mentioned at a few sites. It takes time to build trusting relationships, and time to maintain those relationships. Turnover in individual service-providers is also a challenge, as Better Beginnings has to orient them and build new relationships with those individuals. The importance of "fit" between Better Beginnings and the organization *and* between Better Beginnings and the individual has to be a good one.

To address these challenges, two of the sites (Highfield, Southeast Ottawa) made special efforts in their relationships with service-providers (e.g., by keeping meetings informal and friendly, sending out thank you notes, or having a volunteer recognition dinner). At Highfield, teachers are released from class and Better Beginnings pays for a supply teacher so that they can attend important Better Beginnings meetings. As well, many of the sites are involved with coalitions and networks that help keep them connected with other service-providers.

The impacts of having service-providers involved with Better Beginnings have been many. In each of the sites, the partnerships that have developed with other organizations and agencies has resulted in increased or improved programming, and a sharing of resources. Access to different types of services has also been improved. Service-providers at some of the sites (Highfield, Kingston, Regent Park, Southeast Ottawa) reported that they have become more visible in the communities and have improved or built relationships with residents. In three of the sites (Cornwall, Guelph, Kingston), Better Beginnings projects were credited with creating opportunities for collaboration and partnerships. Following the amalgamation at Walpole Island, the number of staff who do home visits has increased from 1.5 to four full-time staff equivalents, thus strengthening this program component. Moreover, all services for children and families are now more integrated with a single point of access. Finally, in two of the sites (Regent Park, Southeast Ottawa) service-providers reported that they have changed their attitudes or ways of working as a result of their involvement with Better Beginnings. For example, they involved residents more or became more understanding and respectful of community development.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The main questions that this research sought to address with regard to project organization and management at the Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites were:

- What changes, if any, have there been in the leadership, governing structures, participatory approach to management, organizational climate, decision-making processes, staffing and supervision, and the relationship with the sponsor organization of the project sites, and what are the reasons for any changes?
- What factors influenced changes in project organization and management?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to project organization and management?

To answer these questions, we used the eight site reports described previously and the earlier report on project organization and management (Cameron & Vanderwoerd, 1997).

Context

The transition of the Better Beginnings sites from policy research demonstration projects to ongoing, government-funded programs was a very difficult process for most of the sites. First of all, all of the sites began planning for sustainability roughly a year before the government announced permanent funding for the programs. Better Beginnings staff and community members experienced this time period as very uncertain and stressful. Staff and community members were worried about loss of jobs and the negative repercussions that reducing or terminating programming would have on the communities. There was also a fear that the hopes that were raised by these projects would be dashed by the end of funding for Better Beginnings. The sites were preoccupied with finding alternative funding and had banded together to form a provincial Better Beginnings Network that pursued fund-raising for the projects. As well, several of the sites engaged in education and advocacy with provincial politicians and senior managers within the ministries that funded the projects in an effort to keep the projects alive. Many individuals were also quite worried that the projects would be defunded, given that the reigning Progressive Conservative government was pursuing an agenda of cutting funding to social programs at that time. However, to the delight of all of the sites, the Premier of Ontario announced permanent funding for all the Better Beginnings projects on April 17, 1997.

There was a shift in the government role in Better Beginnings after the demonstration phase. During the developmental and demonstration phases, staff from the corporate branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and an inter-ministerial government committee provided support to and oversaw the functioning of the Better Beginnings projects. This role was shifted to the local area offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services during the sustainability phase.

While obtaining funding was a key ingredient in ensuring the sustainability of this community-based prevention initiative, many other factors in the transition process were important for the smooth functioning of the eight sites. Some of the major challenges that the projects encountered during the transition process were changes in leadership, particularly the Project Coordinators,

changes in administrative structures or arrangements with the sponsor agency, and the process and impact of organizational review and restructuring during the process. Almost all of the sites experienced one or more of these challenges during the transition process. We now turn to a more detailed examination of changes experienced by the projects after the demonstration phase.

Changes in Leadership

Most of the Better Beginnings Project Coordinators had been in their positions since they were hired during the developmental phase of the projects (see Table A.6 for a list of primary managers). While residents and service-providers also played leadership roles within the projects, the Project Coordinators were the main leaders in the project sites. During the transition from the demonstration to the sustainability phases, there was turnover in Project Coordinators in 6 of the 8 sites.

Table A.6
Primary Managers, Primary Decision-making Bodies, and Sponsor Agencies for Better Beginnings Sites

Site	Primary Managers	Primary Decision-making Bodies	Sponsor Agency
Cornwall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Coordinator during the developmental and demonstration phases - Executive Director of <i>Équipe psychosociale</i> during the sustainability phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination Committee (6 residents and 6 agency representatives during the developmental and demonstration phases) - Parent Committee (14 parents during developmental phase) - Consultation Committee (composed of the Executive Director and parent representatives from the 4 schools served by the project, meets 3 times per year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Équipe psychosociale</i> for all phases
Guelph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Coordinator for all phases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management Board (roughly an equal mix of residents and service-providers during the developmental phase; 22 elected members during demonstration and sustainability phases, including 12 residents, 6 service-providers, and 2 at-large members) - Leadership Team (6 members of the Management Board constituted its Executive during the demonstration and sustainability phases) - Neighbourhood Group during all phases (all community residents, some of whom also participated on the Management Board) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family and Children’s Services for all phases
Highfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Manager for all phases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steering Committee for all phases (large committee during developmental phase dominated by service-providers; restructured into smaller unit during demonstration phase with 4 residents, 3 service-providers, and the Project Manager; and 3 residents, 2 service-providers, and the Project Manager during the sustainability phase) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Etobicoke Board of Education during developmental phase - Toronto District School Board during demonstration phase - George Hull Child and Family Centre currently

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Site	Primary Managers	Primary Decision-making Bodies	Sponsor Agency
Kingston	- Project Coordinator during the developmental and demonstration phases, Program Coordinator during the sustainability phase	- Action Group (12 residents and 6 service-providers during all phases)	- Community Health Centre
Regent Park	- Project Manager during all phases	- Steering Committee during the developmental and demonstration phases (5 residents and 5 service-providers) - A Parents Group existed during the developmental phase and for one year (1996-97) during the demonstration phase parents temporarily split off from the Steering Committee to form a Community Management Group before rejoining the Steering Committee.	- Community Health Centre
Southeast Ottawa	- Project Manager during all phases	- Steering Committee (5 residents and 4 service-providers during developmental phase; 8 residents and 4 service-providers during early part of demonstration phase; 10 residents and 5 service-providers during latter part of demonstration phase and continuing throughout the sustainability phase)	- Community Health Centre
Sudbury	- Project Manager during the developmental and demonstration phases, 2 part-time Project Managers during the early part of the sustainability phase, and an Executive Director currently	- The Association (during the developmental phase, this large body was made up primarily of service-providers; during the demonstration phase, there were equal numbers of staff, residents, and service-providers) - The Council (became the primary decision-making body during the developmental phase, consisting of 13 elected members, 10 of whom represented 5 groups [4 cultural groups and staff] and 3 whom were at-large members; during the sustainability phase, Council consisted of 11 elected members from the community)	- Native Friendship Centre during the developmental phase - Became incorporated during the demonstration phase

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Site	Primary Managers	Primary Decision-making Bodies	Sponsor Agency
Walpole Island	- Project Coordinator during developmental and demonstration phases, Director of Social Services during the sustainability phase	- Advisory Group during the developmental phase - Steering Committee during the demonstration phase (including a member of Band Council, the Project Coordinator, agency representatives and 8 residents) - Social Services Committee and Band Council during the sustainability phase	- Band Council for all phases

Cornwall. The Project Coordinator position was eliminated during the sustainability phase, and staff now report directly to the Executive Director of the sponsor agency.

Guelph. The original Project Coordinator retired in 2002, and a new person has been in that position for the past two years.

Highfield. The original Project Manager resigned in 1999, and it was six months before a new Project Manager was hired. Also, during the sustainability phase, there was turnover in all Coordinator positions (In-school, Family Support, and Community Development). Thus, there has been an entirely new management team during the sustainability phase.

Kingston. The Project Coordinator left in 1997, and a new Project Coordinator was hired in 1998. As well, a new Executive Director for Kingston's sponsor agency, the Community Health Centre, was hired in 2001, and that change was very significant for the leadership of the Kingston site.

Sudbury. The Project Coordinator was replaced in 1998, after ongoing funding was obtained, and was replaced by two part-time Project Coordinators. During 2001, the employment of these two Project Coordinators was terminated, and the coordinator position was not filled for six months. Now there is an Executive Director who has coordinated the project for a little more than two years.

Walpole Island. As a result of a restructuring process at Walpole Island in 2001, the Project Coordinator position was eliminated and changed to Community Development Officer for Walpole Island Social Services. Staff at Walpole Island now report to the team leaders for the Children's Services and Community Development units and the Director of Social Services.

Regent Park and Southeast Ottawa. The original Project Coordinators have remained in their positions during the sustainability phase.

These changes in leadership were experienced as stressful for staff and others involved in the projects.

"When the Project Coordinators . . . were let go, [it] created a lot of fighting within the community. . . There was a group of people that were . . . totally against it. . . There was staff here that were against it; there were staff that were for it." (Sudbury key informant)

"Everybody felt a loss when she left." (Guelph key informant)

"They're both [the former and new Project Coordinators] amazing actually. Just different." (Guelph staff focus group)

"I can't remember the specifics but all I know is everything just kept on rolling, you know, we kept surviving [during the time between Project Managers]. It was difficult getting a Coordinator at the time because of the stuff that was going on between the board and the project. So, it kind of prevented us from being able to fill the position and then when the Coordinator got hired on, they became familiar with the job, a project

manager you know told them what their job is, and they just started taking on the responsibilities again. It's not like we collapsed, you know, it was tough, it was tough." (Highfield Steering Committee focus group)

"I think the Principal, my predecessor, did a sensational job of holding things together. Like she took on being Principal of the school, [which] is a big enough task, but I know she took on a major leadership role with Better Beginnings and did a marvellous job of holding things together, keeping the project going [during the time when there was no Coordinator]." (Highfield Steering Committee focus group)

Changes in Administrative Structures and/or Arrangements with the Sponsor Agency

More than half the sites also reported major changes in their administrative structures and/or sponsor agencies (see Table A.6).

Cornwall. During the sustainability phase at Cornwall, the Coordination Committee was disbanded; the Project Coordinator position was terminated; and the project is now managed by the Executive Director of the sponsor agency. For the past three years during the sustainability phase, there has been a Consultation Committee, which consists of the Executive Director of the sponsor agency and parent representatives from the four schools served by the project. This committee is used to gather parent input regarding *Partir d'un bon pas* and meets three times per year.

Highfield. Highfield changed sponsor agencies from the Toronto District School Board to the George Hull Child and Family Centre. Highfield has retained its project Steering Committee, with a representative from George Hull now participating on the Steering Committee. Also, the Steering Committee is now somewhat smaller than during the demonstration phase and meets less often, once every two months. Highfield also continues to have several different program and organizational committees.

Kingston. In Kingston, there was a decision to discontinue most of the sub-committees as stakeholders did not feel the need to continue those committees, given that programs were running fairly smoothly. All program sub-committees were amalgamated into one Program Committee. These changes occurred at approximately the time that permanent funding was announced. As well, the new Executive Director of the Community Health Centre (the sponsor agency for the project), who was hired in early 2001, wanted to bring the Better Beginnings project "into the fold" (Kingston key informant interview). An organizational review was held to make the organization more efficient and effective, and to look at the relationship with the CHC. This resulted in a change in a shift of the project's administrative structures. Financial reports and any personnel or staff salary issues no longer passed through the Action Group; these fell under the domain of the Board of the Community Health Centre. There was some disagreement amongst stakeholders about this shift; some argued that the Action Group had reduced decision-making power after this shift, while others reported that the Board always held ultimate decision-making power over these issues. As well, Action Group members cannot participate on the Board of the Community Health Centre, as this was felt to be a conflict of interest.

Regent Park. At Regent Park, based on the direction of government funders, Parents for Better Beginnings was integrated with the sponsor agency, the Regent Park Community Health Centre in January, 1998. The Steering Committee was eliminated, and the governing role was assumed by the board of directors for the Community Health Centre. This board has two parent representatives from Better Beginnings, and it has at least 50% parent representation. Parents for Better Beginnings is now a program of the Community Health Centre. The Resource Committee (which was a merger of the Finance and Personnel Committees) disbanded during the sustainability phase, but the Research Working Group meets when necessary, and the Better Beginnings Staff team and sub-teams (e.g., Family Visiting, School Readiness) continue to operate.

Walpole Island. At Walpole Island, a Restructuring Committee decided to absorb Better Beginnings into the Social Services Department. The Project Coordinator position and Steering Committee were eliminated. There is no longer a program called “Better Beginnings” at Walpole Island. Rather, programs that funded by Better Beginnings now exist within two branches of Social Services: Children's Services and Community Development. The project is managed by the Social Services Director and the team leaders of Children's Services and Community Development, who report to Band Council. All of the members of these bodies are residents of Walpole Island.

On the other hand, there were few changes in administrative structures or relationships with sponsor agencies at three of the sites.

Guelph. Guelph's Onward Willow continues to have the Management Board as its primary decision-making body with a majority of residents elected to this body. There is also a Neighbourhood Group that has been functioning since the early days of the project to address neighbourhood issues and fund raising, and there are several committees that continue to function. The relationship with the sponsor agency, Family and Children's Services (FACS), remains stable. The Executive Director of this agency played an instrumental role in planning Onward Willow, and currently a FACS manager co-chairs the Management Board with a community resident.

Southeast Ottawa. In Ottawa, the Steering Committee continues to be the primary decision-making body with a majority of community residents. The Southeast Ottawa site still has working groups that meet infrequently and on an as needed basis regarding specific issues, and their relationship with the sponsor agency, the Community Health Centre, remains the same.

Sudbury. In Sudbury, the Council continues to be the primary governing body for the project with elected representatives who must live in the community. Also, since the developmental phase, Sudbury has continued to have four cultural caucuses (French, English, Aboriginal, and multicultural) and several different committees. The Sudbury Better Beginnings is incorporated.

Summary. Cornwall, Kingston, Regent Park, and Walpole Island all became services of the sponsor agency, with Walpole Island and Regent Park losing their original primary decision-making bodies. Highfield gained a more favourable sponsor agency, while Sudbury was incorporated and had no sponsor agency. Guelph and Southeast Ottawa maintained consistent

relationships with their sponsor agencies.

Organizational Review and Restructuring

After the announcement of permanent funding, most of the sites underwent major organizational reviews and/or restructuring.

Cornwall. In Cornwall, the project was restructured to become a service of the sponsor agency, *Équipe psychosociale*. Prior to 1999, many important decisions went through the Coordination Committee for approval. As was noted earlier, the Coordination Committee was disbanded and replaced with a Steering Committee that meets less frequently and has no decision-making power; and the Project Coordinator position was eliminated. The Executive Director was delegated limited decision-making powers in many of the program's day-to-day operations. This move enhanced the ability of the Better Beginnings' programs to move ahead more quickly. The restructuring process was needed in order to still permit parents, through the Steering Committee, to have a voice in the decision-making process, but it was no longer necessary for the staff to wait for the Coordination Committee to meet once a month to make decisions affecting program development. By being in line and in direct contact with the project's sponsor agency, this Steering Committee significantly decreases the administrative layers and tasks. The management team and the Community Action Group have also been eliminated. It was not clear why these structures were eliminated.

Guelph. At Guelph, the announcement of permanent funding affected the project's program evaluation plans. The team overseeing the program evaluation (called the Transition Team) changed its focus to examining how the project could best spend its funding and achieve its mandate, while ensuring it met government requirements for funding allocations. While the transition to sustainability occurred without any major issues, a change in one of the project facilities was a major turning point for the project that prompted a process of self-reflection. During the demonstration phase, the project had two locations, a townhouse in the Willow Road neighbourhood that was located in social housing for people with low-income and the Family Gateway, a larger facility with the sponsor agency and one other agency. In 2000, the local school board made a decision to close the public school just across from the Family Gateway. This created an opportunity for the Onward Willow project to acquire a larger facility for its program activities. The sponsor agency, Family and Children's Services, made inquiries with other agencies about their interest in sharing this space with Onward Willow. The Management Board of Onward Willow decided to move into this new facility along with 12 other agencies. In 2001, an agreement was signed between the partner agencies (Shelldale Centres Incorporated), the school board and the city of Guelph for the purchase of this space. Key informants noted that this was an opportunity that had to be seized upon quickly. Key informants noted that in the new facility there is a separation between Onward Willow and the other agencies, with that part of the facility occupied by other agencies as having more of a feeling of formality.

"And we have a mighty corridor. . . To get into the offices at the back end [where the corridor is] where Family and Children's Services is, you have to buzz to get in. . . That's created, it's hard, I would say, it's been hard. The change in dynamics in just the physical way things are put together has created some issues there." (Guelph key informant interview)

Due to the short timeline and the magnitude of change for the project, Onward Willow decided in 2003 to conduct an examination of the process of moving to this new facility. A researcher completed a report in January, 2004 entitled “The Impact of the Development of a Community Centre on Community and Agency Partners - The Shelldale Community Centre: A Snapshot.” (Coulman, 2004). This report was based on six key informant interviews and five focus groups (one with Onward Willow staff, one with service-provider partners, and three with community residents) during the summer of 2003.

Highfield. The Highfield site undertook a major organizational review in 1997 after permanent funding was announced, but before the sustainability phase. A broad-based consultation process was initiated which included three staff meetings, two Leadership Team meetings, two Executive Team meetings, and seven program committee meetings. During these meetings, participants provided input on how programs should be restructured. The Executive Team met over the summer of 1997 to review all of this input and to make final decisions about changes in programs, staffing, and job roles.

Decisions about changes were communicated to staff and others early in September, 1997. Staff members were hired for only 4-month contracts because of what the Executive Team thought would be an imminent change in sponsor agency. There was limited communication between the Executive Team and direct service staff during this time period. While this is a general description of this organizational review process, this description does not convey the degree of change and the stress, uncertainty, and upheaval that was felt most strongly by project managers and staff and associated changes in project atmosphere and perceptions of management style. We discuss this further in subsequent sections of this report.

Kingston. With permanent funding, a condition of continued sponsorship with North Kingston Community Health Centre was that Better Beginnings Kingston for Children undergo an organizational review. A consultant was hired to guide the Kingston site through this process. One of the recommendations of the organizational review was that a program review should be conducted. The entire process took longer than anticipated because the consultant was ill for a period of time. During the program review process, 63 in-depth interviews were conducted with participants, which constituted approximately 20% of the residents served at that time. Consultations were also conducted with staff and service-providers about the organization and programs, but not about the recommendations that came from the review. As will be described in a subsequent section, this review process had a major impact on the Kingston site.

Regent Park. Parents for Better Beginnings merged with the Regent Park Community Health Centre. This restructuring was described by some as difficult. While the restructuring was mandated by government, stakeholders at the site and the sponsor organization strived to make the transition as smooth as possible. The Executive Director of Community Health Centre believed that there was a need to go slow and ensure that all voices were heard in the process:

“When ...permanent funding was given, a letter came from the Ministry of Community and Social Services saying that ... Better Beginnings must merge with the Regent Park Community Health Centre.... So ... that was going against the community development, bottom-up approach. That was a real top-down directive ... and because of that we had

to take our time and Better Beginnings had to come to terms with that." (Regent Park key informant interview)

Walpole Island. After a lengthy and challenging planning and consultation process, Walpole Island amalgamated many different programs for children and families, including Better Beginnings, Better Futures, under the umbrella of the Social Services Department of Walpole Island in 2001. Previous attempts at integrating services had been unsuccessful because "top-down" approaches were used. The approach that successfully led to integration was described by key informants as more "grass roots" in orientation with extensive consultation with residents.

"The failed attempt was a top-down attempt. . . . We called ourselves a Partnership Task Force, because we were a grass roots initiative." (Walpole Island key informant interview).

The overarching goal of the restructuring process was to integrate and coordinate services for children and families. As with any change process, feelings of uncertainty and fear about the project's restructuring led to some resistance of stakeholders:

"[T]he resistance to change has been great..." (Walpole Island key informant)

"[T]here was a lot of fear in different individuals in different programs with the restructuring..." (Walpole Island key informant)

"[A]t certain points it took a toll on our, how we felt, the unknown, 'am I gonna have a job?'" (Walpole Island key informant)

Sudbury and Southeast Ottawa. These sites did not appear to undergo major organizational restructuring during the sustainability phase.

Management Style and Project Atmosphere

Several of the Better Beginnings sites experienced changes in management style and/or project atmosphere during the transition to the sustainability phase.

Cornwall. According to the report on project management during the developmental phase for the Cornwall site, project staff maintained a high level of leadership over the project despite efforts to facilitate community residents taking on more of a leadership role. However, during the demonstration phase, community members who participated on the project's Coordination Committee and other project committees had become more knowledgeable and confident and exerted more leadership. The management style of the project was described as participatory and inclusive of many different stakeholders during the demonstration phase.

With the elimination of the Coordinator position and the Coordination Committee, decision-making during the sustainability phase rests more with the Executive Director of the sponsor agency, who seeks input from parents via a Consultation Committee that meets three times per year. Better Beginnings staff indicated that they enjoyed the open door policy of the Executive Director of the sponsor agency.

However, some school principals thought that there was a need for better communication between *Partir d'un bon pas* and the schools.

“Je pense que la direction a l'impression que vous, en temps que Partir d'un bon pas, vous arrivez, puisque c'est déjà clair qu'est-ce que vous pouvez faire. Mais, nous, on veut pas, la direction ne veut pas imposer des choses que vous n'avez pas le droit à faire. Donc, ils disent, 'Qu'est-ce que vous pouvez faire pour nous?' C'est ce qu'ils font présentement, plutôt que de dire, 'Nos besoins sont ceux-ci.'” (Cornwall focus group with school Principals)

TRANSLATION:

“I think the principals have the impression that you, Partir d'un bon pas, are doing what you have set out to do because it is clear what you can do. But for us on the other hand, the principals do not want to impose on us things that Partir d'un bon pas can't do. Therefore they ask: 'What can you do for us?' when they should actually be telling us; 'These are our needs...’ (Cornwall focus group with school Principals)

Also, the Better Beginnings school facilitators indicated that while they are consulted, they believe that the Better Beginnings managers do not necessarily consider their input in the decision-making process. Some of the facilitators believe that their work in the schools is not fully understood by Better Beginnings staff.

“C'est que le personnel au bureau, ils ont de la difficulté à comprendre le rôle de l'animatrice scolaire, et ils ne réalisent pas qu'on travaille dans une école, puis on doit répondre aux besoins des enseignantes, des enfants et la direction. Alors, c'est difficile nous autres dans nos souliers si quelqu'un au bureau de Partir d'un bon pas qui veut qu'on commence quelque chose d'autre et qu'on s'absente pour de quoi ou pour une autre.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“Personnel have a hard time understanding the school animator's role. They don't seem to realize that we work in a school and must answer to the needs of the teachers, the students and the principal. It is therefore difficult for us to take on something extra which has been asked by Partir d'un bon pas and to consequently absent oneself from one thing or another.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

On the other hand, service-provider partners found that *Partir d'un bon pas* worked collaboratively with them to develop new projects.

“It is very easy to work with them and get projects off the ground. They are flexible in their approach.” (Cornwall focus group with service-providers)

Another issue that has arisen during the sustainability phase at *Partir d'un bon pas* is communication. School facilitators indicated that two years ago, they were unclear as to their roles and the goals of their program. Some facilitators stated that their role is to relieve pressure on teachers' workloads, while others thought their role was to have an impact on children.

“Oh non, il ne sait pas exactement c’est quoi mon rôle. Ça dépend des directions dans différentes écoles. Ils sont plus impliqués puis intéressés que d’autres.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“Oh no! He doesn’t know exactly what is my role. It depends on the principal of each school. They are more involved and interested than others.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

“Bien, je pense que ça allège la tâche, mais c’est peut-être qu’en allégeant la tâche, en travaillant avec un certain nombre d’élèves, il y a un impact très forte. La personne qui travaille auprès des enfants a un impact. Ce n’est pas seulement alléger la tâche du prof, mais pour avoir un impact sur les enfants avec qui elle travaille.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

TRANSLATION:

“Well, I think it lightens the load. It’s probably by making the load lighter and by working with a certain number of students that the impact becomes so strong. The person that works with the children has an impact. It’s not only to lighten the teacher’s tasks but it’s to have an impact on the children she works with.” (Cornwall school facilitator focus group)

Currently, however, the school facilitators believe that their roles have become more clear. They have been working on a standardized tool that will be used to evaluate all of the facilitators in the different schools.

In summary, Cornwall appears to have shifted to more of a staff-directed, as opposed to resident- or community-driven, approach to management since the end of the demonstration project, and there appears to be some communication problems with school personnel.

Guelph. Guelph strived to involve residents in the management of Onward Willow. To develop resident participation in the project, the Project Coordinator adopted relevant theories and processes used at her previous workplace and applied them to the project. This approach to resident participation approach was based on four theoretical concepts: community development, adult education, social support, and social competence. During the developmental phase, there was confusion about the representation of residents on the Management Board. Some stakeholders assumed that the Management Board’s membership would eventually be restricted to only residents, while others did not hold this assumption. A formal decision was made by all participants that both service-providers and residents would serve on the Management Board.

As was the case at other sites, the threat of losing funding strengthened community ties and the community’s commitment to primary prevention and agency partnerships. It also resulted in much time-consuming worry and related work on the part of community leaders and staff. Some community leaders felt the need to preserve what they could of the project, “independently of other neighbourhood and project efforts.” In the end, this led to the request that two of these community leaders resign from their project positions, as it was believed that their actions were undermining the goals and philosophy of the community and the project. Stakeholders also indicated that these two community leaders held too much decision-making power, since together they had held 15 different project leadership positions. Despite feelings of stress and

guilt related to asking two of their peers to leave, staff and residents still believed that action needed to be taken to rectify the situation. Following this incident, the Neighbourhood Group created a policy stating that leadership positions would be held by residents for two years after which they would be required to be re-elected to maintain their positions. Residents were also limited to holding a maximum of two leadership positions. Although implementing this policy did result in leadership positions being filled by new people, staff turnover and residents leaving the project to pursue other work and educational opportunities caused community leaders to continue to feel the need to take on multiple project roles.

As was noted earlier, during the sustainability phase, the decision to move the project to a new facility led to some discomfort or at least ambivalence on the part of staff and residents. In particular, some of the long-term residents missed the social aspects that they enjoyed at the Family Gateway, such as dropping by for coffee in the morning.

“I know the moving, the transition from our old space to moving into the centre, I think was quite stressful.” (Guelph staff focus group)

“For me, it was very, very hard. Extremely hard.” (Guelph staff focus group)

“Yeah, it was, for everybody.” (Guelph staff focus group)

In spite of this, the participatory style of project management has remained intact during the sustainability phase.

“It’s a very participatory approach, and I think you can see that where all the committees and all the people [are] involved in making the decisions... Some people think that just takes too long ... to sift through, and we have some board members ... from agencies and they’re members at large who just think why do we have to take so long on all of this, reaching consensus, ‘just vote, let’s just vote.’ So it’s a constant education with some of the agency partners, but it’s very participatory and ... certainly ... my goal is to continue to keep it participatory and to build ownership in the project from the community and from our agency partners as well Broaden that base of ownership and I think the only way to do that is really to have people involved at various levels making decisions.”
(Guelph key informant interview)

Highfield. Throughout the demonstration phase of the project, the management style was experienced by all stakeholders as highly participatory and the project atmosphere as very positive. However, the aftermath of the organizational review in 1997 after permanent funding was announced was quite tense and stressful. Project participants described a shift from the “nice, friendly atmosphere” of “tight knit groups” to feelings of distrust and tension between staff and management. The overarching theme from the experience of staff was that relationships between management and staff were quite strained. In particular, there was a loss of trust, tension, a lack of group cohesiveness and fun, and poor communication. This was felt most strongly by direct-service staff who perceived a rift between themselves and management, which includes the Project Manager, the Executive Team, and, to some extent, the Program Coordinators.

Rather than the “flat” decision-making process characteristic of past project management, some participants described a hierarchical decision-making process.

“I’ve heard that there is less trust in the group than there used to be in the past. You know, it’s not a very cohesive working environment for some people.” (Highfield Executive Team focus group interview)

“I think for about two weeks following that [staff] meeting it was really tense and nobody was talking. People came in, did what they had to do and just left. The tension was running really high. Then after that there was another meeting . . . It wasn’t as tense but people still felt like it could never be the same again.” (Highfield key informant interview)

“The climate has changed and with that trust, support and respect is no longer there in the way that it used to be.” (Highfield staff focus group interview)

While the process of project review following the announcement of permanent funding led to problems in the atmosphere of the project, this crisis was eventually resolved through discussions between staff, the Project Manager, and the Executive Team. Trust and respect began to emerge once again in the late fall of 1997. Better communication and information-sharing brought about these changes. One concrete change reported by staff was that there was more information and better communication about changes. Moreover, trust and respect re-emerged.

“[There is now] more explanation of why things are being done and why they need to be done.” (Highfield staff focus group interview)

“I also think that the communication is more open now. Because before it was like you just pass everyone and they just went on their own way and like now, if someone just heard about something in the office, it would get around and . . . that this was happening and it’s more back now.” (Highfield staff focus group interview)

“The overall atmosphere has changed. . . There is a reality of a better line of communication and interaction going on. The atmosphere is more fun. And, we’re getting our work done. But, you know, that pleasant feeling, you know, the high spirit, it’s back. I think both management and staff have tried to make that work or have made changes to bring about that kind of atmosphere again. You know, so, we’re kind of back and doing our little parties and things, fun stuff. I like that.” (Highfield staff focus group interview)

As was noted earlier, the project also experienced a great deal of stress in the interim between the resignation of the previous Project Manager and the current Project Manager. However, the project climate at the present time was described by all participants as very positive. Participants used words like “family,” “team,” “friendly,” “open,” “respectful,” and “welcoming” to describe the types of relationships and climate that currently exist within the project. With regard to project management, staff members reported that the new Coordinators and the new Project Manager are very supportive and encouraging. While there is a hierarchy in terms of roles and

responsibilities of staff, participants described the management style as participatory. Staff members believe that they have a voice and are listened to by the Coordinators and Project Manager. One person referred to the management structure as a “collegial hierarchical system.” It appears that the climate, values, and management style of the project are very similar to that which existed for most of the demonstration phase.

Kingston. Although the Action Group was the main decision-making body for Better Beginnings Kingston for Children, during the developmental and demonstration phases, there were different perceptions among key informants about where the decision-making authority lay. Some believed that it lay with the host organization and its Executive Director; some thought that it lay with the Project Coordinator; and some thought it lay with the Action Group. Although the Executive Director of the host organization described her role as “hands off,” non-management project staff saw the management style of the project as a hierarchical one with the host organization and its Executive Director at the top. Very few staff suggested that the Action Group was at the top of the structure, even though the Action Group viewed itself as the key decision-making body of the project.

During the end of the demonstration phase, the former Project Coordinator for Better Beginnings left in 1997 and a new “Program Coordinator” was hired in January 1998. According to the updated project management report, the former coordinator “did not succeed in gaining the trust and respect of her program managers or front line staff” (p. 37). However, the residents who were interviewed for the updated report were unanimous in their “admiration and respect” for the former coordinator. According to staff, the former Coordinator’s management style created many problems due to her perceived lack of organization, unreliability and unapproachability. Staff members’ enthusiasm and initiative waned during her tenure, and they eventually ended up relying more upon one other. This resulted in the teams working very independently of one another with little cohesion across the whole staff complement. During the transition between the two Coordinators, the Executive Director of the host organization tried to supervise and support the staff as much as possible, given her other duties and responsibilities. The importance of involving community residents in a meaningful way was clearly valued by the former Project Coordinator. Residents described her as focused, highly committed, approachable, and trustworthy. From the staff’s perspective, however, the previous Project Coordinator put the community ahead of the staff.

During the sustainability phase, the project underwent an organizational review and program review processes described earlier. Initially the staff felt good about the process, and were told to “trust the process” (Kingston staff focus group); that it would be “very transparent” (Kingston key informant interview).

“There [were] lots of meetings ... we were asking participants, one-on-one, staff giving input, and I think there was a fair bit of excitement around it When we were in the process we were quite excited and optimistic about what it was going to mean for Better Beginnings ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

The culmination of the review process coincided with the hiring of a new Executive Director of the host Community Health Centre. This person’s goal was to make the Better Beginnings project more of a program of the Community Health Centre. She was concerned about parity

across the positions, and the discrepancy in salaries among the front-line staff (i.e., the Childcare Assistants compared to the Family Visitors). A decision was made to have only one front-line position, Family and Community Support Workers, and all workers would do family visiting and facilitate the various playgroups and parenting groups. In so doing, the Childcare Assistants ended up with a substantial pay raise, the Family Visitors were given a slight pay raise, and some staff experienced pay cuts. Many of the staff members were clearly upset by these changes. Some reported that their job descriptions now included things that they were not hired to do, nor trained to do, and they did not believe that their skills lay in these areas. The Family Visitors believed that the changes undermined their good work; they did not feel valued. Some staff were also upset with the way in which the changes were communicated, and felt they had little choice but to comply.

“... When the job change happened ... my whole job description changed ...it ... became things that I felt weren't my strengths and weren't what I was originally hired to do and if that's what I had been originally hired to do, I might have made a different choice about taking the job” (Kingston staff focus group)

“And there was actually some comments made that ... home visiting wasn't going to be the thing to fund anymore. We've got to kind of hide it ... so people would be doing it and doing groups. And that felt like a real slap in the face for those that were doing home visiting” (Kingston staff focus group)

“When you were told, like you didn't have time to digest the results because you were taken into a meeting, you sat down, a piece of paper was put across the table and ... You had such a little bit of time to decide” (Kingston staff focus group)

One key informant stated that the transition period was a difficult time for everyone:

“The program review was a terrible time for all of us, the restructuring was a terrible time and it took us a long time to recover from that ...” (Kingston key informant interview).

The Action Group also asserted that it was an incredibly stressful time and they knew that staff members were upset. Service-providers also acknowledged that it was tense during this transition period. Service-providers also felt uninformed about the changes taking place and thought that they should have been kept better informed, because they were so invested in the project and because it may have made a positive difference during that difficult time period:

“Some of the outside organizations were not as involved and I think that would have made a difference perhaps to some of the outcomes that came off of that review...” (Kingston service-provider focus group)

It should be noted that there was at least one staff member, however, who felt “well-informed” because she had participated on the committee that was looking into restructuring:

“At the time [I] wasn’t overly surprised when they combined the two jobs. I think I saw that coming because there was the talk of parity ... front-line work meaning the same ...”
(Kingston key informant interview)

Although the transition period was extremely stressful for many, staff and others did acknowledge that, over time, the morale had improved. They also acknowledged that there were some positive changes that came about as a result of the change. The staff person quoted earlier who believed that her job description had completely changed and that there were responsibilities to which she did not feel well suited, reported that over time the situation had improved.

“I feel over time... there’s been a shift ... and there’s been more ... accommodation ... and ... I’m doing things that I feel ... fit more for me as an individual...” (Kingston staff focus group)

Other staff members also reported that positives did come out of the review. For example, Better Beginnings provided “wonderful opportunities for training, to come up to what we needed to do the job” (Key informant interview). Others agreed that there have been many training opportunities that have occurred since the restructuring and these have been very valuable (e.g., You Make the Difference and Right From the Start - parenting models; Attachment training). As reported by some staff members the training provided them with greater comfort levels in dealing with high-risk or multi-need families:

“These training opportunities have increased my comfort level working with high risk families. The attachment conferences have helped me identify children at an earlier age and help parents with ideas to help form secure attachment.” (Personal communication)

“Increased comfort serving high needs/multi-needs families. Wider knowledge base - i.e., information to share with families, other community resources to draw upon.” (Personal communication)

As described above, the atmosphere at the Better Beginnings community house was quite tense during the changes that followed from the program review and restructuring. However, most participants who were interviewed agreed that over the last two to three years, the atmosphere had improved. Nevertheless, there was acknowledgment that the climate of the project, although improved, was “not like it used to be” (Kingston staff focus group). As described by various people, there continues to be some mistrust of upper management by some stakeholders:

“I can only speak for myself ... I still feel mistrust Upper management makes a decision, tells everybody, we aren’t part of the loop, and then we have to deal with the fallout of it Their morale goes down, they’re feeling mistrust for the organization and then we have to do all the work to bring everybody back on line again and trust ...”
(Kingston key informant interview)

“The trust isn’t [there]. It never came back ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

One key informant stated that the management approach is “highly participatory,” with issues “discussed at length” (Key informant interview). But there seemed to be disagreement among the staff about how participatory the management approach is. Some staff did think there was a lot of opportunity to provide input and discuss issues. Others, however, felt that “we don’t have much influence” (Staff focus group):

“They’re saying we are a Health Centre, we are responsible, you are a program and we will decide what’s going to happen, we’ll ask you as much as we can, but you will not decide these things ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

Staff was also confused about what issues they had control over and what issues they did not. Another issue that was raised by staff and Action Group members was that Better Beginnings was undergoing an evaluation process to develop a Program Logic Model and evaluate the programs. Some of the staff and Action Group members were worried about what this process meant.

“Like when we started talking about this program evaluation ... not again ... it was awful ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

“It’s just a different name for the same thing ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

Regent Park. During the developmental and demonstration phases, the management style of Parents for Better Beginnings was described as informal, flexible, frequently changing, and committed. An open door policy built an atmosphere in which all opinions were considered valuable. Management made changes to improve project operations based on the concerns of staff. The project also experienced several challenges during the demonstration phase. First, as the project grew, so did its need for management. Since many of the managers lacked experience in management, they had to learn while on-the-job. This created a number of problems, such as slow progress, frustration with staff, and conflict between managers. To address these difficulties, management consulted with an organizational consultant to help increase its effectiveness and efficiency. Second, the project’s formal reporting and communication procedures were viewed by some as ill-defined and not applied in a consistent way. This led to distrust and conflict between managers and between front-line staff and managers. Staff and program team discussions about roles and responsibilities were held to address these issues. Third, the greatest challenge expressed across stakeholders was competing requests, short timelines, and sometimes inconsistent messages made from the government, research, and the community. These demands led to stress and interruptions in daily schedules. Despite these challenges, some stakeholders believed that the management had been very nurturing and was very dedicated to the community.

Over the course of the demonstration phase, management strived to be flexible, responsive, open, committed, and supportive, but there was a stronger emphasis on developing and using formal systems and procedures. To address the issue of managers' lack of management experience and training, all managers attended training workshops beginning in 1995. More efficient and effective systems of working across project teams were also developed from the project’s work with an organizational consultant in 1995 and an internal review of program staff and management teams’ functioning in 1996. Management also put more effort into long-term

planning for each team and for the project. A number of positions that involved management duties were restructured or eliminated in 1997 following a review of management structures. Despite these positive achievements and efforts, challenges still existed that made building a cohesive and effective management team challenging. For example, different levels of experience and skill, different styles, inconsistent communication and decision-making procedures, and external influences and pressures on project management were all challenges faced by the management team.

The atmosphere of Parents for Better Beginnings was reported to have changed somewhat since the end of the demonstration phase. With the merger with the Community Health Centre, Parents for Better Beginnings currently has more structure and accountability. There is more emphasis on documentation, and the atmosphere is perhaps more formal than it was during the demonstration phase of the project.

“For sure we’ve moved in a new direction, where there’s a lot more structure and accountability, and there’s a lot more charting that has to ...[take] place So there’s more accountability....” (Regent Park key informant interview)

“More emphasis on documentation. And they were quite informal... But when you’re with a bigger organization, you have to formalize things” (Regent Park key informant interview)

Although Parents for Better Beginnings has continued to have its own identity, separate from the Community Health Centre, there was still a sense that the project had shifted:

“[The administrative tasks/documentation] affects how we deliver our services We’re not an agency you can just drop in anymore and you see somebody chit chatting, you go chit-chat with somebody on the street. You’ve got to collect and count that sort of stuff. So it’s not that luxury that we used to have” (Regent Park staff focus group)

“We need to nurture and work with this community a lot more than that, instead of hammering numbers into a computer. ...” (Regent Park staff focus group)

Service-providers, however, asserted that the current organizational climate was “calm,” and that staff were “responsive” and “knowledgeable.” Although some hierarchy in the management of the program was acknowledged, most staff and key informants believed that there was a still a commitment to receiving feedback and input and being open and democratic:

“Some of it must be hierarchical because the structure of Better Beginnings has changed because we’re part of the Health Centre But I think that the way that the hierarchy is there, there’s goals and objectives that are set out, we had input into those goals and objectives” (Regent Park staff focus group)

“Management will ask us ... ‘well why don’t you guys brainstorm about this and get back to me.’ Whereas she could have just made the decision by herself There’s still that big commitment ... to staff feedback So I think when it comes to the meat of the work, which is ... the program planning, program evaluation, and trying to sort of integrate ...”

the different new services that have come in, I think ... the meat of that is not bureaucratic at all. I think it's quite democratic” (Regent Park staff focus group)

Southeast Ottawa. The approach to management at the Ottawa site during the developmental and demonstration phases was one of focusing on organizational harmony and community improvement. The management style was described as process-driven and process-oriented: “the overall focus remains on people and the needs of people, rather than the administrative or bureaucratic needs of the organization.” Management was described as being concerned with individual (resident and employee) growth and community empowerment. The atmosphere of the project was viewed as very friendly and relaxed. The Project Manager had a major impact on the management style, the atmosphere, and the project as a whole.

In contrast to all of the other sites, there were no major changes noted in program atmosphere or management style since the end of the demonstration phase in this site. The approach to management was described as participatory by management and by staff, and others had only glowing comments to make about the Program Manager:

“People guide a lot of what happens. Some of them work here, some of them sit on the Steering Committee, some of them are community residents I think it's participatory.” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

“The management style is very participatory, very open to consider new ideas and new approaches ... strong sense of identifying strengths and in supporting people to utilize those strengths...” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

“From day one she has ... an approach as being ‘this is ours, let us do it together,’ for the benefit of the whole [community].” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

“I think she really builds on strengths ... like she really tries to look and pull positive things out of it and turn things around I feel part of it, you feel that you have a say too and that's important. Like I feel that it's put on the table, ‘this is a situation, what are your ideas?’” (Southeast Ottawa staff interview)

As well, the organizational climate and atmosphere of the program were described very positively. The residents felt the atmosphere was very non-judgmental and that “you feel safe and secure.” Many described the Program Manager’s positive leadership, working relationships, and her open-door policy as setting the tone for the project.

Sudbury. During the early years, one of the most important goals of the Sudbury site was involving community residents in the management and organization of the project. As such, the project created an atypical structure, a large Association, to enable the community to participate at different levels of management. Over the years, the project changed from a very informal management structure to a more formal style, with a Council acting as the primary decision-making body. Stakeholders reported that the vision and principles that they had developed had positive impacts on developing community participation, the use of consensus, cultural representation, and building social support. For example, with regard to building social support, the project tried to develop a structure in which other aspects of staff’s and community

members' lives were included in the daily management of the project. For instance, food, music, and awards were incorporated into most events. In its management style, the project addressed the differing needs of stakeholders and took the time to listen to stakeholders' concerns. Before and after meetings, a few minutes were devoted to having attendees check-in by sharing any events or concerns in their lives, and received social support from the other attendees if needed. Throughout the demonstration phase there was a strong emphasis on group process and the involvement of residents in the management of the project. Moreover, unlike other sites, service-providers did not participate on the main decision-making body of the project, unless they lived in the neighbourhood.

Since the end of the demonstration phase, Sudbury Better Beginnings experienced changes that affected both staff morale and the organizational climate. There was some turnover in the Executive Director's position (formerly called the Project Coordinator). At the end of the demonstration phase, there were two part-time Project Coordinators. Those two individuals were terminated by the Council during the sustainability phase, and the position of Project Coordinator was vacant for a period of approximately six months. After that time, the current Executive Director was hired and she has been with the organization for approximately two years. The turnover in the Executive Director position created a great deal of turmoil for the staff, and to a lesser extent, for the community. As well, there was turnover at the Council level. As one key informant described, the Council, at that time, was not very functional:

"I think personally that the Council was totally dysfunctional at that point and I think that few people who just had axes to grind ended up with much too much power. And I felt ... that the process had been manipulated to get rid of people that a few people didn't like." (Sudbury key informant interview)

Many saw this turnover as a "healthy" development. However, not all staff members felt that this turnover was positive. There was some disagreement about how well the Council was currently functioning:

"A lot happened two years ago. We've lost about seven people who were ... key to Better Beginnings, that just walked away." (Sudbury staff focus group)

"But ... to me that was a good thing To me they were a little clique and it me it's a good thing that happened, and a lot of people see it that way Some people might think bad things happened" (Sudbury staff focus group)

"Well, from what I see ... three people at Council [are] making decisions right now.... We used to have a Council that ... questions were out there ... and when something has to be agreed upon, there [were] people there to make sure that it became a real conversation and [a] decision was made amongst a council. Now you're looking at three people" (Sudbury staff focus group)

Most people interviewed agreed that the past tension and turmoil was behind them and that the current climate was warm and welcoming. The approach to management during the sustainability phase was described by key informants, some staff, and the Executive Director as non-bureaucratic and mostly participatory. Staff and others also talked about how the teams

manage their own programs.

“Within our team and our program, I find everything runs pretty smoothly” (Sudbury staff focus group)

“We set out basic criteria that the program has to meet, and accountability. And then once that framework was set up, then the teams are basically free to create the kind of program that they think is going to meet those criteria based on ... their participants, their families, their kids So, in that sense, team management is still very much alive and well in the organization” (Sudbury key informant interview)

Nonetheless, there was a sense that the style is a little more traditional than it was in the early days of the demonstration phase - that there is less consensus-building and less communication among staff:

“... The management right now is probably more of a traditional kind of management structure” (Sudbury key informant interview)

“The communication was better in the past” (Sudbury staff focus group)

“The consensus is not as strong as before” (Sudbury staff focus group)

Walpole Island. At the beginning of the project, the staff and the Project Coordinator experienced stress as they were all in new jobs and creating, developing, and refining new programs. During the developmental and demonstration phases, the Walpole Island Better Beginnings Project Coordinators utilized a team-oriented management style. Management and work groups were set up with a circular structure or team. The operation of staff meetings was similar to Native talk circles. These meetings were important to the daily business of the project’s office staff as they set the tone of the workplace. During the developmental and demonstration phases, a group of department heads formed the management of the project. These individuals were highly committed to and enthusiastic about the project, spending long hours above and beyond their regular work hours to get the project off to a good start. When staff members were hired to develop new programs, the management’s enthusiasm carried over to new employees. Some of this initial excitement among the staff naturally subsided as operation of the programs became routine. The staff subsequently derived its enthusiasm from the Steering Committee because of its work on developing new ideas.

Residents provided their input in determining whether ideas or programs would be successful. They believed that their input was valued and sought by the project. The feedback provided by residents kept management in tune with the community. Resident involvement on organizational or administrative groups provided staff and the Steering Committee with a sense of achievement as it meant that programs were community-driven.

During the sustainability phase, the Better Beginnings Steering Committee was no longer in operation. Nevertheless, residents continued to provide their input on programming, especially in regard to the cultural appropriateness of programs and activities to the project management team. For example, parents continued to have input on the delivery of children’s services.

“[W]e have, like play room guidelines and that that the parents helped to establish... the parents have a say in all that kind of stuff. And as far as the timing in the program, like when the program runs, the afternoon program, we adjust that based on parent feedback, like we had... a schedule set, but it wasn't working for the parents in that some of them have to get home in the afternoon to meet the bus, so we had to move our schedule up a half an hour, ...which meant we had to move the morning program up a half an hour, just so that parents could come to the program with their preschoolers to... be home in time to meet the bus when their other kids got home... And as far as field trips, the parents have a lot of say in where we go and... I mean they get a say... they have choices that they can make...” (Walpole Island service-provider focus group)

Collaboration and teamwork were stressed in the sustainability phase. Supervisors, team leaders, staff, and community residents worked in collaboration on multiple levels. Overall, the project atmosphere was described as a relaxed environment in which everyone worked together to achieve the successful delivery of programs to the Walpole Island community.

“[W]e have a service delivery structure that ... allows responsiveness to community needs...” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“We have been working very hard on team-building to bring, to bring the overall team together, so there's been more of a concept of a team that has come about as the result of our changes, and there's a, there's caring that goes along with that... So... we've done a lot of building, we came from very separate distinct territorial kind of programs to where we see ourselves as one team and we support one another and the grey areas are gone and the stress is gone that's been attached to that... So, we could be a better example of healthy interactions to the community and... it's... been incredible, the development that's taken place from Better Beginnings to the present, and I believe that the Better Beginnings initiative, as it was then, has been a real stimulant to the possibilities that were there that made our restructuring initiative a success.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

Decision-making Processes

During the developmental phase, all but two of the sites, Cornwall and Kingston, used a consensus approach to decision-making on the primary decision-making bodies regarding policy issues. However, this has changed over time. During the demonstration phase, Highfield, Regent Park, and Southeast Ottawa had used majority voting to make some decisions. Moreover, this type of decision-making process continued during the sustainability phase. The reasons that were given for the shift to voting was that the process of making decisions by consensus was confusing and that consensus was sometimes hard to reach. The difficulty of using the consensus approach was also acknowledged by stakeholders at sites that continued to use consensus.

“Consensus is wonderful. It's a wonderful concept [For example], a week ago we had an all-staff meeting. I had 12 employees that wanted to do staff training during March break. I had two employees that were very adamant that they wanted to open programs. Okay, so I don't imagine that we reached consensus on that day because we had so much

to do and we had to move on We can't open programs and have training because ...we don't have the money for it So ... we didn't hash it out and hash it out and hash it out until we were blue in the face, but ... the conversation did go on and ... there was ... an arena open that if they wanted to talk about it again afterwards, they could”
(Sudbury key informant interview)

“Consensus is a strange thing I think it's working well One of the things I do find though is, not just Better Beginnings but all organizations that try to run by consensus, is that as soon as you do have a few people who do question, who aren't happy, who want changes, they tend to get marginalized very quickly because they're seen as the problem So I think that consensus has to be facilitated very well and very carefully, so that people do feel free to voice their opinions, that's the whole point of consensus”
(Sudbury key informant interview)

“We never have any trouble reaching a consensus in terms of making a decision. We don't always maybe come to a true consensus, like maybe somebody will just abstain or refuse to take a stand on a position, and just say 'forget it, I don't care'” (Sudbury Council focus group)

The sites that shifted to voting wanted the right balance between hearing from everyone in the decision-making process to being efficient in making decisions. In those sites where there was a shift to voting, there was still an emphasis on striving for consensus so that voting would not be needed. Moreover, what was seen as most important was making sure that stakeholders have all the information and enough time to digest the information and discuss it with others before making a decision. At the Guelph site, which still used consensus, this was seen as very important.

“We've made a concentrated effort in the last ... two years ... to really get ... the community to speak first, because ... when I first came on, what we had noticed is that it was very easy sometimes for agency folks to dominate the discussion.... If we were putting an item on the floor for discussion and decision-making you could have a lot of people make decisions about that. . . that were influenced sometimes by how the agency members spoke ... or the community members would be quieter. So, what we've done at the board level is ... if there's a big item for decision-making, like participation at the neighbourhood coalition level, for one example, who's gonna sit there and those kind of things, we introduce it in one meeting, we identify the issues, we identify the kind of things we want to discuss and then we ask people to think about it and talk to their membership, like the neighbours that weren't at the meeting and those kind of things and then we'd bring it back for decision-making the next month. So ... we haven't been introducing major decision-making items and expecting people to move on them that evening. We want people to read materials, discuss with their neighbours, bring it, and then we have communities speak first. And so in chairing that, I'll ask, I'll actually ask that community members speak and then some agency people can come behind that [We're] making sure it's a community-driven decision as opposed to an agency-driven decision. . . And we put a meeting evaluation format in at the end of every board meeting. I wanted to make sure that I was ... being true to the model. Because in our agency, it could be so easy ... to just get really administratively focused. So, we put in this

community ... feedback thing, and that was kind of, we'd hear from community that couldn't speak, like they hear from the community more....” (Guelph key informant interview)

“We sometimes talk things to death but it's good because it has been fully explained to everyone that way, and we know that everyone's understood it and everyone's had a chance to have their input.” (Guelph key informant interview)

With the merger of Better Beginnings projects into other organizations during the sustainability phase, another type of decision-making emerged, one that emphasizes consultation. For example, at Cornwall, the Executive Director of the sponsor agency has a Consultation Committee composed of parents, who provide him with input but who have no decision-making power. While the Director of Social Services and the Social Services Committee at Walpole Island are responsible for making decisions, they regularly consult with team leaders, supervisors, and other key stakeholders before any major programming decisions were made during the sustainability phase.

“Key decisions... they're discussed at team leader meetings. They're taken to committee, our Social Services Committee... They're taken to parent groups for direction, when issues... when issues come up and we have to make... a decision on direction, you know, what direction are we going with this, with this initiative. We have consultations with staff and community groups...and then the process is we, we would, of course, [have] that linkage with the team leader meetings that takes place. We have discussion there.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

At Kingston, changes were made to the Better Beginnings Action Group following the organizational review and Better Beginnings becoming a program of the Community Health Centre. Some stakeholders reported that the Action Group also lost some of its power and felt it had gone from being a decision-making body to an advisory group.

“It was made very clear [that the] community has no say about jobs or any . . . personnel issues.” (Kingston staff focus group)

“I don't even think they have a say about all other things either.” (Kingston staff focus group)

However, it should be noted that other stakeholders reported that the Action Group never had ultimate decision-making on issues – that the Board was always the final authority for the project. Moreover, Action Group members can no longer participate on both the Action Group and the board of the Community Health Centre, due to conflict of interest. At least one Action Group member did not understand the reason for the change (in the past members were allowed to serve on both groups) or what the nature of the conflict of interest is. This member did not think the board had Better Beginnings' best interest at heart and believed that membership of Better Beginnings residents on that board would be “a joke” or a “token” (Action Group focus group). Another resident, however, who did sit on the board, believed that they were well informed about Better Beginnings and that control still resided with the Action Group:

“The board has meetings right here at Better Beginnings to see the site and to talk about the site and to ...listen to [the Program Coordinator] talk about what they’re delivering right now, how they’re delivering it, what the participants are saying We get ... a wealth of information Health Centre is aware of what things go on, but they don’t really have any say ... in terms of ... what’s actually happening It’s a hands off board, so it doesn’t have ... control...” (Kingston key informant interview)

Another aspect of decision-making pertains to day-to-day decision-making within the projects. During the sustainability phase, staff at some sites felt left out of the decision-making process. For example, at the Cornwall site, facilitators indicated that while they are consulted on matters, the Better Beginnings program office may not necessarily consider their input in the decision-making process. Hence, there is a feeling that the facilitators are left out of the decision-making process as it affects their activities in the schools. Similarly, in Sudbury, some staff members also feel that consensus is not really being reached much of the time. Some believed that the communication is not great between management and staff, and that their voice is not being valued or heard.

“Our voice doesn’t matter any more, really.... Like now they decide things and we’re not aware of it ... until ... the last minute It’s like you don’t have a voice.” (Sudbury staff focus group)

As part of the organizational review and program review at Kingston, issues of who makes what decisions were addressed. “Zones of influence” and “zones of control” were discussed. One participant thought that was a very good process for staff and that “people are much more aware of their power in making decisions” (Key informant Interview). At least one of the staff also thought this process was helpful and that it was clear what decisions they had control over, and what decisions they only had input on:

“I think that’s been a good learning experience for everybody is to learn who makes what decisions and when and when you’re not involved in the decision, don’t pretend I am. I think that’s been the biggest learning ... is tell me am I going to be part of making the decision or not, and if ... you’re just asking for input, then that’s what I want you to say, ‘I’m asking for your input.’ And that’s been ... much better, I think...” (Kingston key informant interview)

Other staff members were still confused about what decisions they had control over: “I feel like asking every time, so what zone is this? Is this ... just input or is this decision-making?” (Kingston staff focus group).

Staffing and Supervision

There are several themes regarding staffing and supervision at the Better Beginnings sites during the sustainability phase. First, as one might expect, there has been some turnover in staff at the different sites. Moreover, the amount of turnover has varied considerably from site to site. For example, during the sustainability phase, there was no turnover in the management positions and very little turnover overall at Southeast Ottawa. On the other hand, at Highfield the Project Manager and all three Coordinators changed, and in Sudbury there was turnover in the

Francophone community worker position several times during the sustainability phase. While the turnover at Highfield caused some initial disruption, in the long-run, a great deal of energy and forward momentum was generated by the work of these new managers.

“Well, I think new energy is always a good thing and . . . no negative agendas, no resentments. There was a real honeymoon, so you almost anticipated that something was gonna happen, yeah, there was gonna be a little bit of fall, and we did get a little bit of fall out over time, but nothing .. nothing that they couldn’t work out. I think there was enormous commitment, even when the fall out happened to say ‘well, we’re all gonna work together, as you know, we all work in very tight quarters and it’s a very intimate relationship and we’ll make it work,’ and so there was a little bit of conflict resolution that went on. But I see now that there was the honeymoon, there was a very intense stage, then there was a little bit of the in-fighting, then there was a withdrawal. Now I see a real sort of comfort, kind of a meshing of operations without that real intensity of doing everything together, being everything to everybody that there was at the beginning. But I see that they’ve developed a very, a comfortable relationship. And also too, I think everybody recognizes the strengths and the weaknesses of each other and builds on them and it’s not, it’s not hidden any more.” (Highfield key informant interview)

A related issue that emerged the sustainability phase was that of the need to integrate new staff with continuing staff. Some sites noted tensions that had developed between new staff and continuing staff. However, this did not appear to be a major issue for any site, and those interviewed thought that some tension between new and continuing staff was inevitable and that such tensions dissipated with time and experience.

A second theme is that most sites continue to have an emphasis on hiring residents from the community. In at least one site, there was less emphasis on hiring from the community, as there are fewer resources available to train community residents. On the other hand, Onward Willow in Guelph continues to have positions for community members with a 3-year limited contract. The idea underlying the limited contract is that the goal of the position is to provide training to community members so that they can seek employment in the wider community. The 3-year limit also enables more community members to take advantage of this training opportunity.

“They have a very specific hiring policy.... If formal credentialing is not required for a position, such as an MSW, ... they will hire within the community first and foremost. And they will, certainly over the years, in order to give more people opportunities for job training, they would take a full-time job and make two part-time jobs and so a lot of people have been employed, residents have been employed in various ways, shapes and forms....It’s kind of given them ... a résumé basically so they can go and work elsewhere.” (Guelph staff focus group)

As was the case during the demonstration phase, some local residents have found that there are challenges to working in Better Beginnings and being a resident of the community.

“A lot of the staff here are part-time staff and lived in the neighbourhood or still do live in the neighbourhood, so, it’s that part of the Better Beginnings, like it’s programming, right, you know, you hire parents and then they develop skills and they move on. They’re

the staff that are most vulnerable; they're the ones that are attacked in the community because they live in the community; they're visible. But they also work in the community, and so if anything, they're the ones that are most at risk for backlash." (Guelph staff focus group)

"I've bonded and made friends with people up there and then when I started work here, I became this different person, this outsider, so it was kind of tough to beat. And then it was let's pick on me, is how I felt at first." (Guelph staff focus group)

"She was scrutinized; she didn't have a life any more." (Guelph staff focus group)

Third, the various restructuring processes that sites undertook has led to some jobs being eliminated and/or changes in job descriptions. At Walpole Island, the Community Outreach Facilitators who were working for the project during the demonstration phase are no longer staff members and have moved on to careers outside of Better Beginnings. At Highfield, the Home Visitor and Educational Assistant positions were merged into one position, Child and Family Enrichment Workers. This new staff position entailed both work in the classrooms and family visits. Similarly, in Kingston, the child care worker position and home visitor position were merged. With the changes that occurred with the Kingston Better Beginnings' position, the host agency, and Better Beginnings, made special efforts to provide various training opportunities to ensure that staff had the necessary skills for their new positions. Staff reported that these training opportunities were very valuable and that they helped them feel more comfortable in their new jobs.

A fourth theme is that staff morale at the different sites tends to be positive overall. Staff tended to view their work environment as supportive and their jobs to be challenging. At the same time, however, there were some differences between sites and between individual staff members.

"The program is ... in our hearts ...we want to ... make things better. We want things to go well with the program" (Sudbury staff focus group)

"It's amazing. All the staff supports everybody, it doesn't matter what position you have." (Guelph staff focus group)

"Coming to work here is like not working anywhere else. I've never been in a social services setting per se, like this. It's very community-oriented, very community-driven, and it does take some getting used to." (Guelph staff focus group)

"[The staff] settled into new positions, understanding their roles much better and the roles of other people. It sifted out quite well to where they, they knew what they were responsible for, they knew what other people were responsible, they know how to connect with others easily." (Walpole Island key informant interview)

"I really do like the role that I'm doing now and being more involved with the community, one on one." (Walpole Island staff focus group)

“So, we have a good team and we’ve got good networking internally, we just need to expand it out further and it’s coming.” (Walpole Island staff focus group)

“It gave me the opportunity to get to know people in my community on a more personal basis and I learned a lot from the people in the community... I enjoy it... and it just... gave me the opportunity to touch base with and open doors for myself and experiences of the people I live with.” (Walpole Island staff focus group)

“... but knowing what Better Beginnings gave me as far as training and some of the other good stuff ... I think that’s what it did is it also gave us the better foundation ...” (Walpole Island staff focus group)

“I’m really proud to work with a program like this. I think it’s a really interesting program and unique” (Regent Park key informant interview)

“I’m very honoured to be part of Better Beginnings as well as the Health Centre as a whole I’m very fortunate to be here still doing what I’m doing” (Regent Park key informant interview)

“I feel very grateful about being here I really admire the philosophy of the agency in general, in spite of all the changes” (Regent Park staff focus group)

“It takes a lot of time, but there’s investment At a staff meeting, we kind of take... time to check in, so I find out stuff about people then that I wouldn’t find out otherwise. And if there are issues that need to be addressed, they’re addressed. I don’t believe it’s a good idea to wait a long time to address something, let’s take it up now ... let’s do what we can to solve it if there’s problem-solving needed.” (Southeast Ottawa staff focus group)

“We’re willing to accept ... inconveniences ... challenges, because we’re so close to each other. We understand each other and we all live it So if somebody’s talking on the phone and you’re trying to do notes ... and all different languages and ... you’re trying to do your notes ... it’s frustrating. But then because we’re understanding and because we understand the situation, ... we put up with that.” (Southeast Ottawa staff focus group)

“I am personally proud of the fact that the BBKC organization enables me to share my own personal values of respect for families and children, offering information in a non-judgmental manner and respecting confidentiality.” (Kingston staff personal communication)

However, the many changes in leadership, organizational review and restructuring processes, and changes in relationships with the sponsor organizations did have, and in some cases continue to have, negative impacts on staff morale, as was noted earlier. In spite of this, staff members believe that they had maintained a positive focus on their work and on the programs.

“All the staff is very committed.” (Kingston staff focus group)

“Amazing group of staff here that are very committed to what they do ...” (Kingston staff focus group)

“We kept it together as best we could for the participants’ sake...” (Kingston staff focus group)

“I was pretty proud of the people who were working here because there was a lot of emotion around it ... but they handled it really well.... You could tell that there was change, you could tell that there was this tension here, but they also did a great job ...” (Kingston key informant interview)

Staff at several sites talked about increased paper work and increased workload during the sustainability phase. In one site, staff spoke of having more paper work as function of the project’s restructuring.

“You think that you’re gonna get all this other paper work done, it doesn’t happen like that. It’s just so different working in this kind of setting, this community, you know, their needs are usually more dominant or more pressing than paper work or meetings or any of those kinds of things. So it’s always trying to remember that programming is the most important, is what we all as staff have to keep reminding ourselves, programming first, all the other stuff second.” (Guelph staff focus group)

Staff also noted in some sites that their workload had increased because of an increase in the population in the community without any increase in funding for the project.

“Well, there’s more people using it since the beginning. I’ve been here since the beginning and yeah, it’s at least tripled the amount of people that come through this.” (Guelph staff focus group)

One other dimension of staff morale is that of pay. In most sites, staff had not had a raise in pay for some time, as project budgets had remained constant. At Sudbury, staff hours were temporarily cut resulting from a budget over-run at the end of the demonstration phase. At Kingston, when two positions were merged, some individuals had their pay increase, while others had their pay cut. Finally, staff at several sites talked about problems related to their physical space. In three sites, staff worked at different settings and spoke of being cut off from other staff. One site found its new space that it shared with other agencies to be more formal than it would like, and at other sites staff found that their quarters were cramped.

Finally, there were changes in supervision at a few sites. In Cornwall, staff are now supervised the Executive Director of the sponsor agency. At Highfield, the three Coordinators are responsible for much of the supervision, but because of the rules of the new staff union, the Project Manager is officially designated as the supervisor of all staff. In practice, however, staff supervision is done in much the same way that it always has been done. In Sudbury, staff are supervised by Community Workers, who conduct annual appraisals. At Walpole Island, staff reported to their immediate supervisors and the Project Manager during the demonstration phase, but now supervision is the responsibility of the team leaders and the Director of Social Services. At Regent Park and Southeast Ottawa, there is management staff who are responsible for

supervision. With the merged position in Kingston, staff now had two different supervisors, which some staff said they found “very confusing” (Kingston staff focus group).

Relationships with the Sponsor Agency

Cornwall. Contacts with the sponsor agency were punctuated with tensions at the start of the fall of 1997. A restructuring, which occurred shortly after the government’s announcement of permanent funding, aroused questions among the Coordination Committee members regarding the future orientation of the project and the degree of dialogue required between the project and the sponsor agency to preserve the integrity of the objectives of this primary prevention initiative. The Coordination Committee asked for a meeting with the directors of the sponsor agency and expressed their concerns to the directors of the sponsor agency. They discussed the means to see to it that the project remained consistent with its initial mission and the means to assure the maintenance of the prevention program model. After this meeting, tensions diminished for all parties involved and relations between the project and the sponsor agency became more cordial and respectful of each other. During the sustainability phase, the project has become a service of the sponsor agency, *Équipe psychosociale*. It is not clear how or why this decision was made.

Guelph. Onward Willow continues to enjoy a positive relationship with the sponsor agency. The sponsor agency, Family and Children’s Services, has provided guidance with respect to the hiring, supervision, evaluation, and firing of staff and with the financial concerns of the organization.

“We needed to have policies and procedures for ... hiring, firing, contract length ... some very specific human resource stuff. And we tend to adopt Family and Children’s Services guidelines, like when you need that kind of structure, we use what we have. We, Better Beginnings, use what Family and Children’s services has.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“Family and Children’s Services [provides] guidance in terms of employment practice and law and what you do and all those kind of things and . . . recruiting, the job of the Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator’s position is done by a team but it was our Human Resource Department that was able to do all of the advertising on behalf of the community and a lot of the screening and you know, a lot of the formalized documentation around policies and procedures. You’ve got that kind of infrastructure to fall back on. And ... our board has to sign off on the service plan which is a very formalized link with the ministry” (Guelph key informant interview)

“In terms ... of the financial piece, they give us a lot of support in terms of that. They do our payroll and that sort of thing and also help us [with]... our financial statements and all of that.... [They] ... not in a dictatorial way, by any means So, very supportive [with] ... any kinds of personnel issues that we might have. Their human resources director is available to us to help us out. So I would say it’s a very good working relationship, and they ...provide support when we ask but they don’t ... impose anything on us.” (Guelph key informant interview)

Highfield. During the developmental and demonstration phases, the project tried unsuccessfully to develop a letter of agreement with the Etobicoke Board of Education. When the Etobicoke board was merged into the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in the late 1990s, the project began seeking an alternate sponsor. These efforts were led by the previous Project Manager and Executive Team, but the process was met with internal resistance from staff and stalled by the TDSB. Another complication following the demonstration phase was that project staff were unionized, and the union did not want to lose its members with the shift to a new organization. From the time the new Project Manager was hired in 1999, it took three years to make the shift to a new sponsor agency. One of the members of the Steering Committee had a connection with the Chair of the TDSB and was finally able to expedite the process. Once the TDSB was willing to sever ties with the project, the negotiation process with George Hull began.

“Well, the problem was that George Hull was quite willing to take us on at any time, the Ministry was quite willing to release the contract with the school board and establish a new one with George Hull, but the school board wouldn’t let us go. It was a very, very long transition. . . Part of the problem was that the staff became unionized during that time and CUPE [the union] of course didn’t want to let any staff go, but also were too busy and too preoccupied to really negotiate anything new, so they would just say ‘no,’ and then you’d have months where you didn’t hear anything, and then you would take an initiative and then they’d write back and say ‘no’.. and then you’d get silence again. And, so, really, it ended up being that I had to force the issue, I ended up you know, with a lot of the help from some of the connections that members of the Steering Committee had. . . We were able to get one of the school trustees to sign off. It was actually [name of person who was the Chair of TDSB], who is now our MPP. And once that ball got rolling, you know, once somebody in real authority at the school board had made that decision, then everything [fell into place].” (Highfield key informant interview)

The relationship with George Hull has worked out very well for the project.

“There’s absolutely no comparison. This is an accountable agency that really believes in developing the community, takes a hands off approach to the project, and supports the project. . . So, I can’t say enough good things about this relationship. It’s really been, I think it’s really been a saviour for the project.” (Highfield key informant interview)

While staff had previously been fearful of leaving the school board, they became less enamoured of the school board over time. Several staff members complained about having problems with their pay cheques and taking months with the TDSB payroll department to sort these problems out. They also noted that it was difficult to get permission from TDSB for advertising positions.

“And then you had to wait for permission every time you wanted to do something.” (Highfield staff focus group)

“Messing up your paycheque.” (Highfield staff focus group)

“And they were taking all of our union dues. . . they were taking all the union dues and never paid us back.” (Highfield staff focus group)

Highfield staff was very positive about the change to George Hull as a sponsor agency.

Kingston. It was agreed by all participants that the new Executive Director of the sponsor agency (the Community Health Centre) wanted to ensure that the Community Health Centre and Better Beginnings were all part of the same organization. According to key informants, she was very interested in parity and ensuring that all front-line workers were paid equally. One key informant believed that the Executive Director had worked very hard to raise the profile of the Community Health Centre, and that she had also fought hard so that Better Beginnings could retain its different culture. The Coordinator did not think there was anything negative in the relationship with the Community Health Centre, but that it was part of “efficient functioning” (Key informant Interview). Staff also saw that there could be great benefits in becoming more a part of the Health Centre - greater collaboration with the staff of the Community Health Centre, more resources, etc. However, they also believed that the different cultures of the two organizations “need to be respected” and there was a general mistrust of the Community Health Centre (Staff focus group; Key informant interview).

Although the new Executive Director wanted to make Better Beginnings more of a program of the Centre, staff reported that they were “no more connected to the Health Centre that I was 10 years ago” (Kingston staff focus group). Some staff reported that they did not feel welcomed or comfortable at the Health Centre, and that there was not parity when it came to office equipment, furniture, and computer equipment. Staff reported that the Health Centre staff was sometimes frustrated because it could not communicate with Better Beginnings staff by e-mail; they didn’t realize that Better Beginnings staff members do not have their own computers, and their access to the ones they do have is limited.

Staff acknowledged that the relationship could be better and that by being housed in one location, as may happen in the near future, the benefits to Better Beginnings staff would be many. However, they also thought that although it may be beneficial to them, they did not believe that it would benefit the community. As described above, they believed that the two cultures need to be respected. Action Group members generally agreed - they believed that it was very important for Better Beginnings to be fairly autonomous, and they were worried about the growing influence of the Health Centre and the fact that the programs may ultimately be housed there:

“We’re going to move into the same building with them and everything. We will be no more Better Beginnings, we will be Health Centre.” (Kingston Action Group focus group)

“I think that’ll just alienate the community more ...” (Kingston Action Group focus group)

“I don’t have a problem with the Health Centre itself, it’s a separate entity The community is supposed to own [Better Beginnings]...” (Kingston Action Group focus group)

Service-providers wanted to highlight that “there’s positive parts to that growth too and that isn’t getting out there” (Kingston service-provider focus group).

Regent Park. As described previously, the merger with the Community Health Centre was described by some as difficult. However, it does seem that much effort was put into trying to make the transition as smooth as possible. As described the Executive Director of the Community Health Centre, there was a need to go slow and ensure that all voices were heard in the process. A retreat was held to discuss the mission and values of Better Beginnings and how that fit with the CHC.

“When we merged with the health centre, the ... Board did a very interesting thing and decided to have a big day ... of concreting our values ... so that it wasn't just absorbing PFBB and you come into our value system We actually co-created our values with the idea and it turned out ... they all came out pretty well the same anyway. And then getting also a better sense of the health centre as a whole There was a merge evaluation that did take place and I think any issues that came out, came out through that. I thin overall the health centre has done amazing leaps and bounds to make us feel welcome....”
(Regent Park Staff focus group)

Staff felt heard during the process and that the Community Health Centre made many efforts, including evaluating the amalgamation process, to make Parents for Better Beginnings staff feel welcome. Although the transition was described as “challenging” by more than one key informant, it seems that the steps that the Community Health Centre took to assist in the merger did help. The initial frustration with administrative work and meetings, particularly for the Program Manager, did dissipate with time. Key informants believed that it took approximately two years until Parents for Better Beginnings staff felt more a part of the Community Health Centre, and the tension that came with the change had subsided.

Southeast Ottawa. The relationship between the project and the host agency, the Southeast Ottawa Community Health Centre, appears to be quite positive. Even though the program is part of the Health Centre and, ultimately, is accountable to its board of directors, Better Beginnings has a good deal of autonomy.

“Our relationship is one of ... recognized independence, where there's quite a bit of autonomy for the Better Beginnings program to work in a way that fits this community ... and there's ... I think respect for that.... I think there's a sense that we are accountable, that we're doing good work. I think there's a very strong trust and respect within that relationship, but there's also the recognition that it needs to be here, and that people here need to make it happen in a way that fits.... [The Executive Director] has been very good at maintaining that distance but support.” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

“Ultimately it goes through our board of directors. However, the Better Beginnings program has always been guided and directed by its own Steering Committee and our board of directors I think has been very wise in, although it maintains oversight for the overall program direction and for the management of the funds because that legally is their responsibility, they've allowed a lot of authority to rest with that Steering Committee.” (Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

The program received many benefits from having the Health Centre as its host, mostly in the area of providing infrastructure. The Program Manager, over the years, has had an increasingly larger role in the Community Health Centre. She now helps manage the Early Years program staff at the Health Centre. Staff believed that the relationship with the host agency had improved over the years. Although they appreciated the autonomy provided by the Health Centre, they also thought that it would be nice to see the Executive Director more frequently - that he should have more of a connection with Better Beginnings. Yet, they also felt that “he has total confidence in us.”

Key informants also reported that Better Beginnings had had a positive impact on how the Health Centre operates. The Program Manager believed that the Health Centre had begun to offer more children’s programming as a result of their contact with Better Beginnings staff. She asserted that Better Beginnings staff, when they sit on the various workgroups of the Centre, bring a certain “perspective” that has an impact on the Centre. Others agreed:

“In terms of what we get back from this, it’s huge, it’s significant. Better Beginnings has demonstrated what’s possible in terms of a community development program and a community development approach that is apparently working. So, we use Better Beginnings and their ... strategies for inclusiveness and participation. We’ve adopted so many of those in our programs.... [The Program Manager] and her staff, [the Program Manager] in particular ... are constantly challenging us to reconsider our values and our morals as we’re developing and delivering our ... community-based programs.”
(Southeast Ottawa key informant interview)

Sudbury. Since Sudbury incorporated during the demonstration phase, it no longer has a sponsor agency.

Walpole Island. In 2001, the Walpole Island Better Beginnings project amalgamated with Social Services. The restructuring phase brought with it many challenges to overcome and several structural changes occurred. There were a lot of conflicting feelings about the project’s restructuring. Participants indicated that the Walpole Island Better Beginnings project had been more distinct prior to the restructuring phase with Social Services.

“[B]efore the integration of services and or restructuring, Better Beginnings was very separate and distinct...” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“Better Beginnings, through, like through restructuring, there is no Better Beginnings because we don’t use the term Better Beginnings any more...” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

Despite the fact that the name "Better Beginnings" was no longer used, participants stated that the integrity of Better Beginnings program was maintained and that the project was still making an impact in the community. For example, although community residents did not necessarily know that they were participating in Better Beginnings activities, these programs were an integral component of their daily lives. Furthermore, the project laid the foundation for several other projects and services to take root within the community.

“I do believe we’ve incorporated programming from Better Beginnings into our new system.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“I believe the integrity of that programming has been maintained in our new service delivery structure...” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“It’s [Better Beginnings] still there, it’s still there and I think it’s going to continue as long as the funding is there. If funding ever goes... it’ll be a very long mourning process for community. It will. Even in light of research. And the research can say ‘nah; it didn’t do anything,’ but... I don’t, I don’t think people realize what it [the project] has done.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“I’d like to say that we had a hand in that, Better Beginnings had a hand in the start of that Early Year’s initiative in this community because it was through Better Beginnings how I became aware of Early Years.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“[W]here we are today is because of Better Beginnings. Yeah, it’s hard to imagine... without it. I don’t know where things would have gone, but things are going in a real good direction now, I think they are. I see a lot of... positive forward movement and I think Better Beginnings was a big part of that...” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

“I think that [the project] continues... it really does continue... Maybe without the words Better Beginnings attached, the service will continue to impact family lives and children’s outcomes.” (Walpole Island key informant interview)

Values and Principles Guiding Project Management

Many of the Better Beginnings sites have had and continue to have a strong emphasis on value-driven and principle-driven approaches to project management. Many of those values were derived from the original Better Beginnings document, which emphasized resident participation and a comprehensive and holistic approach to prevention.

Cornwall. The working principles and the philosophy of the project called for a participatory style of organization and management. As such, the project’s success was dependent on participants’ feelings of belonging and the degree to which they identified with the project. Furthermore, a positive atmosphere in the project rested largely on the willingness of all partners to join their efforts. Hence, a participatory style of organization and management was implemented by establishing a number of different administrative structures and management levels in which individuals from different stakeholder groups could participate. Stakeholders believed that having multiple stakeholders participate in the project’s administration was a major asset in maximizing the flexibility and possibilities for action at the program level. However, from the information gathered for this report, there was little discussion about the values or principles of the project or the need for a continued emphasis on resident participation during the sustainability phase.

Guelph. Principles have always guided the management and organization of the Onward Willow project. These principles were based on the government's integrated model for Better Beginnings. Some of these principles were clearly articulated, while others were implied. The Management Board, which operated the project, formulated a document of agreement between the sponsoring agency (Family and Children's Services) that included six project operating principles. These principles were: principle-based decision-making, everyone has a voice, prevention starts with ourselves, partnership, creative alternatives, and stability and continuity.

These values and principles have remained intact during the sustainability phase and continue to be used to guide the management of the project.

"[There is the] value of sort of the whole family. . . Like the . . . at the visioning day that we had . . . the parental involvement, stronger parental involvement and making sure that programs serve all of our folks. The other value, in terms of the diversity is their respect for each other. And in the visioning day, we ha ... our Chinese women's group that learn English as a second language, ... at the entire visioning day, with translation and we had other translation as well. But in terms of the leadership... like the voice of grandparents and sort of celebrating all the good things about this community. It really came from some of the minority groups that were speaking very eloquently about what this community means to them. And I don't think that that would have happened if the respect hadn't been there, the warmth to kind of make sure that everybody had a place.... It's just amazing to see the diversity in the room when you've got people pulled together Other kind of values would be . . . the community decision making The community very much will put you in your place if you speak out of turn.... If I speak and I sound like an agency person instead of me, I don't know how else to describe that, they will tell you that's not your place, we have a say in how that goes. And ... I've seen more of that, and so I don't know if that's one of the unintended impacts of us being here, but I think the community's made more of a conscious effort to speak for itself." (Guelph key informant interview)

"I would say participation, broad, broad participation. . . I would say inclusivity ... and these are things that I'd say have been identified by the community as well. We had a visioning day a couple of months ago where we spent a Saturday together as a community and ... identifying some ... key areas that we wanted to work on, so, certainly issues around the diversity of this community and how we can ... work better at that, in terms of anti-racism, or in terms of ensuring that people from the diverse cultures in the community are sitting on leadership positions and are seen as community leaders and they're involved. The importance of prevention and have really taken on that perspective of good programming and looking at ...the long-term prevention possibilities and so I think that's really ... another key value." (Guelph key informant interview)

"We definitely I would say think of children first, you know, think about what would be best for the kids, you know, before, what would be easiest for the staff or do that kind of thing. We definitely, we're trying very hard to be multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and recognize the diversity here and I think we're doing fairly well. I mean I think we do better than a lot of our partners in that respect. And what other values, I mean you know, there's the basic values of respect each other and hopefully some

ownership and responsibility that people feel towards the organization as a whole, that the individual feels a little bit of responsibility.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“You’ve gotta love your community, for one thing. And I, for one, am very much for whatever I can get for any kid out there because I think the kids are important.” (Guelph key informant interview)

One key informant made a similar comment about the central role of the community in the project and the importance of community resident leaders in holding the project to its original vision and values.

“There’s a few community leaders that catch it, you know, like some of our historians in the community, it was a ‘that’s not right, that’s not what we originally intended’ The [name of community resident leader] of the world will always keep this community honest in terms of what some of its original intentions are. But I think having the planning days and the visioning days and the annual reviews in terms of program objectives and reviewing those regularly and having supervisors take the lead in making sure that ... there’s some documentation of ... a drift when you’re doing that. But the community discussions is where most of the ‘is this what you wanted it to be?, does this new thing now make sense?’ I think that’s kind of what held people honest is that process.” (Guelph key informant interview)

Highfield. There has been a conscious effort during the sustainability phase to maintain the philosophy and values that the project began with, including its focus on a child-family-community continuum, an emphasis on language and culture, and the need for programs relating to every aspect of the child’s life (i.e., social, physical, cognitive):

“That concept of the organicness of it, that a child develops within a family within a community, I think is, is really understood by everybody at all levels and I think that that’s really important, because it’s a visual image and people can grasp a visual image and have something to hang on to, and I think that everybody gets it.” (Highfield key informant interview)

The values of resident participation, a holistic approach to child development, and prevention remain intact. The project revisited its mission statement and values after the new Project Manager and new Coordinators were hired. This process helped to clarify and refresh the original values of the project and to underscore their importance for new staff.

Kingston. Six principles were developed to guide the management of the project during the developmental and demonstration phases:

- commitment to the principles outlined in the original Better Beginnings, Better Futures document
- primary prevention and community ownership
- equal partnership among the partner agencies and the project
- majority rule decision-making
- creative alternatives to traditional methods

- responsibility to function within legal requirements, to be financially accountable, and to maintain fair employment practices

Better Beginnings Kingston for Children also used a bicycle analogy to describe the roles of different stakeholders, and it has eight assumptions underlying project governance:

- integration - fitting together of parts into a whole
- serving the 0 to 4 age group and their families
- the project and affiliated agencies should ensure that programs and services have components of nutrition, food, and family planning incorporated
- the project was concerned with child development
- there were five years to the project
- all programs and services were monitored and evaluated with high quality community support
- research was the reason for the project
- community involvement must be present in every aspect of the project

Key informants felt that the values from the demonstration phase had continued into the sustainability phase.

"I think that they work very hard at building community connections, with residents to their community, and residents to other residents within the community. And I think that they work very hard to create the opportunities, create access for those kinds of things to happen, as well as the ... growth of individuals, as parents, as well as community ... members...." (Kingston key informant interview)

"inclusiveness ... a client-centred approach ... there's a great ...emphasis also on community capacity building ... and ... a community orientated approach to help children." (Kingston key informant interview)

"[I]t's surprising, because often when I go out to do a speak, I'll do the, the principals from ...what we call the bible [the original Better Beginnings' call for proposals] ... and they're the same ... we have really stuck to them." (Kingston key informant interview)

Regent Park. The values of community ownership, inclusiveness, anti-racism, and flexibility guided the project during the developmental and demonstration phases. During the sustainability phase, there was a conscious effort on the part of Parents for Better Beginnings to re-examine the values of the project and to determine if those were compatible with the host organization with whom they were directed to merge. As well, the host organization was very receptive to ensuring that there was a good fit between Parents for Better Beginnings and the Community Health Centre, as described previously.

Southeast Ottawa. The Ottawa site has been guided by seven major principles of project management:

- process orientation - emphasis was on process and developing social relations among people

- people centredness - focus was on all people, not exclusively clients; emphasis was on individual support and empowerment
- hiring from within - emphasis to hire residents from the community in order to encourage community involvement and promote skill building
- democratic leadership - staff shared equally in the decision-making and power sharing
- boundary diffusion - integration and overlap of personal and professional boundaries among workers, in terms of roles, work and space
- modeling - as a teaching strategy, managers modelled three skill patterns – interpersonal (respectful, courteous and democratic behaviour), organizational (meeting, facilitation, grant proposal), and community-oriented (by being active in and accountable to the community)
- translation of interests and accountability - involved the ability to translate the knowledge and concerns of residents to government in ways which were meaningful to both

These principles were consistently used from the developmental phase through the sustainability phase.

Sudbury. The initial coalition, Sudbury Better Beginnings, Better Futures, developed several principles for the project. These principles emphasized community strengths, partnership building, and a collective concern for children’s welfare, and they set the tone for the horizontal and egalitarian management and organization of the project. The Project Coordinator worked at developing a new vision and principles to create a common ground for those who would be working together. The new vision and principles were approved in the fall of 1991 and were used to guide working relationships during the development of the Association structure and became the preamble to the by-laws of the Council structure. The new vision and principles reaffirmed the first set of principles and placed a special emphasis on cultural group issues. Members’ commitments to the guiding vision and principles were also formalized. The same vision, values, and principles were used to guide the management philosophy of the project and were included in most official documents and in the training of new staff and volunteers. Certain staff stated that they tried to ensure that the vision, values, and principles were used throughout the project, which meant ensuring that volunteers had the abilities to follow the vision, values, and principles.

During the sustainability phase, it appears the values or principles that guide Sudbury Better Beginnings have not changed since the demonstration phase, according to staff and other key informants.

“Principles, in fact, [have] not changed. From the beginning we had the same principles, the same philosophy: to help the kids, to raise the kids in a healthy environment and to support the parents in [the] community” (Sudbury Council focus group)

Other values that were mentioned are community ownership, respect, and being non-judgmental (Key informant interview; Interview with two staff members).

Walpole Island. This site also has a clear set of values on which the Better Beginnings project rests. These values and issues are an important part of the cultural sensitivity and uniqueness of Better Beginnings programs at Walpole Island. These values/issues include the

following:

- ethic of non-interference- “Tribal people don’t stand for another individual telling them what to do, even for their own good, it must come from the group.”
- importance of kinship patterns - There is a strong emphasis on kinship and family.
- lack of role models for dealing with strangers - Since the main ways of relating to others is through kinship, historically there were no models of how to relate to people from outside the culture.
- teaching methods - emphasis on elders as teachers, with seven stages of life and the last stage being the teaching stage
- decision-making by consensus
- group work patterns - work is traditionally done communally in Native communities
- use of humour - “The ability to laugh is central to our being and should be formally recognized within any new programs as it was in our original teachings.”
- sensory/thought patterns - emphasis on kinaesthetic learning
- effects of colonialism/genocide - deep-rooted orientation towards survival based on the historical relationship with the dominant white society
- tribal worldview - emphasis on balance, holism, harmony, rather than western linear thought

Teamwork and equality continued to be the two main values that guided the Better Beginning’s project management during the sustainability phase at Walpole Island.

Themes Related to Project Organization and Management

There are several general themes and issues related to project organization and management over the life cycle of Better Beginnings organizations.

Values and Principles. In the previous cross-site report on project organization and management, Cameron and Vanderwoerd (1997) noted that Better Beginnings stakeholders “. . . have been motivated by strongly held principles and beliefs” (p. 123). This continued to be the case during the sustainability phase. At most of the sites, those who were interviewed articulated several values and principles that underlie project organization and management. Moreover, the central value continues to be resident participation.

The Central Value of Resident Participation. The value of resident participation is manifested in several different ways: staff and service-providers encouraging residents and nurturing their growth in the projects, hiring staff from the communities, and having residents participate on the primary decision-making bodies of the projects. While there is a central focus on resident participation, it does appear that resident participation waned somewhat during the sustainability phase. While this was an overall trend, it was more apparent at some sites than others. The sites which maintained their autonomy appeared more likely to have maintained the participation of residents in project management. In these sites, residents continued to have decision-making power; whereas in the sites that were absorbed into the host organization, staff were more likely to consult with residents.

Managing the Transition to the Sustainability Phase. Most of the sites experienced at least some upset or turmoil during the transition from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase. In some sites, the amount of turmoil and demoralization was substantial. Changes in project leadership, organizational arrangements with the sponsor agency, and organizational restructuring processes were all factors that impacted on the atmosphere of the projects. For the most part, the projects seem to have weathered these difficult periods. Several sites have restored their equilibrium and all have made improvements in their social climate.

Different Organizational Arrangements. In the previous cross-site report, Cameron and Vanderwoerd (1997) asserted that it was important for “. . . each demonstration site to decide what organizational arrangement will make sense in the long run and to begin to move in that direction” (p. 129). Through various organizational reviews and restructuring processes, the project sites made decisions about the type of organizational arrangements that would sustain them over time. Overall, there was trend across sites of becoming somewhat more traditional and formal in their operations. Decision-making shifted from consensus to voting; there was more paperwork and accounting; and staff assumed a greater role in management and program delivery in some sites. The degree to which these changes took place seems to be related to whether or not the Better Beginnings project was absorbed into and became a service of another organization.

Summary of Findings on Project Organization and Management

Changes in leadership were one of the major changes that occurred in the transition from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase. Two of the sites have had stable leadership, in that the same Project Manager has been in place since the developmental phase. In two cases, the Project Coordinator positioned was eliminated leading to major structural changes in the management of the project. In other cases, there was a gap in time of several months before a new Project Coordinator was hired. In another site, two new part-time Project Coordinators were fired. Finally, there were cases in which staff and other stakeholders in the project simply had to adjust to a new person and new leadership style. These changes in leadership were experienced as very stressful for staff and others involved in the projects. Also, during the transition from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase, most of the projects undertook major organizational reviews or processes of self-reflection.

Focus group and individual interviews with a range of stakeholders at each of the sites revealed two main themes regarding management style and project atmosphere at the eight sites. First, there was theme of becoming somewhat more traditional, formal, and staff-driven in management style. The degree to which this change has taken place seems to be related to whether or not the Better Beginnings project was absorbed into and became a service of another organization. At Cornwall and Kingston, the management approach had become more staff-driven after they became a service of the host organization, although each of these sites had some mechanisms for consulting with community residents. On the other hand, while Parents for Better Beginnings became a service of the local Community Health Centre, steps were taken to maintain resident participation in the management of the project via participation on the board of the Community Health Centre. The sites which maintained their autonomy appeared more likely to have maintained the participation of residents in project management. In these sites, residents continued to have decision-making power; whereas in the sites that were absorbed into the host

organization, staff were more likely to consult with residents.

A second finding regarding management style and project atmosphere was that most of the sites experienced at least some upset or turmoil during the transition from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase. Changes in project leadership, organizational arrangements with the sponsor agency, organizational restructuring processes, and changes in the buildings that housed the project were all factors that impacted on the atmosphere of the projects. For the most part, the projects seem to have weathered these difficult periods. Several sites have restored their equilibrium and others, while still struggling somewhat, have made improvements in their social climate. One other observation concerns the two sites that have had the same Project Manager throughout the history of the projects. The climate and stability of Regent Park appears to have improved from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase, and Southeast Ottawa has maintained a positive climate throughout its history.

With experience, many of the sites moved from using consensus to voting to make policy decisions. As was the case with project management, residents at the sites that have become a service of the host organization tend to be consulted by management staff rather than having decision-making power.

At some sites, there have been marked changes in the relationships between the Better Beginnings projects and the sponsor organizations. Cornwall, Kingston, Regent Park, and Walpole Island have become services or programs of the sponsor organizations. Highfield found a new sponsor organization that is supportive, but which has enabled the project to maintain its autonomy. Sudbury is incorporated and does not have a sponsor organization, and the other sites continue to have supportive relationships with their sponsor organizations, while remaining fairly autonomous.

Most of the Better Beginnings sites have used and continue to use a value-driven and principle-driven approach to project management. The key values that underlie this approach across sites are participation and inclusion of the voices of multiple stakeholders, especially community residents.

PROGRAM MODEL

The major questions that this part of the research addressed were:

- What changes, if any, have there been in the program components of the demonstration sites since the end of the demonstration period and what are the reasons for any changes?
- To what extent was the program model and the program components based on a program logic model or previous research evidence (evidence-based practice approach) or on input from community residents (community development approach)?
- What have been the critical issues since the end of the demonstration period with regard to the program model?
- How do the budget allocations to the different program components in each of the sites compare during the demonstration and sustainability phases?

- What types of programs for children in the age cohort and service-provider partnerships exist in the Better Beginnings comparison communities?

Better Beginnings sites focus on one of two age groups: (a) birth to age 4 - younger child sites or (b) ages 4-8 - older child sites.

Younger Child Sites

Better Beginnings Project Sites. Social programs can be described through program logic models that show the program components, the intended outcomes, and the logic linking the program components and outcomes (Rush & Ogbourne, 1991). The overall program logic model for the younger child sites is depicted in Figure A.1. During the developmental phase, each of the five sites was charged with three major tasks: (a) the creation of project management and organization structures and the engagement of community residents in the process, (b) the development of high quality prevention programs for children in the age range of birth to 4, their families, and the surrounding neighbourhoods, (c) the integration of services and involvement of service-providers. During the demonstration phase, each site implemented child-focused, family-focused, and neighbourhood-focused programs. These program activities were designed to have impacts on the children, their parents and families, and the neighbourhoods. The types of outcomes are noted in Figure A.1.

There were five younger child sites: (a) Guelph, (b) Kingston, (c) Regent Park, (d) Southeast Ottawa, and (e) Walpole Island. An overview of the main programs of these sites is provided in Table A.7.¹ A more detailed description of the programs can be found in Appendix E.

¹ To help simplify the range of programs offered at the sites, the table that follows attempts to categorize programs into “child-focussed”, “family-focussed” and “community-focussed”. We realize, however, that there may be some programs at some sites that could fall into more than one category -- for example, a program could be both child and parent-focused.

Figure A.1: Conceptual Model of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project in the Younger Child Sites

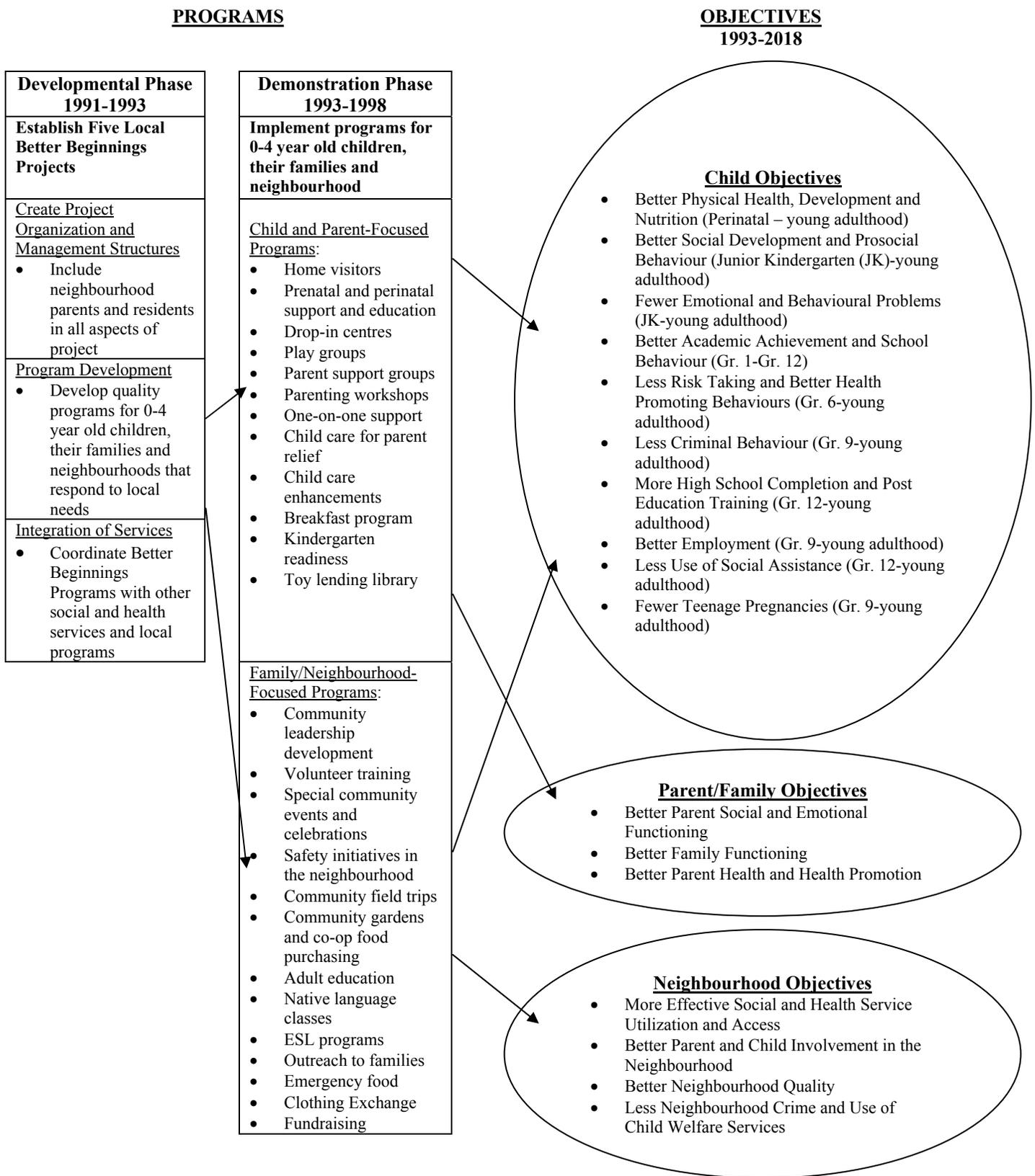


Table A.7: Status of Programs at the Five Younger Child Sites (Ages 0-4) During Sustainability Phase

CHILD-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Existing Programming				
Parent-Infant Group (Well Baby Day)	Family Resource Playgroup/Drop-In Centre	Perinatal Program	Parent Relief	Playgroup
Toddler Day	Native Language in Play Groups	Play and Learn Toy Lending and Resource Centre	Child Care	Respite care
Toy and Book Lending Library	Home Visiting	School Readiness Program		
Parent Run Drop-In	Blanket Program			
Parent and Child Drop-In	“You Make the Difference” Parenting Program			
Kindergarten Readiness	Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program			
Books for Birthdays				
Mixed-Age and Pre-school Playgroups				
Day Camps				
New Programming				
		Informal Drop-In Space for Parents (was offered previously, discontinued, now offered again)		

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

CHILD-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Discontinued Programming				
Child Play Group	Bkejwanong Children’s Centre Outreach	Parent “Take-A-Break” Discussion Group	Healthy Baby, Healthy Mom	Enhancement to Nursery School
Saturday A.M. Drop-In		Parent Relief/Emergency Care	Hey What About Me	Mobile Toy Lending Library
Night Club		Family Drop-In	Childcare Enhancement	
		Parent Group	Home Child Care Project	
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)				
Seasonal Camps	Early Years Program	Incredible Years Parenting Program (IYPP)	School Readiness Program	Books for Babes
After School Activities		Dinosaur Social Skills Program for Children (DSSP)		Play for Life
Teen Drop-in		Toronto Speech and Language Support Program		You Make the Difference Workshops, a First Words initiative
Junior RAP		Early Years 2		Summer Park Program
Breakfast Club				
School-Aged Team (previously called Stay in School)				
Youth Group/Leadership				
Recreational Activities (e.g., Karate)				
Summer Camp				

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

FAMILY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Existing Programming				
Home Visitors	Blanket Program	Family Visiting	Parent Visitor	Family Visiting
Spirits in the Wind		Family Resource Centre	7 weekly Play Groups	Pre- and Post-natal support and visits from Community Nurse
Community Economic Development			Toddler Group	
Respite Care			Infant Group	
Ban Viet (Circle of Friends)			Parent Support Group	
Friends Circle			Baby's coming	
South Asian Women's Group				
Parent Workshops				
Employment Training Program				
Daily Bread box and Weekend Market				
Leadership Training				
Clothing Room				
Emergency Food Supplies				
Other Supports Outside of Planned Programs				

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

FAMILY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
New Programming				
Community Cooks Program		Parent-Child Mother Goose Program		Baby Cupboard
		Mother-Baby Circle		Pre/Post Natal Nutrition Supplements
				Infant Nutrition/Baby Food Making
Discontinued Programming				
Parent Take a Break		The Playgroup	Toy Library/ Story Centres	
Parent to Parent group			Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program	
Women's Group			Dinner Club	
Parents Continuing Education			Little People Parks Program	
Parent Recreation				
Collective Kitchen and Community Kitchen				
Garden Plots				
El Grupos Las Alegres (Group of Happy People)				
Adult Education				
Good Food Box				

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

FAMILY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Legal Clinic				
Men's Group				
Onward Voices				
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)				
New and Expectant Parent Group			Prenatal and Parent Drop-In	Parenting Workshop
ESL Classes			You Make the Difference	
			Right From the Start	
			Encouraging Parents	
			Healthy Relationships	
			Kingscourt Playgroup	
			Special Delivery Club	
			RAPP	
			Prenatal Nutrition Program	
			Bridge to School	
			Toy Library	

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Existing Programming				
Circle of Words	Cultural Enrichment Programming	Young Men’s Community Drop-in	Operation Warm Feet	Better Beginnings Community House
Newsletter Committee	Boozhoo Nijjii Newsletter	Pick Your Own Farm Trips	Seasonal Referrals	Community Development
Community BBQ	Monthly Information Sessions	Ongoing systemic/advocacy work re: youth crime, neighbourhood safety and community development	Community Based Workers Network	Clothing/Bank Exchange
Community Outreach	Fundraising		Active Living Working Group	Coffee Time
Safety Committee	Monthly Food Draw/Good Food Box		Social Issues Networking Group	Community Celebrations
Fundraising	Senior Visits		Community Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee	Theatre Group
Christmas Party			Kingston Health and Housing/Closing the Distance/Room of One’s Own	
Community Leadership			Lobbying for sidewalks	
Community Celebrations			Advocacy to secure bus route for local community	
			Special events	

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
			Co-facilitator/volunteer training	
			Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns	
			Junior Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns	
New Programming				
Awareness of prevention of violence				The Extras Neighbourhood Food Cupboard
Volunteer Recognition				Bread Distribution
				Toy Distribution
				Income tax clinics
				Voices of Our Neighbourhood Newsletter
Discontinued Programming				
Summer Carnival	Bkejwanong Community Resource Team	Emergency Supplies	Neighbour to Neighbour newspaper	Magic Bus
Christmas Hampers	Community Training Program	Welcome Basket	Community Writers Group	Collective Kitchen
Fundraising Committee		Domestic Violence Support Group	Multicultural Outreach	Sewing/Crafts Classes

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
Project HOW		Women’s Group/Drop-In	Low Income Needs Coalition	Quality Fresh Food Club
		Big Yard Kitchen	Nutrition working group	Women’s Group
			Community Kitchens	
			Child Identification day	
			Test Kitchens	
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)				
	Walpole Island Volunteer Elf Association		Splash Pad	Kids in the Hood
	Bkejwanong Early Years Advisory Team		Kingston Entitlement Access Program (KEAP)	Community Connections Worker
	Native language Advisory Group		Share the Warmth	
	Special Needs Action Partners (SNAP)		Kingston Head Lice Coalition	
			Kingston Coalition for Dental Care	
			PRO Kinds	
			Fun and Friendly Activities	
			Occupational Disease Prevention Project	

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS				
Guelph	Walpole Island	Regent Park	Kingston	Southeast Ottawa
			Kingston Head Lice Coalition	
			Kingston Coalition for Dental Care	
			Falls Prevention Coalition	
Status Unknown				
Neighbourhood Support Coalition		Anti-Racism Training		
		Kindergarten Registration Package		

Guelph. The three main program components at Onward Willow included: child-focused programs, family-focused programs, and community development. These major program components have stayed relatively consistent from the program's inception to the sustainability phase. Child-focused activities aim to provide program options that respond to the needs of children from birth to 4 years of age and their families. These programs focus on providing quality care for children, enhancing multiple aspects of children's development (i.e., emotional, social, physical, cognitive), providing a supportive and respectful environment in which children could interact, offering relief childcare for parents, as well as strengthening families. Current child-focused programs include a Parent and Child Drop-In, Parent-Infant Group, Kindergarten Readiness, Toy and Book Lending Library, Books for Birthdays, as well as Day Camps. Programming that was discontinued by the sustainability phase includes: Mixed Age Playgroups, Pre-School Playgroups, Child Play Group, Night Club, and the Saturday A.M. Drop-In.

As a result of external funding, Onward Willow was able to offer numerous programs and activities for youth, including the Teen Drop-In, Breakfast Club, Summer Camp and Youth Group/Leadership. Family-focused activities have been developed to support families through formal and informal means to meet their diverse needs. The goals of these activities are to promote and maintain mental and physical health, provide social supports, offer flexible and accessible child care, and facilitate linkages to formal services. Family-focused programming was extensive and included the Home Visitors, Spirits in the Wind, Community Economic Development, Respite Care, Ban Viet (Circle of Friends), South Asian Women's Group, Friend's Circle, Parent Workshops, Employment Training, Daily Bread Box and Weekend Market, Leadership Training, Clothing Room, Emergency Food Supplies, ESL Classes, as well as the New and Expectant Parent Group. Despite the numerous programming options in existence in the later years, 13 programs for families had been discontinued.

From the beginning of the project, community residents placed a major emphasis on community development and serving the whole community, including children and youth who were outside Better Beginnings age range of birth to 4. The community development component included the following activities: the development of community leaders, promotion of the project, increased safety and well-being of families, building a positive community spirit, and the provision of recreational and leisure activities for community residents. Examples of community development projects included a community newsletter, leadership training, fundraising events, volunteer recognition, Christmas Party, as well as awareness and prevention of violence in the community. With the expansion of space at the site locations and the acquisition of external funding to offer youth programming, the number of activities has multiplied during the sustainability phase. While the main program components have stayed consistent throughout the years, some of the focus of the work of the programs has changed. For instance, an influx of new Canadians into the community has made it necessary for family visitors to do more settlement work with these families, despite the fact that this is outside their mandate.

In the early and middle years of Onward Willow, activities were open to children from birth to 17 years old. Yet, the majority of programming was targeted at children from birth to the age of 4. In the sustainability phase, the project continued to concentrate its programming on preschool children, but continued to obtain additional external funding for expanded youth programs.

In the early years of the project, there were four concepts and principles that influenced the development of programming, which included community development, the use of an adult education model, social support, and social competence. In the middle years, the guiding principles were re-defined to better suit the project. The seven principles and values that guided the project in the middle years included: principle-based decision-making, everyone has a voice, prevention starts with us, partnerships, creative alternatives, continuity and stability, and creating access. In the sustainability phase, Onward Willow continued to have a strong community development focus. In addition, the project aimed to work with all children in the neighbourhood and sought out external funding for youth programs. While the underlying philosophy of the prevention model remained constant throughout the years, the project paid more careful attention to developing and maintaining the quality of programs rather than spreading staff resources too thinly over the programs during the sustainability years. Part of what prompted this was the increased number of children and families within the community. Project staff became aware that they could not meet all the needs of the growing population of the community.

“I would say there’s a real balance I would say in the child care program in particular there’s a balance there. And I’d say somewhat of a tension, as well. And I’ll give you an example of that. Some of the community perspective is that need to give every child in this community a little morsel of something, a little crumb of a program. So we don’t want to see waiting lists for programs, we don’t want anybody to be denied a program, you know. If we have to do ten programs at an hour each, so that more people can participate, or five programs at two hours each, we’ll do the ten programs so that that many more people can participate. And, on the Child and Family Team, there sit a number of partners, including [Liaison to the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Coordination Unit] who’s in the Child and Family Studies program at Guelph ... who has done a lot of work around ... what’s good for kids and what makes good programs, quality programs and that sort of thing. And certainly our staff push that as well in saying ... research says that a child should be in the program ... a minimum of six hours a week for it to really have any impact on that child. Whereas one hour a week isn’t really going to make any difference in the long run. And in the community, that’s been a hard one for the community to get a grasp on because they want everyone to get a little something and for them an hour is better than nothing at all, whereas really, from a research perspective, an hour isn’t really going to make a difference in the long run. And ... so we had to make some decisions around our kindergarten readiness program, for example.... When I came ... a child would come once a week for that program and so after I came and we had a number of these discussions around the table, we said, you know, we’ll find the funding to do it three times Yeah, community desire and then also ... we would look at some best practice things. And we are lucky to have people ... with expertise and that sort of thing who do sit on the teams and committees that they can help ... it kind of gives them direction ... this is a good practice this has worked ... in other places.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“We’ve had this whole discussion about quantity versus quality here. To run a quality program, what’s the limit in terms of how often you can do something or how big the group can be or how you’re going to schedule it and how are you going to use your resources. . . We’ve ... made a very deliberate effort to make sure that we wouldn’t just give into community’s request for programs at Better Beginnings, that we wouldn’t run

them because people were asking to have them run. We wanted to make sure that they still stayed true to some of the goals ... for what the service was being, and that you still had the right people with the right level of skill running that group, so [the project coordinator] has really ... moved the committees and the staff to ... make sure that capacity is something that, it's ... unfortunate, but we're going to make sure that we've got it as a quality kind of program.” (Guelph key informant interview)

While it is important to offer quality, evidence-based programs, it is also important to determine if the community wants a program to be offered. Community input and ownership over programs continues to be very important for Onward Willow.

“The process would be more based on feedback from the community and then that decision would be made at the team, the team that kind of oversees that program. So, if it were in the child care program, say we wanted to end it, or we wanted to end play groups because no one came to them any more, whatever the reason [may] be, so that would go to the child-family team and they would talk about it and make that recommendation and that decision.” (Guelph key informant interview)

“I'd say there's a lot of community ownership. I think people feel that it's, you know, it's their, you know, it's their program, their project.” (Guelph key informant interview)

Kingston. In the early years, the Better Beginnings for Kingston Children project consisted of four main program components, which included: prenatal and infant development (Parent Visitor, Baby's Coming, Parent and Baby Get-Together, and the Hey What About Me program), childcare (Childcare Services and the Childcare Enhancement program), family support (Toy Library/ Story Centres, Parent Relief, Playgroups, Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program, and Dinner club), and community development (Low Income Needs Cooperative, Community Kitchens, Test Kitchens, Neighbour to Neighbour Newspaper, Community Writers Group, Special Events, and Multicultural Outreach).

In 1998, a review of the programs and activities was conducted and based on participant and staff feedback substantial changes to programming were made during the sustainability phase of the project. For instance, the Nobody's Perfect, Toy Library/Story Centres, and Childcare Enhancement programs were discontinued because they were not fulfilling the needs of residents and/or they were not achieving their objectives. Also, smaller community development initiatives were eliminated due to the lack of interest among community members and not enough financial resources. Furthermore, in the later years, the Kingston site secured external funding for other programs. The increased financial resources allowed the Better Beginnings for Kingston Children project to offer new parenting programs. For example, the You Make the Difference and Encouraging Parents were created through money received from the Challenge Fund. Also the School Readiness Program, which is aimed at preschoolers to try to improve the skills that they will need in their first year of school, began as a result of Early Years funding.

In addition, increased external funding allowed the program to enhance its perinatal programming. Currently, the major program activities at the Kingston site include: Family Visiting, Perinatal Programming (e.g., Baby's Coming offered four times per year and the Prenatal Nutrition Program), Parent-Child groups, Parent Relief, Parenting programs, and the

School Readiness Program. One major change observed in the later years was that the boundaries for all programming, with the exception of Family Visiting, had expanded to cover the same catchment area as the Health Centre. Another change that occurred since the end of the demonstration phase was that the main location for Better Beginnings for Kingston Children was now in their own house in a different part of the community (the previous location had been too expensive). Various parenting and playgroup programs are offered in eight different sites in the community including schools, a housing unit, the BBKC Community House, the Health Centre, an Ontario Early Years Centre, and a church. Three are in schools, one is in a housing unit. The School Readiness Program is offered in three sites.

As with the early and middle year periods, programs during the later years at the Kingston site focused on children aged 0 to 4. BBKC were committed to concentrating on this age group. Programming focused on the promotion of optimal prenatal and infant development. During the sustainability phase, Early Years funding was obtained and as a result the age range expanded to serve children aged 0 to 6, for some programming. Despite the expansion of the target age range for some programming, however, key informants believed that the project was mostly serving families within the mandated age group in the later years.

From the demonstration to the sustainability phases, every program developed at the Kingston site was guided by community involvement, accessibility, and using appropriate approaches to address the specific needs of children and families in the Better Beginnings community. Community involvement highlighted the importance of involving as many community members as possible in program planning and decision-making. Accessibility was defined as conducting outreach to people within the community and providing programs in areas that residents could easily access, as well as providing transportation and child care. There was a stability of values that guided the work of the Better Beginnings for Kingston Children project as seen across the three phases in terms of meaningful resident participation, respect for the community, positive parenting, and providing opportunities. In the sustainability phase, key informants believed that programming and activities continued to be based more on participant feedback.

The Short-Term Findings Report did not have much impact on how things were run at Better Beginnings for Kingston Children. The findings, according to key informants, were generally positive and, therefore, affirmed what they had been doing. The failure to find positive nutrition outcomes for children was identified by the staff as surprising because of the program's emphasis on nutritional programming. As one key informant said, "we thought we had done tons of great stuff in nutrition and it didn't show at all." Given that there were no positive outcomes resulting from the nutrition programs, the project acquired short-term funding to focus more in-depth on nutrition. However, when the grant was completed, they lost their worker and nutrition was not given as much attention.

Key informants felt that the programs have matured and really developed over the years and that they were very well attended:

"Their quality has really improved, I think the structure of them hasn't changed a lot .. for instance, home visiting, parent-child groups, parent relief .. they're basically done in the same way, but ... I think they've just matured ... over time and we're always kind of trying to push .. the quality thing and how can we make this better and constantly

looking, questioning ... we seldom sit back smugly here. We're always looking at how things could be done better." (Kingston key informant interview)

"Our programs are very comprehensive..... I think our model is fantastic. We have managed throughout to stick to the original model, enhance and improve our programs, and be forward thinking so that the programs reflect the needs of the community." (Kingston staff personal communication)

Southeast Ottawa. In the early years, the major programming components and activities included: Family Visiting, Playgroup/Respite Care, Better Beginnings Community House, Community Development, Health Integration/Community Nurse, Mobile Toy Lending Library, Parenting Workshops and Classes, and Enhancement to Nursery School. Family Visiting included weekly visits by program staff to pregnant women and women with children under the age of 5 who were residents in the Better Beginnings neighbourhood. While the initial program goals were to increase self-esteem, improve parenting skills, and strengthen parent-child relationships, the middle and later years saw a shift towards focusing more on the child. However, there have been no other major changes over the years for the Family Visiting component.

The Playgroup/Respite Care was established to provide child-oriented playgroups, engage the children and promote language development, provide support to improve parenting skills, and decrease social isolation of parents. In the sustainability phase, the Play for Life program was introduced to promote physical activity among pre-schoolers. First Words was developed to provide some screening of children who may be experiencing development delays and You Make the Difference workshops and Books for Babes were developed to assist with language development. The Better Beginnings Community House was the location of the administrative offices, drop-in space, clothing bank, and children's program. This program component remained relatively consistent throughout the years with the only major change being the transition of child designated space to more offices. However, a small area of the house's main living room now has a play area with toys for small children.

With regard to the Community Development component, several smaller programs had been developed to support residents, advocate on their behalf when necessary, bring the community together, engage in neighbourhood development, as well as to make service-providers sensitive to neighbourhood issues. The smaller programs and activities were running successfully in the middle years, but many were discontinued throughout the sustainability phase due to lack of resources. One major program established in the early years was the Magic Bus. However, this program was terminated in the later years due to the high costs associated with running the bus. The middle years saw the development of the Kids in the Hood program, Quality Fresh Food Club (no longer running), as well as a Theatre Group.

In the sustainability phase, a new community development initiative called the Extras Neighbourhood Food Cupboard was introduced. Furthermore, in the later years, the Community Nurse has played an integral role throughout the history of the program and continues to provide many services to area residents. While the Toy Lending Library was a prominent program component at the Southeast Ottawa site throughout the early and middle years, it was discontinued in the later years due to high costs. However, in its place the Books for Babes

program was established to help improve pre-schoolers' expressive language and includes over 1400 books that represent 10 different languages. Finally, the Enhancement to Nursery School component was offered in the early and middle years, but has been discontinued in the sustainability phase.

The programming at the Southeast Ottawa site has been greatly influenced by the government throughout its history. In the early years, the government influenced program development, not only through the initial guidelines, but also by other means when site representatives were initially developing the programs. For example, the government refused to have money from the budget spent on an ECE teacher at another daycare centre, because this location did not serve enough Better Beginnings families. The government was also not in support of having a nurse home visitor. Furthermore, the government exerted pressure to change the way that community development was conducted at this site. However, despite government pressure in the early years the site managed to keep its original community development model. Pressure from the government resulted in feelings that the government had undue influence on the development of programs, which resulted in anxiety and cynicism among staff and residents. In the later years, the project was further influenced by the government when the provincial government required them to go through a pay equity process. The increased salaries resulted in the termination of some programs.

Throughout the project's history the programming and activities have targeted pre-schoolers (children aged 0-4 years old) and their families. In the middle years, the Southeast Ottawa site secured external funding from the Trillium Foundation to develop the Kids in the Hood program for older children and youth aged 10-14 years old, which continued to exist in the sustainability phase. In addition, external funding was used to establish the Quality Fresh Food Club that served approximately 40-70 families per month, as well as the Theatre group.

There were seven philosophies and/or values that have guided the project over the years and have been reflected within the project's atmosphere and management. The first principle was process orientation, which placed an emphasis on the process and development of social relations among people. Second, people centeredness encompassed the notion that the project was to focus on all people, not exclusively on clients. There was also an emphasis on individual support and empowerment. The third guiding principle was to hire from within, which encouraged community involvement and the promotion of skill building among residents. Fourth was democratic leadership, which meant that staff had equal power and shared in the decision-making process. The fifth guiding principle was boundary diffusion, which was defined as the integration and overlap of personal and professional boundaries among workers, in terms of roles, work and space. Sixth, it was seen as important for managers to model three skill patterns as a teaching strategy. The three skill patterns included: interpersonal (respectful, courteous and democratic behaviour), organizational (meeting, facilitation, grant proposal), and community-oriented (by being active in and accountable to the community). The seventh and last guiding principle was the translation of interests and accountability, which encompassed the ability to translate the knowledge and concerns of residents to government in ways that were meaningful to both groups.

The Short-Term Findings Report has impacted programming at the Southeast Ottawa Better Beginnings site. According to a key informant, the report found two major problems that were

experienced by children in the community: (a) they were lagging behind in expressive language; and (b) there was a large proportion (approximately 20%) that was at or above the 90th percentile for weight. To address the first issue, the Books for Babes program was developed and all staff received training in promoting expressive language. To address the second issue, the Play for Life program was created to help increase physical activity among pre-schoolers. According to a key informant, Better Beginnings has always strived to strike a balance between what the community wants and what the research literature says works.

Regent Park. There were eight core programming components, which included Family Visiting, the Perinatal Program, the School Readiness Program, Toronto Speech and Language Support, Early Years 2, Parent-Child Drop-in, the Incredible Years Parenting Program (IYPP) and Dinosaur Social Skills Program for Children (DSSP), as well as Community Development activities. The Family Visiting program has not changed substantially since the beginning of the project, but in the later years there has been an increased focus placed on child development and professional partnerships for multi-needs, challenging families. The Perinatal Program has stayed relatively constant over the years; however, a lactation consultant from St. Michael's Hospital is available at the program every Monday. The School Readiness Program has been a new development for PFBB during the sustainability phase. Based upon results from the Short-Term Findings Report (i.e., no cognitive gains for children), PFBB decided a school readiness program as needed in the community. The parent relief and family drop-in were discontinued and the toy and equipment lending library was cut back to free up resources for the School Readiness Program. The program allows PFBB to identify children with development delays or other problems and then work with them more intensively. The Toronto Speech and Language Support program has a Speech and Language therapist available on-site and has provided some training to the family visitors.

A relatively new and still developing program was Early Years 2 (for children aged 0 to 6), which has been added to the Better Beginnings programming as a result of external funding that was secured by the Regent Park site to address the service gaps for complex, high-needs families. As previously mentioned, the Parent-Child Drop-in had been terminated to free up space and resources for the School Readiness Program. However, a more informal drop-in space for parents was established in early 2004. The Incredible Years Parenting Program (IYPP) and Dinosaur Social Skills Program for Children (DSSP) were run at a local elementary school in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The IYPP aims to promote positive behaviours in children, provide an understanding of child behaviour, reduce stress and improve parent-child relationships, while the DSSP aims to promote children's problem-solving skills, self-esteem, frustration management and social skills. During the sustainability phase of the project, there has been less focus on community development programming. The elimination of some of the smaller community development programs was the result of limited funding, increased expenses, and the normal evolution of the program.

In all three phases, project activities focused on younger children aged 0-4 years old. However, when the Early Years 2 initiative was introduced in partnership with the Better Beginnings at the Regent Park site, the target group for that program expanded to serve children 0 to 6 year old.

The majority of project stakeholders believed that the guiding philosophies and values remained stable since the demonstration phase. The key values throughout all phases included respect for

the community, being community-focused and driven, giving residents choices, and the provision of high quality programming. The only major change that was reported by staff in the sustainability phase was a decreased emphasis on hiring individuals within the community as staff for the project.

The Short-Term Findings Report had a definite impact on the programming offered by Regent Park. As described by different key informants, the report validated the perinatal program by showing that the incidence of low birth-weight babies had been reduced. However, there were no cognitive gains demonstrated for the children in the research study. According to key informants, the program took those results very seriously and looked at how they could best make positive impacts in this area. It was decided that although the Parent Relief and Toy Lending Library were used and appreciated by parents in the neighbourhood, those services were not having an impact on the children. Therefore, those programs were discontinued and the School Readiness Program was developed. As well, the home visiting developed more of a child-development focus and led to the program seeking Early Years 2 funding.

Walpole Island. In the early and middle years of the project, there were four main program components: home visitation, other child and family-focused programs, community-focused programs, and community healing. Home visitation involves a family support worker who visits families in the home and focuses on promoting child development and positive parenting. Other child and family-focused programs included: the Family Resource Drop-in Centre, the blanket program, Bkejwanong Children's Centre Outreach, You Make the Difference parenting program, and the Bkejwanong Prenatal Nutrition Program. The community-focused programs included: native language classes, cultural enrichment programming, the monthly Boozhoo Nijjii newsletter which provided information on programs and parenting skills with Native content, monthly food box, visits to seniors, monthly community potluck, fundraising, Bkejwanong Community Resource Team, and Nobody's Perfect parenting program. Community healing focused on training to deal with addictions.

The sustainability phase of the Walpole Island Better Beginnings project saw several changes to the program components. For instance, the home visitation and child and family-focused programs now fell under the Children's Services Unit of the Department of Social Services, while community-focused programs fell under the Community Development branch of Social Services. The number of home visitors was increased from 1.5 full-time staff to four full-time staff during the sustainability phase. Other child and family-focused programs that continued during the later years include the Family Resource Drop-in Centre, the blanket program, You Make the Difference, Nobody's Perfect, community language programs, the Walpole Island volunteer Elf Association, and cultural enrichment programming..

During the later years, the Better Beginnings Boozhoo Nijjii newsletter was merged with the Children's Services newsletter. In addition, there were some Better Beginnings programs and activities that were discontinued before the amalgamation with Social Services (i.e., Bkejwanong Community Resource Team, Community Training Program). Also, several programs continued but in a different form, including: native language programs, the monthly food box, visits to seniors, and the monthly potluck. Three new groups were formed during the sustainability phase of the project. They included: the Bkejwanong Early Years Advisory Team, Native Language Advisory Group, and Special Needs Action Partners (SNAP). Although these three groups are

not Better Beginnings programming, they were developed by the project and the Community Development team leader is actively involved as a member of the groups.

The target age range of 0-4 remained consistent throughout the early, middle, and later years of the program. In the early and middle years, various programming and activities saw the participation of some children outside of the mandated age group. However, during the sustainability phase project stakeholders believed that with the amalgamation of services between Better Beginning and Social Services that the Better Beginnings funded programs focused specifically on children 0-4 years of age.

The project's vision was centred on two equally important foci: the development of children as the future (healing society by helping children and helping children by healing society) and community ownership and control (this is a value of being a tribal culture). An emphasis was placed on designing programs based on community needs and modifying them when these needs changed. There were several values and issues unique to the Better Beginnings programs at Walpole Island because it was a Native community. Accordingly, the values (e.g., ethic of non-interference, importance of kinship patterns, etc.) described in the previous section played an important role in the development of prevention programs at Walpole Island.

The guiding philosophies, values, and approaches to prevention were similar from earlier to later years of the Better Beginnings project. However, philosophies and values were thought by staff to have evolved as a result of the numerous partnerships that the Better Beginnings project had established over the years. Some of the values that individuals mentioned as being influential in the later years of the project included: (a) to provide opportunities that community residents would not have had, (b) to promote positive growth, change, and healing, (c) to be helpers for community residents to achieve personal goals, (d) to listen to the participants and focus on their needs, (e) to work together with various stakeholder groups to achieve a healthy community, and (f) to work towards an environment that is healthy, stable, nurturing, loving and respectful.

With regard to the impact of the Short-term Findings report on the program model at Walpole Island, one key informant stated: "the findings from that report encouraged Better Beginnings to just continue on doing the good things that we're doing" (Walpole Island key informant interview). This same informant stated that there has been an increased emphasis on language for children during the sustainability phase, noting that the project has hired a language coordinator.

Budget for younger child sites. The budget for these five younger child sites is provided in Table A.8. From this table, one can compare the budgets for these sites during the demonstration phase and the sustainability phase. Overall, the budgets for the younger child sites are similar from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase. However, there are some differences across sites. The budgets for Kingston and Southeast Ottawa both increased by more than \$100,000 from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase, while the budget for Walpole Island decreased by over \$80,000 during the same time period. This table does not include budget information for other funding sources that the projects were able to obtain for additional programs.

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Table A.8: Direct Government Costs for Younger Child Sites, by Program and Year (1995/6, 1996/7, 2002/3 or 2003/4), Ontario Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Site and Year	Program					Total
	Home Visiting	Other Child-Focused	Family/Parent-Focused	Community Development	Community Healing	
- \$ -						
<u>Guelph</u>						
1995/6	163,119	135,304	124,849	77,633	0	500,905
1996/7	165,396	129,052	125,304	80,240	0	499,992 ¹
2003/4	123,223	123,223	123,223	103,310	0	472,979 ²
Total	451,738	387,579	373,376	261,183	0	1,473,876
<u>Kingston</u>						
1995/6	376,589	159,136	99,077	66,230	0	701,032
1996/7	393,751	157,465	107,270	65,073	0	723,559
2003/4	190,556	190,556	190,556	190,556	0	762,224 ³
Total	960,896	507,157	396,903	321,859	0	2,186,815
<u>Southeast Ottawa</u>						
1995/6	300,282	12,773	128,978	74,494	0	516,527
1996/7	311,558	7,160	127,431	69,830	0	515,979
2002/3	405,084	0	152,316	60,468	0	587,731
Total	1,016,924	19,933	408,725	204,792	0	1,620,237
<u>Regent Park</u>						
1995/6	397,870	0	161,593	172,444	0	731,907
1996/7	390,509	0	159,217	160,786	0	710,512
2002/3	429,654		148,157	162,972		740,783
Total	1,218,033	0	468,967	496,202	0	2,183,202
<u>Walpole Island</u>						
1995/6	63,933	0	73,232	183,377	56,389	376,931
1996/7	67,694	0	70,665	160,878	26,620	325,857
2003/4	120,201	0	120,201	27,675	27,675	295,752 ⁴
Total	251,828	0	264,098	371,930	110,684	998,540
<u>All Sites</u>						
1995/6	1,301,793	307,213	587,729	574,178	56,389	2,827,302
1996/7	1,328,908	293,677	589,887	536,807	26,620	2,775,899
2002/3 or 2003/4	1,268,718	313,779	734,453	544,981	27,675	2,889,605
Total	3,899,419	914,669	1,912,069	1,655,966	110,684	8,492,807
				Average Cost/Site/Year		\$566,187

Notes:

¹ Annual data estimated from third-quarter figures for 1996/7.

² Onward Willow Better Beginnings combines Home Visiting, Other Child-Focused and Family/Parent Focused into one grouping.

³ The total operating expenses were distributed evenly among the programs for Kingston.

⁴ Home Visiting and Family/Parent Focused are combined into one grouping; Community Development and Community Healing are combined into one grouping.

Comparison Sites

There were two comparison sites for the research on the younger child sites: Hamilton and Peterborough.

Hamilton. We were not able to locate a key informant who could provide us with information about the Hamilton comparison site. Thus, we relied on information from different websites. As such, our information about this comparison site is not as complete as the information that we gathered for the other comparison sites.

There are Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC) in Hamilton, but it does not appear that there is one in the Hamilton comparison community. The nearest location appears to be further south at the Betty Brooks Community Centre. This OEYC offers early learning activities, parent resources and education, pre and post-natal resources and information, information about links to other Early Years' services, early literacy programs, outreach services, speakers bureau, volunteer coordination, and data gathering and monitoring. The Outreach Services "take Early Years programs into communities where transportation or distance presents challenges. In Hamilton there will be traveling programs for people who cannot get to an Early Years Centre and neighbourhood sites so you can get to Early Years programs close to where you live" (<http://www.inform.hamilton.ca>). So, it is unclear if there are any OEYC services in the comparison community. Although CAPC programs are offered in Hamilton, again it does not appear that these are in the same neighbourhood as the Hamilton comparison community. These programs seem to focus on Hamilton East, whereas the Hamilton comparison community is more in the west end of Hamilton. There is a "North End Information Services," which "is a local, independent service offering its resources to citizens in the City of Hamilton. All services are free and include the publishing of a monthly news sheet called the 'North End Breezes.' Services include a legal aid clinic on Wednesday evenings" (<http://www.inform.hamilton.ca>). This does appear to be located in the comparison community. Finally, there is a North End Neighbourhood Association whose purpose it is "to stand up on any neighbourhood issues that may arise." Again, this does appear to be located in the comparison community.

Peterborough. Several programs are run out of the Peterborough Family Resource Centre, which has been in operation since 1983 (<http://www.pfrc.ca>). This centre received federal funding from the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) in 1994 to offer the Brighter Futures program and from Canada's Prenatal Nutrition Program in 1996 to offer Babies First. The Centre is now an Early Years program, focusing on preschool children and their families. "The mission of the Peterborough Family Resource Centre (county and city of Peterborough) is the well-being of the whole child, families and care-providers." The values that guide the Centre include the following:

- providing support services which are prevention-focused and non-treatment oriented
- families and child care providers are instrumental to the well-being of children
- families and child care providers can be responsible and competent in teaching and supporting each other
- families and child care providers with support and information can make the best choices for children
- choices which support the well-being of the whole child will be valued and accepted

- the larger community has a responsibility to support families and child care providers in meeting the needs of children

The Centre offers a wide range of programs, including the following:

- Babies First - “a prenatal nutrition and support program for women trying to eat enough healthy food to have healthy babies”
- Adult/Child Drop-ins
- Me and My Dad Drop-in - a special program for fathers with young children
- a County Outreach Program
- a Resource Library with toys and books
- Steps and Stages - a support program for families with children ages 0-18 months
- a variety of parenting programs
- Baby Wellness - provides resources on breast feeding
- a variety of family support programs
- neighbourhood and community-focused programs
- support groups that focus on women with postpartum depression
- preschool readiness programs, done in collaboration with the school board

The Centre works in collaboration with other service-provider partners, such as the Five County Children’s Centre, which provides community-based services for children with special needs, and La Leche League.

As well, the public health unit runs a number of programs for preschool children. “Their key values are promoting optimal child health development, early identification and prevention, family participation and community involvement” (Key informant interview). The health unit “runs an infant and toddler development program . . . that promotes optimal development of children who are delayed or at risk of being delayed from 0 to 5 years of age” (Key informant interview). As well, they have “a home visiting program [Healthy Babies, Healthy Children] and also preschool consultation, and then the families are involved in the development of a service plan for the individual children” (Key informant interview). The health unit also operates a program called Care for Kids that focuses on the prevention of child sexual abuse, a child health line, which is staffed by a public health nurse, a pediatric clinic staffed by a nurse practitioner, prenatal classes, a teen prenatal supper club, a prenatal fair which is conducted three times per year, breast feeding promotion and support, immunization programs.

The Kinark Children’s Mental Health Centre also operates some prevention programs for children, including “a consultation program for preschoolers that they run with Five Counties. They also have a couple of other programs that are geared to prevention and early intervention for younger kids, the ones called Right from the Start, one’s called the Preschool Consultation Program, that’s run with Five Counties, and one’s called the Incredible Years” (Key informant interview).

At the community-level, Peterborough has a Children and Youth Action Council, which is made up of service-providers. There is a core committee “. . . that is made up of volunteers from health services, education services, social services, child services, child welfare, there’s kind of a cross section representation of kind of all services to do with children from 0 to 19 years of age. . .

They have three main focuses, county opportunities, high needs families and advocacy for childcare. And they kind of do an annual forum that's an education forum" (Key informant interview). A key informant suggested that there is more cooperation among agencies serving young children than there was 10 years ago, when services were more protective of their programs and territory.

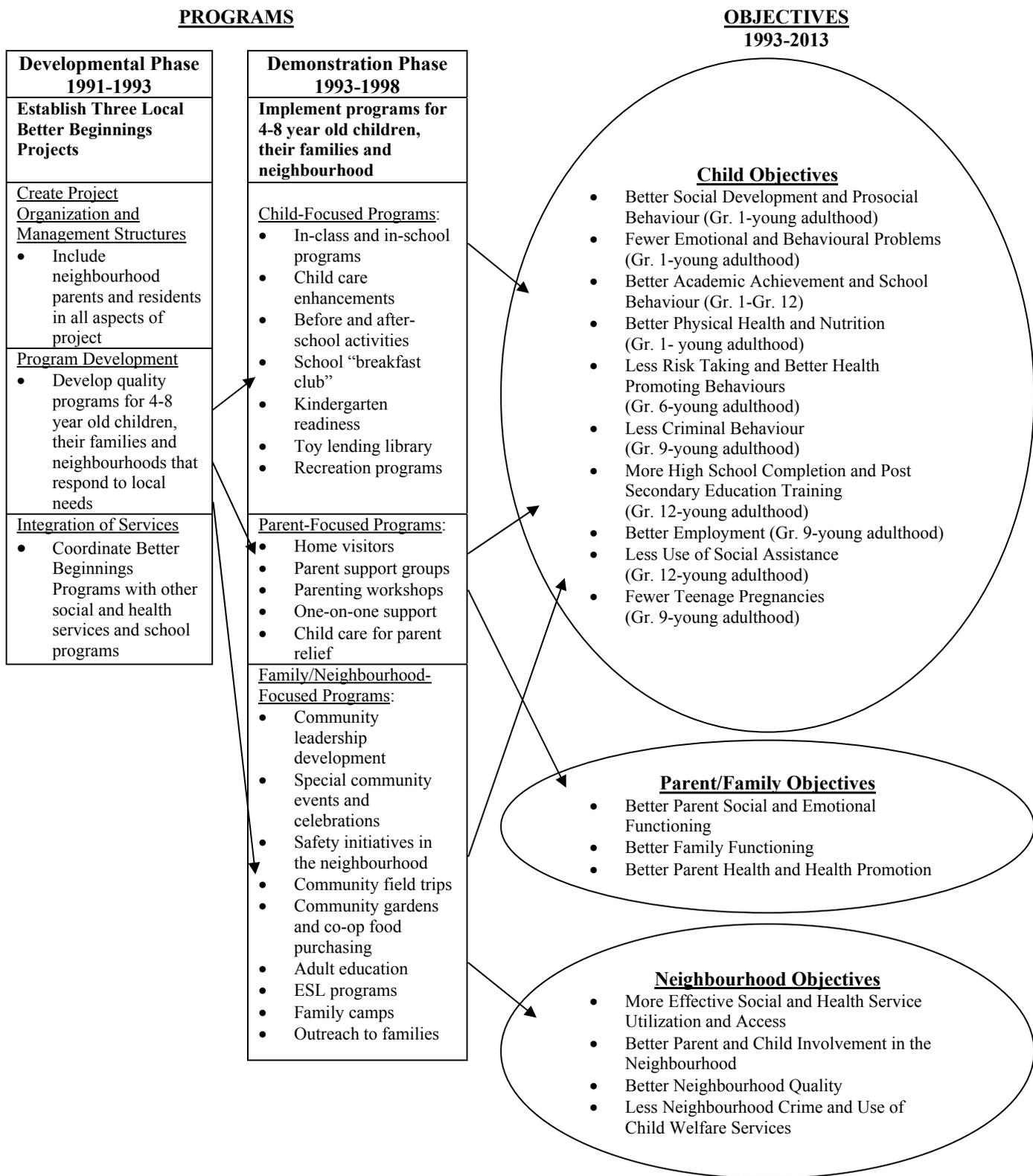
In sum, the Hamilton and Peterborough comparison sites appear to be quite different. The Hamilton comparison site does not appear to be well-developed in terms of services for preschool children. In contrast, the Peterborough comparison site appears to be very well-developed in terms of prevention programs for preschool children. While the family resource centre in Peterborough has been in operation since the 1980s, there was a significant increase in funding for prevention programs for young children in the mid-1990s.

Older Child Sites

Better Beginnings Project Sites. The overall program logic model for the older child sites is depicted in Figure A.2. The major program components for the older child sites include: (a) child-focused programs, (b) parent-focused programs, and (c) family/neighbourhood-focused programs. As was the case with the younger child sites, these programs were intended to have impacts on children, parents/families, and the project neighbourhoods (see Figure A.2).

There were three older child sites: (a) Cornwall, (b) Highfield, and (c) Sudbury. An overview of the main programs of these sites is provided in Table A.9. A more detailed description of the programs can be found in Appendix E.

Figure A.2: Conceptual Model of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project in the Older Child Sites



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Table A.9: Status of Programs at the Three Older Child Sites (Ages 4-8) During Sustainability Phase

CHILD AND FAMILY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
Existing Programming		
Family Visits	Family Resource Centre Drop-in	After School/ Holiday Programs
Family Visits for Parent with Children Going Into Kindergarten	Playgroups	Summer Programs
Holiday Activities	Toy Lending Library	L'Arc-en-ciel du Moulin a Fleur
	Preschool Computer Program	Family Visiting Program
	Kindergarten Readiness	Travelling Road Show
	Parent's Group	Christmas Baskets
	Parents' Relief	Babysitting and Transportation
		Can Skate
New Programming		
Famille et École Travaillent Ensemble (FETE) Program	English Conversational Group	
Apprentissage Petite Enfance Canada (APEC) Workshops	Parent Education Programs	
	Kindergarten Readiness Parent Support Group	
Discontinued Programming		
	Home Visits	Parent Support Program
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)		
Family Activity Centre		

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CHILD AND FAMILY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
Centre de Ressources familiales L'Estrie		
Status Unknown		
		Halloween Haunted House
		Better Beginnings Membership and Volunteer

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
Existing Programming		
School Activities Centre	Health and Nutrition Program	Early Bird Breakfast and Play Program
The Breakfast Program	Educational Assistants, Parent Volunteers, and Academic/ Language Development	Peaceful Schools Program
New Programming		
Summer Tutoring Programs	Home Visiting (previously focused on family)	
	Incredible Years	
Discontinued Programming		
	Lion's Quest	Native and Multicultural Programs
		Multicultural Support Program
		Summer Camp Experience
		Tout Pour Reussir

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SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)		
Homework Support		
Status Unknown		
	Classroom Social Skills, Intervention, Storytelling and Drama	
	Home-School Connection and Parental Involvement	

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
Existing Programming		
	Resident Participation and Leadership	Community Kitchen Program
	Welcome Baskets	Environmental Group or Hands for Nature Program
	Before-and-After-School Program	Research Program
	March Break Program	
	Summer Programming	
	Ethno-Cultural Programs & Activities	
	Social and Recreational Programs (e.g., Aerobics, and Ballet for Kids)	
New Programming		
Montessori Program	Leadership Program	

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COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS		
Cornwall	Highfield	Sudbury
BÉBÉ FETE”	Family Movie Nights	
National Children’s Day Activities		
Volunteer Recognition Night		
Discontinued Programming		
		College Street Drop-In
		Mediation Group
		You Won’t Believe It’s Theatre
External Programming (e.g., funded outside Better Beginnings)		
Community Action Group	Community Ethnic and Cultural Events	Pre-Teen After School Program
	English Conversation Circle	
Status Unknown		
	Neighbourhood Safety	Myths & Mirrors Community Arts Program
	Language and Prevocational Skills	Community Advisory Committee
		GEODE (Grassroots Economic Opportunities Development and Evaluation)
		Fundraising
		Committee Training
		General Training
		Volunteer Recognition

Cornwall. Originally, the core programs followed a model of four components: nutrition, daycare, health, and the prevention of academic difficulties. By the end of 1992, modifications had been made and there were now three major program components. The components included children's programs, family programs, and community development activities. Also, an academic enrichment section was introduced to encompass all school-based programs and activities. In the middle years, there had been a need to link each program while making sure that each program remained independent. Thus, programming objectives were now interconnected and each program was interlinked, all the time making sure that each activity was a separate piece of a larger, whole project.

In the sustainability phase, core program components continued to stay the same. Currently, the School Activities Centre, Breakfast Program, Holiday Activities, and Summer Tutoring Programs are the major programs for children. Furthermore, there are a variety of programs that are focused on families. For example, there are two types of Family Visiting: a general one and one for parents whose eldest child was about to start Kindergarten. Also, there is a wide array of parental workshops, including the Famille et École Travailent Ensemble (FETE) program that provides a framework of positive, communicative, interactive experiences, as well as the APEC (Apprentissage Petite Enfance Canada) Workshops that explore the role of parents in the everyday learning of their children. The Community Development Activities include programming that targets families, children, and the larger community. All community development programs currently being offered have been developed in the later years. For instance, a pilot project named BEBE FETE was created, which was similar in scope to the FETE program, but was offered to parents under the age of 21 and the grandparents of these families. Also, a National Children's Day Activities, a Volunteer Recognition Night, as well as a Montessori Program are all newly developed programs.

The government has had an impact on various programming and activities over the years at the Cornwall site due to the major role it played in the modification of the age group the project was to serve (from 0-4 to 4-8 years). The government's role was permissive at certain times and restrictive at others in terms of programming. For instance, the project was allowed to use schools to deliver programs, but it was not granted permission to expand the Breakfast Program because the government wanted funds spread equally across programs. At times, confrontations between government and the project developed when the government's goals differed from those of project representatives. This led the project to search for ways to reconcile the different perspectives and reach satisfactory solutions.

The project was originally mandated to target children from the age of 0-4. However, the government intervened in the developmental phase and wanted the Cornwall site to serve Francophone children aged 4-8 years old and their families. The project has continued to focus on children aged 4-8 years old throughout the years. One major change that has occurred was that initially there were seven schools involved in the project, but after a needs assessment the number of schools was reduced to four in 1992. It was estimated that the project has touched the lives of over 600 families and children.

The overall goal of the program, which is to improve the quality of life of children and their families, remains unchanged from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase. As well, the guiding philosophy and values of prevention, promotion, and community development stayed

constant. Prevention programs have continued to focus on the reduction of long-term affective and behavioural problems of children. Promotion encompasses the advancement of development of the social, affective, behavioural, and cognitive domains of children who were most likely to encounter difficulties in their lifetime. Community development has aimed at reinforcing the capacity of community agencies in an effort to respond to the social and economic needs of children and their families. Furthermore, based on the fundamental belief of the project that no single agency could effectively respond to the needs of all children, a broad spectrum, multi-sectoral approach to service delivery has been deemed necessary for the successful implementation of Better Beginnings programming and services. Therefore, over the years the Cornwall site has valued high quality programming that involves active community organization partnerships, as well as high levels of participation from community members.

Highfield. The initial three main areas of programming were family support, school-focused services, and community development activities. The major program components have stayed the same from the project's early years to the sustainability phase. Family support programs operate out of the Family Resource Centre. During the early years, family support programs included: Family Resource Centre Drop-in, Toy Lending Library, Home Visits, Playgroups, Parent's Group, and a Parent's Relief program. In the middle years, the focus of the Home Visitation program changed and was moved into the school-focused area of programming. In addition, the middle years saw the development of the Preschool Computer Program (still existing in the sustainability phase) and the Preschool Literacy Program, which was later replaced by the Kindergarten Readiness Program. In the later years, several new programs and services were added onto the family support area, including an English Conversational Group for parents, Parent Education Programs, and the Kindergarten Readiness Parent Support Group. Furthermore, a number of the key programs were expanded or enhanced. For example, the Family Resource Centre Drop-in hours expanded; the Parent Group took on more of an educational focus; the Toy Lending Library hours and number of books was increased; and the Parent's Relief Program was now offered one additional day per week.

The school-focused services included the Health and Nutrition Program, as well as Educational Assistants and Parent Volunteers who worked in the classroom. In the middle years, Educational Assistants expanded their role to conduct family visits and provide family support. Also in the middle years, a social skills program called the Lion's Quest was implemented. However, despite being successfully implemented on a school-wide basis, the Lions Quest social skills program was terminated in the sustainability phase. This was largely due to the amalgamation of the individual Metropolitan Toronto school boards into one board, as well as changes in curriculum requirements that had occurred as a result of the provincial government's revised mandate. The school believed it could no longer devote the time needed to run the program, as it was struggling to meet the new curriculum requirements. Thus, in 2004 the Incredible Years social skills program for preschool children was introduced as part of the Kindergarten Readiness program to replace The Lions Quest program.

The goals of community development were to improve the quality and accessibility of social and recreational opportunities for children and families, economic supports, and neighbourhood living conditions. While community development was designated as a separate program component, it was more of a process than specific programming. The community development activities were slow to develop during the project's early years, but programs such as the

Welcome Baskets, Before-and-After-School Program, March Break, Summer Programming, Ethno-Cultural Programs and Activities, as well as Social and Recreational Programs (e.g. aerobics and ballet for children) were successfully running in both the middle and later years of the project. In addition, highly popular programs such as Family Movie Nights were added to the mix of community development programs in the sustainability phase. The expansion of programs in the middle and later years was the result of a change in focus that looked at community development on a broader level, which facilitated partnerships with other agencies to coordinate services and develop early intervention initiatives that concentrated on children in the mandated age group.

The sustainability phase saw more emphasis being placed on outreach, community leadership, and volunteer coordination efforts, which resulted in a strengthening of the community development part of the project. For instance, one new initiative undertaken in the later years was the Leadership Program, which had been designed to train residents in community leadership and advocacy. The change in emphasis and coordination in the volunteer program also resulted in increased activity and involvement of community members, with over 100 community volunteers in all aspects of the project annually. One major change that occurred in the later years of the project had to do with the way in which programs were offered. An increasing number of programs were now offered in partnership with other agencies in the community, with Highfield providing support in the way of facilities and/or staffing of these programs. For example, the joint Parent Education Programs were offered in partnership with the local Women's Centre. The Women's Centre co-facilitated the programs with Highfield staff, provided interpretation in a second language if needed, and Highfield provided the facilities and childcare support for the programs. Other examples of these kinds of jointly sponsored programs included an English Conversational Circle, as well as Community Ethnic and Cultural Events.

The mandated age group for Highfield was children aged 4-8. Throughout the early, middle, and later years of the project, the specific age ranges of children participating in activities varied from program to program. While programming typically focused on the target age group, some of the activities served parents with pre-school children (e.g., the Family Resource Centre) and other programs offered services to children older than the mandated age (e.g., March Break and Summer Programs). In the sustainability phase, Highfield was designated as an Early Years Satellite Site, which meant that provincial government funding that was specifically allocated for children from birth to age 4 will be coming into the project.

In the sustainability phase there has been a conscious effort to maintain the philosophy and values with which the project began, including its focus on a child-family-community continuum, an emphasis on language and culture, and the need for programs relating to every aspect of the child's life (e.g., social, physical, cognitive). Community leadership and development received increasing attention during the project's later years. The increased focus on community leadership and development was made evident through the leadership development program, resident advocacy and social action activities, as well as the upsurge in volunteers in the program. As in the earlier years of the program, the project management continued to see community ownership and involvement as a crucial element in the enhancement of existing programming and the development of new programming.

Sudbury. The three main program components for Sudbury during the early years were: child and family-focused, school-based, and community-focused programs. Over the years, the programs at the Sudbury site have remained relatively stable and have been running largely unchanged. The following is a description of the main programming offered in the sustainability phase. The Early Bird Breakfast and Play Program was developed in the early years to offer activities for children that included creative play and cooperative games while providing a nutritious snack each morning before the children started school. In the middle and later years, the program offered a full breakfast and introduced more activities for the children. Another program was the Peaceful Schools Program, which aimed to create a peaceful environment for children and over the years the program grew to offer an anger management course, as well as mediation and programming for individual children with anger problems. The After School/Holiday Programs offered children the chance to play and socialize within organized activities and has been a strong program throughout the project's history. In the later years, the project obtained Trillium Foundation funding to offer a Pre-Teen After School Program for children and youth aged 9-13 years old. Another program that has been a part of the Sudbury program since its inception is the Summer Programs, which has seen the amount of programs offered expand over the years.

The L'arc en Ciel du Moulin a Fleur was established in the early years of the project to provide Francophone parents with small children the opportunity to meet and participate with a facilitator in educational activities, discussions, and collective cooking classes (i.e., the Community Kitchen). In the sustainability phase, the L'Arc en Ciel was a satellite Early Years program offered to children aged 0 to 6 years of age and was running strong thanks to the money provided through the Early Years program. The Travelling Road Show was offered in the early years for children and adults. However, the Road Show was currently not as active as it had been in the past. For example, it no longer travelled to various communities, but was offered in one community at less frequent times than it had been in the early and middle years. Other activities and programming that focused on children and families and were currently running included the Family Visiting Program, Christmas Baskets, Can Skate, as well as Babysitting and Transportation. Discontinued child and family or school-based programming included: the Native and Multicultural programming in schools, Multicultural Support program, Parent Support program, Summer Camp Experience, Tout Pour Reussir.

There were also several community development initiatives that made up the core programming components of Sudbury's Better Beginnings project. Current community development programming and activities includes the Community Kitchen Program, Environmental Group or Hands for Nature Program (funded through the Trillium Foundation), as well as the Research Program. The College Street Drop-In, Mediation Group, and You Won't Believe It's Theatre Group no longer existed during the sustainability phase. Since funding has become permanent, key stakeholders believed that the types of programming and activities have become less innovative. Furthermore, in the later years of the project, there was lack of agreement regarding the extent to which the community felt ownership of the project. Despite the fact that the community's sense of ownership has waned since the early days, project staff believed that the community continued to feel that Better Beginnings was part of the community and that the programs were their own.

The Sudbury site mainly served children in the mandated age range of 4-8 years old. However, the project served children both younger and older than the target age range due to external funding that was secured for several of their programs. For instance, Trillium Foundation funding was obtained for the Pre-teen After School program aimed at youth 9 to 13 years old, as well as for the Hands for Nature program. Also, the Sudbury Better Beginnings project now operated as an Early Years satellite site, which means that the L'Arc en Ciel du Moulin a Fleur program will now be offered to children from 0 to 6, as per the Early Years mandate.

One of the most important goals for the Sudbury site was to involve the community in all aspects of the project, including management, organization, and programming. The Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures is guided by several principles, which include community strengths, partnership building, and a collective concern for children's welfare. There has also been special emphasis placed on cultural-group issues at the Sudbury site as a guiding factor. Stakeholders have reported that the vision and principles had positive impacts on developing community participation, the use of consensus, cultural representation, and building social support.

It does not appear that the programs offered by Sudbury Better Beginnings are evidence-based, and site representatives have not used a program logic model in program development. Rather, the programs grew out of input from the community regarding what the expressed needs of the community were. Staff members believed that the programs continued to meet the needs of the community over the years. Currently, the Council is initiating a review of the different programs to ensure that the programs do meet the needs of residents. They are not using a program logic model approach in this review, although they were interested when this issue was raised. Furthermore, it is unclear if the Short-Term Findings report had any effect on the programs that were offered. One key informant felt that the report did impact the after school programs, as these programs began to focus more on homework completion and academic work. Other than that, it was unclear if the report had any other impacts.

Budget for older child sites. The budget for these three older child sites is provided in Table A.10. From this table, one can compare the budgets for these sites during the demonstration phase and the sustainability phase. The budgets for all three sites did not change much over time. This table does not include budget information from other funding sources that the sites were able to obtain to fund additional programs.

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Table A.10: Direct Government Costs for Older Child Sites, by Program and Year 1995/6, 1996/7, 2002/3 or 2003/4), Ontario Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Site and Year	Program				Total
	Classroom Enrichment	Other Child-Focused	Family-Parent Focused	Community Development	
- \$ -					
<u>Cornwall</u>					
1995/6	228,424	69,502	86,564	191,953	576,443
1996/7	321,593	62,934	92,327	104,084	580,938
2003/4	321,593	62,934	92,327	87,788	564,642 ¹
Total	871,610	195,370	271,218	383,825	1,722,023
<u>Highfield</u>					
1995/6	200,761	0	165,520	143,711	509,992
1996/7	186,292	0	175,669	150,205	512,166
2003/4	305,635	0	123,326	107,240	536,201 ²
Total	692,688	0	464,515	401,156	1,558,359
<u>Sudbury</u>					
1995/6	44,172	395,636	105,631	94,748	640,187
1996/7	63,820	355,289	125,009	113,824	657,942
2002/3	202,081	202,081	202,081	41,213	647,456 ¹
Total	310,073	953,006	432,721	249,785	1,945,585
<u>All Sites</u>					
1995/6	473,357	465,138	357,715	430,412	1,726,622
1996/7	571,705	418,223	393,005	368,113	1,751,046
2002/3 or 2003/4	829,309	265,015	417,734	236,241	1,748,299
Total	1,874,371	1,148,376	1,168,454	1,034,766	5,225,967
			Average Cost/Site/Year		580,663

Notes:

- 1 Costs for the different program areas were estimated for Cornwall and Sudbury.
- 2 The Highfield project currently allocates 57% of its Ministry budget to In-school programming, 23% to Community Development and 20% to Family Resource Programs. However, In-school program staff now implement parent education programs and provide support in the Family Resource Centre as well as support Community Development activities and events resulting in considerable overlap between programs.

Comparison Sites

There were two comparison sites for the research on the older child sites: Etobicoke and Ottawa-Vanier.

Etobicoke. The comparison site in north Etobicoke consists primarily of a low-income, immigrant population.

“About 71 percent of the people who live in Rexdale are immigrants. They are visible minorities and, and the way that, our feeling is that the highest grouping are South Asians and they’re about 28,000 out of 118,000 and then after that, it’s [people from] Africa, and that’s about 21,000. The fastest growing population is the South Asian population, from the 1996 census to this most recent census, they grew by I think 36.7 or 38.7 percent. So, just a really large [increase] across the city of Toronto, that’s for all of the city of Toronto, the biggest, I think 10.8 or something percent are of a Chinese background and 10.6 are South Asian, so, this seems to be a settlement community for the South Asian people.” (Etobicoke key informant interview)

One of the programs for preschool children is the Early Years’ Centre for Etobicoke North, which provides a number of programs for families with children ages birth to 6. These programs include parent resource library, a toy lending library, a program called My 5 Senses, that focuses on sensory exploration, craft programs, kindergarten readiness, gross motor programs, and some programs for families. There is also a licensed child care centre which serves 62 children ages 2 to 9.

The Braeburn Neighbourhood Place and Boys and Girls Club has been in operation for 30 years and was incorporated in 1975. “We’ve got a mission statement [that] kind of talks about self-help and about community capacity building and about strong relationships” (Key informant interview). Braeburn is funded by the United Way and operates a number of programs for elementary school age children. This community organization was started by a group of mothers and has a Board of Directors, consisting of parents from the neighbourhood (many of whom started as volunteers in the program) and the Principal of Braeburn Junior School. They have had a community development worker who has worked to involve residents in this organization and to make partnerships with other organizations like the Children’s Aid Society and Metro Toronto Housing. Braeburn has an Executive Director and a senior management team that is composed of the staff who manage the different programs. Braeburn staff also conduct focus groups with residents to help guide the programs, as well as having a Program Committee of the Board of Directors.

“We have committees on the board, like our program committee, that is also made up of parents.. and, most of our volunteers, about, well, just even on our staff, about 75 percent of our staff used to be volunteers .. and our volunteers are people who live in this community .. I don’t think we’ve got anybody from outside of the community. So, they .. they’re involved in all the roles, in management, and involved in planning and evaluation, outreach, all the things that we do as an agency is all parent-driven.” (Etobicoke key informant)

Staff of this organization, most of whom are community residents, speak 16 different languages. Staff conducted eight community consultations for the Early Years, and the majority of parents wanted programs to focus on school readiness for their children “where the language of the room was English” (Key informant).

Some of the programs are offered through Braeburn Junior School, including before and after school programs, child nutrition programs (including breakfast programs, snack program, and lunches for children), homework programs, a program called Focus on the Future (including units on ceramics, storytelling, dance, drama, etc.), and sports activities. There are also youth programs for those over the age of 12 and a youth committee. There is an emergency food bank, a supplementary food program, and a community garden. There is also a summer camp program that focuses on reinforcing academic skills learned in school.

Braeburn is also a member of two community-wide coalitions, the Etobicoke Brighter Futures and the Etobicoke Food for Kids Coalition, and Braeburn staff members have chaired both of these coalitions. Braeburn is also a part of the Early Years network and the Boys and Girls Club Network of Great Toronto. Brighter Futures is planning, coordination, networking, and advocacy body that strives to enhance services for children. According to its website (<http://www.ebf.ca>), the Brighter Futures Coalition began in 1994 and now has 25 service-provider members and 15 community members who are active in the coalition. “The purpose of the Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition is to jointly develop and implement inclusive and integrated programs that will increase the health and well-being of at-risk children (0-6), in the context of their families and communities.” The mission statement of the coalition is: “Our vision is to work toward the creation of a seamless network of integrated services for all young children and their families in our community.” Guiding principles include the following: a focus on all of Etobicoke (with three teams serving the northern, central, and southern parts of Etobicoke), a focus on children ages 0-6, their families, and communities, working in partnerships, community involvement, and planning.

In sum, the Etobicoke comparison site has had for some time a number of prevention programs for children and a neighbourhood resource centre that is parent-driven. The comparison community resembles the Highfield project in many ways.

Ottawa-Vanier. Ottawa-Vanier is a bilingual (French and English-speaking), which also has an immigrant population. Vanier is also a low-income community with a high degree of turnover in residents.

There are a number of programs for low-income families. Some programs focus on preschool children and their families. For example, the Early Years program has a focus on health promotion. Public health staff conduct workshops on nutrition, toilet training, reaching physical milestones, immunization, etc. While not offered in the community, La League La Leche focuses on breast feeding of women who have their children at a Francophone hospital. Another important prevention programs for children in Ottawa-Vanier is Six Ans Gagnant, which operates out of a community centre. The program begins when mothers are pregnant and continues until the child reaches 6 years of age and is focused on single mothers who are on social assistance. “They assist her [the mother] with nutrition, with prenatal classes, how to look at all the needs of the child after birth. They’re looking at classes on development, child

development in the early ages, early literacy. They cover all the, all the areas of development, physical, emotional, psychological need of the child, all the way up to 6” (Key informant interview). This program, which is funded by the city of Ottawa, provides outreach to parents, book and toy exchanges, play groups, and workshops for parents. Parents are free to participate in any of these activities.

For elementary school-aged children, there is a program in one of the schools in the community with a high level of illiteracy. This special program focuses on promoting reading through a variety of activities (music, cooking, and kinesthetic activities), rather than through a traditional focus on phonics and reading. Children begin this program at age 4, and the program lasts for three years. Parent involvement in this program is encouraged. Le Centre des Ressources Pour Enfants de Vanier assists parents with children ages 6-14. This program focuses on behaviour management issues and offers telephone support, books on parenting, and other information.

At the community level, there is a Coalition of Community, Health and the Resource Centers of Ottawa. This coalition is trying to coordinate services for low-income families in the area and to involve community members in social action. In the Vanier community, services have operated independently, and involving residents in this coalition has proved difficult. “They’re completely separate, and there’s no communication between the different services.”

In sum, the Ottawa-Vanier comparison site does not have the same type of well-developed community-based prevention programs that exist in the Cornwall site.

Summary of Findings on the Program Models

From the developmental phase to the sustainability phase, several of the Better Beginnings sites have seen a multitude of changes. It is evident that the Better Beginnings programs have altered, added, and/or discontinued programming throughout the years in order to better serve their clientele. For example, Regent Park and Southeast Ottawa have altered their programs to focus more on children. Also, the Regent Park site showed a decrease in smaller community programs and activities in the later years. Despite the presence of change, major program components have stayed relatively stable for most of the sites. Furthermore, the presence of external funding has had an impact on several of the Better Beginnings sites, with the expansion of existing programs and/or the development of new programming and activities occurring in many of the sites.

The age range of children that participated in project activities have remained relatively consistent within each site from the development to sustainability phase. Changes in the targeted age of children served were mostly the result of a site’s acquisition of external funding.

The guiding philosophies, values, and aims of the Better Beginnings have stayed relatively stable and unchanged over the years. It was evident that the programming for all sites was universally guided by the provision of programs and activities that would increase the quality of life for all individuals within a community, with great emphasis placed on the overall well-being of children and youth.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: CRITICAL ISSUES AND THEMES IN THE LIFE CYCLE OF BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES ORGANIZATIONS

The critical issues and themes that capture the experiences of the eight Better Beginnings, Better Futures organizations from the demonstration phase to the sustainability phase will now be discussed. The reader is referred to Table A.11 for a summary of the findings regarding the tasks, processes, systems interactions, and critical issues and themes that emerged and how they fit with the conceptual framework that we introduced in the literature review earlier in this report (Powell & Nelson, 1997). We will not discuss the tasks, processes, and systems interactions, as we have described the main findings regarding these dimensions in the previous four sections. Rather we focus here on the critical issues and overarching themes that characterize the eight sites during the three different time periods of the organizational life cycle. We begin with the early years.

Table A.11: Summary of Tasks, Processes, and Systems Interactions Across the Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Sites

Phase	Key Components			
	Tasks	Processes	Systems Interactions	Critical Issues and Themes
Developmental (1990-93)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning a holistic prevention program model - Developing administrative structures to support community participation and prevention programming - Hiring and training staff, including neighbourhood residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting and supporting residents to participate in the process - Establishing a participatory and inclusive approach to project management and a positive project atmosphere - Using consensus to make decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting and developing collaborative relationships among service-providers in the planning process - Deciding on a sponsor agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Work, work, work!</i> - Managing all of the multiple competing tasks in launching a community-based prevention project in a short-time frame - <i>Striking a balance</i> - between task completion and a process of meaningful resident and service-provider involvement, between government and community perspectives on programs - <i>Hiring the right leader</i> - residents and service-providers select project managers - <i>Engaging residents</i> - Overcoming residents' fears and mistrust and external obstacles to their participation - <i>Developing a shared vision</i> - establishing values, principles, and working relationships - <i>Negotiating a base of support</i> - developing a relationship with the sponsor agency that provides both support and autonomy for the project

SECTION A: The Life Cycle of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Organizations

Phase	Key Components			
	Tasks	Processes	Systems Interactions	Critical Issues and Themes
Demonstration (1994-98)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing and fine-tuning prevention programs - Continuing to develop administrative structures to support community participation and prevention programming - Staff training, supervision, and evaluation - Seeking out additional funding for new program plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing recruitment of residents and creating multiple ways in which residents could participate - Striving to maintain a participatory and inclusive approach to project management and a positive project atmosphere - Striving for consensus, but using majority voting when necessary to make decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refining and developing new partnerships with service-providers - Clarifying roles of service-provider partners - Affirming or re-examining relationship with the sponsor agency - Working in partnership with other organizations to address community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Launching the programs</i> - Launching the programs, refining them, and adding new programs - <i>Building an organizational base</i> - Evolving the administrative structures of the project - <i>Developing a new way: Putting the vision into action</i> - Maintaining resident participation in the process, a participatory and inclusive approach to project management, and a positive project atmosphere - <i>Creating partnerships to address community needs</i> - Developing working relationships with service-provider partners in the implementation of programs and in addressing community needs outside of the scope of the mandated age range for the Better Beginnings initiative

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Phase	Key Components			
	Tasks	Processes	Systems Interactions	Critical Issues and Themes
Sustainability (1999-04)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs are running smoothly - Programs continue to emphasize a holistic, community-driven approach to prevention with the same age groups of children - Changing leadership and organizational arrangements - Still hiring people from the community - Continuing to seek out additional funding for new program plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing new ways to maintain resident participation - Becoming somewhat more routinized and bureaucratic, yet working hard to maintain an alternative type of organization in terms of management style and project atmosphere - Conducting organizational reviews and restructuring processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuing to work with community partners on existing programs and in the development of new programs - Dealing with a changing organizational, community, and socio-political context - Changing relationships with the sponsor agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Staying the course</i> - maintaining a holistic, community-driven approach to prevention programs for children and families - <i>Changing organizational relationships</i> - finding an organizational arrangement that would sustain community-driven prevention programs - <i>Managing the transition</i> - dealing with staff turnover, changes in leadership, and a changing context through organizational renewal and restructuring - <i>The honeymoon is over</i> - experiencing conflict and turmoil during the transition to sustainability - <i>Striving to maintain the vision</i> - using values, principles, and resident participation to hold the initiatives to their original vision - <i>Being a beacon in the community</i> - projects served as a model of how to create partnerships among service-providers and residents using a community development approach; they have become recognized as leaders in the community; and they act as a magnet to draw partners together around new initiatives

The Early Years

There were several critical issues and key themes during the early years or developmental phase of the projects.

Work, Work, Work! The period from 1990 to 1993 was a time of great enthusiasm for the projects, but there was also a great deal of work that needed to be done. Service-providers and community residents had to come together in a very short time period to develop a proposal to become a Better Beginnings site. While the government provided some seed money to assist sites with the development of their proposals, service-providers and community residents put in a great deal of time and energy to participate in the proposal development process. They did so as an “add on” to their current lives and responsibilities.

There was widespread excitement when the sites learned that they had received funding to become a part of the Better Beginnings initiative. However, it soon became apparent that more work lay ahead in terms of concrete planning of the programs and organizational structures. Until the project managers were hired, the responsibility for this work fell once again on service-providers and community residents. At several of the sites, this was a very stressful time because of all the work tasks. As Cameron and Vanderwoerd (1997) pointed out in the previous cross-site project organization and management report, planning and working on all of the multiple, competing tasks in launching a community-based prevention project in a short-time frame was a complex and challenging undertaking. Similarly, other researchers have found that the planning or developmental phase of prevention programs can take up to two years to complete (Johnson et al., 1997; Juras et al., 1997). Our qualitative research demonstrated that this phase is not just time consuming, but that it is also very complex and challenging and sometimes very stressful for those involved in the planning process.

Striking a Balance. Another important theme that emerged from the findings is that the projects needed to strike a balance between task completion and a process of meaningful resident and service-provider involvement and between government and community perspectives on programs. Similarly, Juras et al. (1997) also noted that there is a tension between time-consuming collaborative processes and the need to complete tasks involved in the planning process. Like Peirson and Prilleltensky (1994), we found that there are dangers in going too fast or too slow in the planning process. If partners move too quickly, they may sacrifice the trust and the voice of community residents in the process, as residents initially find these partnerships to be intimidating and outside of their experience. On the other hand, moving too slowly can leave people feeling fatigued and frustrated when they feel that they are “spinning their wheels” and not accomplishing anything. Our research confirms that some kind of balance is needed between collaboration and action, and that both time and patience are needed during the early years of planning.

In the Better Beginnings initiative, government was another important player. Some of the sites experienced tension between the perspectives of government and those of community stakeholders. For example, in one site the government wanted the project to shift its focus from younger children to older children, and in some sites, the communities wanted to emphasize the whole community over the mandated age range of children for the initiative. Moreover, all sites had to negotiate their program model and budget with government representatives. Striking a

balance between government and community was also important, and these issues were successfully resolved through negotiation between the project sites and government.

Hiring the Right Leader. Sarason (1972) and Maton and Salem (1995) argued that leadership is an important component of empowering community organizations. Previous research has found that leadership that is inspirational, talented, shared, and committed facilitates the self-determination, social support, and sociopolitical awareness of all the stakeholders in an organization (staff, residents, service-provider partners) (Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997; Maton & Salem, 1995). Similarly, we found that a critical issue for the Better Beginnings sites was hiring the right leader who believed in the philosophy of Better Beginnings and who had multiple and diverse skills in prevention, community development, project management, budgeting, and interpersonal relationships. In the majority of sites, the same leaders guided the projects through the planning process and the implementation of programs. Hiring the right leader was an important task during the early years, which proved vital to the long-term success of the projects.

Engaging Residents. Resident participation is the key element in the community-building component of the Jones and Silva (1991) model that we introduced earlier in this report. Building community capacity requires the active and whole-hearted participation of community members in a collaborative, democratic process (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Initiating the involvement of community residents in building communities, however, is widely acknowledged as a difficult endeavour (Hodgson, 1984; Kaye, 1990; Pancer & Cameron, 1994; Wandersman & Giamartino, 1980). In this research, we found that there were both internal obstacles, such as residents' fears and mistrust, and external obstacles, such as lack of child care and alienating meetings that were too formal and dominated by professionals, to the participation of community residents. We found that to promote resident participation, professionals must be willing to share power and control over the planning process (Cameron & Cadell, 1999; Cameron, Peirson, & Pancer, 1994).

To counteract these impediments to resident participation, settings need to be changed so that they empower participation (Maton & Salem, 1995). We found that this can be accomplished by mandating 50% resident participation on all major decision-making and planning bodies in the Better Beginnings sites, having a number of different roles that residents can take on (and moving them to different roles as their capacities and confidence develop), making education and training opportunities available, reducing the level of jargon and formality at meetings, having professionals relate as peers rather than as expert, authority figures, and providing support and nurturance to residents (Cameron et al., 1984; Nelson, Pancer, Hayward, & Kelly, 2004).

Developing a Shared Vision. The vision and values of an organization are also very important for innovative organizations. Some grassroots organizations that consider themselves to be alternatives to mainstream organizations have a strong ideological character, place a high value on member participation, and typically adopt a collectivist as opposed to a hierarchical structure (Reinharz, 1984; Riger, 1984; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976). Recent developments in organizational theory, such as the concept of the "learning organization," have also underscored the key role that vision and values play in organization development and change (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999). In fact, the main challenges for members of learning organizations are to develop a common purpose and shared vision and to confront

contradictions between espoused values and the constraints posed by everyday problems. The degree to which the shared vision and values are implemented should result in an organizational culture and atmosphere that fosters participation, trust, respect, personal growth, and team development (Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, 2001; Senge, 1990). In the Better Beginnings sites, we found a strong emphasis on articulating values, principles, and a vision and using these values/principles/visions to guide their actions. Developing a shared vision between service-provider partners, community residents, and project staff was a key part of the planning process for prevention programs, as was articulated in the model proposed by Nelson et al. (2000).

Negotiating a Base of Support. Another critical issue and key theme during the early years was the need for projects to develop a relationship with the sponsor agency that provided both support and autonomy for the projects. Having a good relationship with one's sponsor agency was important for the planning process during the early years.

The Middle Years

All the planning and preparation that was undertaken during the developmental phase came to fruition in the demonstration phase when programs were launched. The critical issues and main themes of the sites during this period of time are as follows.

Launching the Programs. Launching the programs, refining them, and adding new programs were key tasks during the demonstration phase. Previous research has revealed that problems in the implementation of prevention programs may be due to resistance of those required to do the implementation (e.g., teachers), lack of training, support, and ongoing consultation for those doing the implementation, and lack of administrative and financial support for the program (Chamberland et al., 1998; Cherniss, 1997; Durlak, 1998b; Gager & Elias, 1997; Lynch et al., 1998; Peirson & Prilleltensky, 1994). In the case of Better Beginnings, project staff members were successful in avoiding many of these problems in implementation. While there were some initial "hiccups" in implementation, careful attention to the processes and context of implementation helped to overcome any minor problems. The ground work that had been laid during the developmental phase paved the way for successful program implementation. Moreover, consistent with previous research (e.g., Comer, 1976; Hodgson, 1984; Pancer & Nelson, 1990), we found that resident participation resulted in improved programs and services and a better match between the needs of the community and the kinds of services provided in the Better Beginnings sites.

Building an Organizational Base. During the demonstration phase, the project participants continued to evolve the administrative structures of the projects. As was noted previously, learning organizations strive to implement a "bottom up" approach to management, in which all members of an organization, not just senior management, chart the direction of the organization (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1999). Consistent with this approach, the administrative structures of the Better Beginnings sites were organized to provide many different opportunities for front-line staff, service-providers, and community residents to participate and have a voice in the management of the project. Moreover, the projects strived to keep meetings informal, often providing food at meetings and having plenty of time for members to socialize and get to know one another. This served to reduce the social distance between residents and professionals and

between managers and direct service staff.

Developing a New Way: Putting the Vision into Action. According to Senge (1990; Senge et al., 1999), in learning organizations, the mission statement of the organization is not relegated to something that is framed, posted on a wall, and forgotten about. Rather the vision and values that are embodied in the mission statement become the life blood of the organization, guiding the day-to-day actions of organizational members (Racino, 1991). A highly participatory approach to management is a way of making the vision and values a reality (Handy, 1995; Lincoln, 1985; Senge, 1990). This style of management requires strong value-based leadership (Prilleltensky, 2000) and a number of administrative structures that promote high levels of participation from a diverse array of stakeholders (e.g., community members, teachers and school staff, project staff, service-provider partners).

Like Bond and Keys (1993), we found that the synergy of this power-sharing and inclusive approach to management resulted in a positive organizational culture, climate, and atmosphere in most of the Better Beginnings sites during the demonstration phase. Maintaining resident participation in the process, a participatory and inclusive approach to project management, and a positive project atmosphere were key aspects of the way in which the vision for the projects was put into action. By and large, staff and residents at the Better Beginnings sites experienced the project as empowering and supportive during the demonstration phase.

Creating Partnerships to Address Community Needs. Also during the demonstration phase, the projects continued to developing working relationships with service-provider partners in the implementation of programs. An important issue that emerged during the demonstration phase was clarifying the roles of different partners. There was a transition in roles during the shift from the developmental phase to the demonstration phase. During the developmental phase, service-providers often played a lead role in planning programs. However, after staff was hired, staff assumed many of the roles that had previously been played by service-providers. In some cases, service-providers played a role as committee members, while in other cases they were a part of teams providing direct services in the Better Beginnings communities. Similarly, during the demonstration phase, some community residents were hired as staff members. In those cases in which the residents had been involved in the project's primary decision-making body or on project committees, it became necessary to clarify roles and potential conflicts of interest.

Also during the demonstration phase, the projects developed new partnerships to address community needs and issues outside of the scope of the mandated age range for the Better Beginnings initiative. Project members often played a leadership role in community coalitions and partnerships in applying for new grant money for programs in the Better Beginnings communities and in neighboring communities.

In all of their partnerships with other service-providers, a key factor in developing these partnerships was the compatibility of the values of the service-provider partner organizations with the Better Beginnings organizations. Better Beginnings sites partnered most successfully with those agencies that had a similar vision, values, and working style, thus underscoring the importance of value-based partnerships (Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivray, 2001).

The Later Years

After the demonstration phase, the government decided to grant permanent funding to the sites. While the transition to sustainability was accompanied by many changes, some aspects of the sites have remained relatively consistent. Overall, our research found that the programs are sustained and thriving, and that for the most part, the initial vision of the Better Beginnings initiative has been maintained.

Staying the Course. All of the sites have been successful in sustaining a holistic, community-driven approach to prevention programs for younger or older children and their families. In fact, the core programs have become routinized in all of the sites. As was noted earlier, some of the qualities that are related to the sustainability of prevention programs are: programs that are community-driven, high quality, and are integrated into local service systems and have demonstrated effectiveness, ongoing evaluation, active administrative support, program consultation, ongoing training and professional development, the potential to meet changing community needs, and the active participation of other service-providers (Akerlund, 2000; Elias & Kamarinos, 2003; Johnson et al., 1997). It is clear from our research that the Better Beginnings sites have many of these qualities that promote sustainability.

Not only have the sites continued to serve children in the original age groups, but many of the sites have obtained additional funding to augment services for children in the age group or to serve children outside of the age groups. For example, several of the sites have obtained funding from the Early Years Initiative to serve children ages 0-6. As well, sites have helped to develop programs for youth, fathers, and different cultural groups in the Better Beginnings communities. Thus, sites have added programs during the sustainability phase. The organizational infrastructure of Better Beginnings has served a base from which other prevention programs can be added.

Changing Organizational Relationships. Each of the sites has worked to find an organizational arrangement that would sustain the community-driven prevention programs. In their study of the sustainability of prevention programs, Dariotis et al. (2004) found that after the grant for the demonstration phase ended, the programs that continued to operate did so under various types of organizational arrangements, including partnerships with other organizations, reduced operations with integrated funding, and full integration with existing programs. Each Better Beginnings site has developed its own unique organizational arrangement.

In some cases and in some ways, the Better Beginnings organizations appear to have become somewhat more traditional or formal in their operations over time. For example, most of the sites use majority voting as a means of making decisions. In some sites, residents are no longer in roles of decision-making with regard to the projects, and in other cases, staff do much of the work rather than resident volunteers. Sociologist Max Weber (1946) asserted that over time, social movement organizations become more bureaucratic. He argued that having a hierarchical decision-making structure and a rational division of labor with clear roles and responsibilities for staff positions was essential for the efficient functioning of an organization. However, as was mentioned earlier, many grassroots, community-based organizations often find hierarchies of power and rigid bureaucratic structures to be inconsistent their values (Reinharz, 1984).

While the Better Beginnings sites may have become more somewhat more traditional in their organizational structures over time, they are nevertheless more non-traditional and innovative than mainstream human service organizations in their communities. All of the sites continue to have some mechanisms to involve residents in meaningful roles in the organizations; all strive to main the vision, values, and principles on which Better Beginnings was founded; and all are progressive human service organizations.

Managing the Transition. We found that almost all of the sites experienced the transition to the sustainability phase as stressful and challenging. The sites had to deal with changes in leadership, staff turnover, and a changing organizational, community, governmental, and socio-political context. Many of the original project managers who were so key to the success of the projects during the developmental and demonstration phases retired during the sustainability phase. An important organizational change that occurred during the sustainability phase included changing relationships with the sponsor agency. Many of the sites also experienced community changes, including an increasingly diverse population in the community with the immigration of new Canadians and an increasing overall population in the community. There was also a major change with respect to the sites' relationship with government. There was no longer a government committee or staff from the corporate office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to oversee and support the projects. This responsibility was transferred to the area offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services who had no previous experience working with the sites. Also, there was no increase in funding for the projects from government during the demonstration and sustainability phases. Socio-political changes include an increasingly harsh economic reality that impacted on families in the Better Beginnings communities. Cutbacks to social assistance and a lack of employment opportunities have left many people living in Better Beginnings communities more impoverished.

The Better Beginnings initiatives coped with these changes proactively through planned processes of organizational renewal and restructuring. These organizational change processes were designed to assist the sites in dealing with the new realities in the community. Planned change processes are a vital part of the life of learning organizations as they strive to grow and prosper (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1999).

The Honeymoon Is Over. While most of the sites were operating fairly smoothly during the demonstration phase, the challenges posed by the transition phase led to conflict and turmoil in several of the sites. The loss of the original project managers, the challenges of changing contexts, and the stress of organizational renewal processes were difficult for stakeholders in the Better Beginnings sites.

Striving to Maintain the Vision. In spite of the challenges experienced during the sustainability phase noted above, the Better Beginnings organizations used values, principles, and resident participation to hold these initiatives to their original vision. Moreover, the sites worked hard and made conscious efforts to maintain the vision. This was challenging because of the changing context noted above. As we indicated earlier, Senge (1990; Senge et al., 1999) has argued that the vision and values of learning organizations are important anchors for the functioning of such organizations.

One of those values was widespread resident participation in all aspects of the Better Beginnings initiatives. In her seminal paper on resident participation, Arnstein (1969) distinguished different levels of citizen involvement in the programs, initiatives and activities that go on in their communities. At the lowest level, citizens are only involved as participants in these programs and may have, at most, token representation on the bodies that coordinate these programs; they have little say in which programs are offered, or how they are managed and implemented. At the highest level, residents drive the process; they are the ones who ultimately determine what kinds of programs are offered in their communities and how those programs operate.

During the sustainability phase, all of the Better Beginnings sites continued to involve residents in various roles in the organizations. Some of the sites continued to have the mandated 51% or more resident participation on all project committees and the primary decision-making body of the organization. Others did not have the same high level of resident participation that they had during the developmental and demonstration phases, but they did have some mechanisms for ensuring resident participation. The sites also continued their practice of hiring residents from the Better Beginnings community as staff members. One challenge that we found that the sites experienced during the sustainability phase was integrating “new” and “continuing” residents. New volunteers do not have the same sense of history and perhaps the same degree of ownership that the original resident participants had.

On the Arnstein (1969) participation ladder, the sites ranged from medium to high levels of citizen participation. None had low or token levels of citizen participation. As we noted earlier in the report, comments from the focus group and key informant interviews suggested pointed to the importance of resident participation in holding the initiatives to the original Better Beginnings vision. Involving residents in the process helps to keep the initiatives honest to their original mandate.

Being a Beacon in the Community. In this research, many participants commented that the projects served as a model of how to create partnerships among service-providers and residents using a community development approach. During the sustainability phase, the sites continued to have strong partnerships with other service-providers. While some of the partners have changed, the sites still emphasize working in partnership with other community agencies. Moreover, other community groups or new community organizations often sought out the expertise of the Better Beginnings organizations in helping them to engage residents and service-providers in their initiatives. There were several comments that the Better Beginnings organizations were recognized as leaders in the community, and that the sites had a great deal of credibility in the community regarding a community development approach to prevention for children and families. In their leadership role, the Better Beginnings organizations acted as a magnet to draw partners together around new community initiatives.