Values, Process and Commitment:
Better Beginnings, Better Futures
Project Organization and Management

First Version May 1997
Revised November 1997
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Gary Cameron & Jim Vanderwoerd

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This report describes activities in seven Better Beginnings, Better Futures communities and is based on individual site reports prepared by the following researchers:

Cornwall	Lucie Vincent-Leblanc, Yves Herry and Denis Levesque, June 1996
Etobicoke	Geoffrey Nelson, S. Mark Pancer and Karen Hayward, October 1996
Guelph	Jim Vanderwoerd, June 1996
Kingston	Jim Vanderwoerd and Dawn Blessing, February 1997
Ottawa	Ruth Charles, Karen Lee Miller, Pamela Turpin, Tess Dawber and Jim Vanderwoerd, April 1997
Sudbury	Lamine Diallo, June 1996
Toronto	Dia Mamatis and Gloria Roberts-Fiati, August 1996

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PART I

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This report examines how seven Better Beginnings, Better Futures prevention projects were organized and managed. The time period covered in this report is from early 1991 until June 1995. In a few instances, some information was available for 1996.

This report includes more of an assessment and an interpretation of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures experience than any of the four previous cross-site reports. There are several reasons for this. In part, it can be attributed to the fact that the Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects have evolved over the past six years to the point where their basic characteristics have become clearer to participants. In addition, the topics addressed by this report touch on many central aspects of the demonstration projects such as community development, project development, project governance, staffing, management, relations with host organizations as well as prevention programming. As a result, the seven individual site reports on which this cross-site report is based provided more of an assessment of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures experience than the earlier site reports had done.

The individual organization and management site reports were lengthy and complex. Also, in the opinion of the authors, there were great differences in project organization and management principles and practices between the various sites. As a result, this cross-site report cannot capture the intricacies of project organization and management at each demonstration site. For a greater understanding of a particular site, the reader is referred to the individual site report. This cross-site report focuses on general patterns, or the similarities and differences between the sites, and on the questions these patterns raise.

Better Beginnings, Better Futures is an intricate initiative about which participants have strong opinions and beliefs. How we see Better Beginnings, Better Futures seems to be very much influenced both by our position in relation to the demonstration project and the history and the values we bring to the experience. For example, in the authors' opinion, this report illustrates that it would be an error for participants at one demonstration site to presume that their experience and

opinions about Better Beginnings reflect what others do or believe at the other demonstration sites. There are as many differences as there are similarities from community to community.

This cross-site report may challenge the perceptions and beliefs of some readers. For this reason, it would be useful to clarify the position and the perspective from which this report is written. The authors have had the opportunity to compare and contrast the information in the seven site reports without having any strong prior attachment to a particular site or ways of working. On the other hand, our interpretation of this information will be coloured by our own orientation towards project organization and management. We would describe ourselves as favouring a middle ground between established organization and management procedures and creating new approaches specifically for Better Beginnings. The comments on the first draft of this report show clearly that others with different orientations may read these data differently. However, we make a consistent effort to provide sufficient examples in this report to allow the readers to decide for themselves the appropriateness of our conclusions. In addition, whenever possible, we have included interpretations from the first review of this document which differ from our own into appropriate sections of this report.

The next section describes the research methods used for this report. Next, Part II of the report focuses on specific topics such as organizational and managerial values or philosophy, governance structures and procedures, staffing, management and supervision, relations with the host agency, project independence and long-term survival. Part III concludes by discussing the authors' perceptions of general themes and patterns that have emerged from the data which cut across the specific organizational and management topics in this report.

2.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology was used within the framework of a multiple case study (Yin, 1989). This approach involved the collection of data by direct observation, interviews, focus groups, and relevant documents and other written material (Patton, 1990). At each site, a local researcher carried out the majority of data collection, with assistance from a liaison person who provided a link and a support from the local site to the core research team. In addition, a local research committee consisting of neighbourhood residents, agency representatives and project staff persons provided consultation in the selection of persons and groups to interview and events to observe.

The major source of information was the set of field notes compiled by local researchers at each site. These notes consisted of semi-verbatim accounts of meetings of each local projects' main decision-making group, summary notes of other site meetings and events, and summaries of key site documents such as proposals, reports, and minutes. In addition, researchers also added their own reflections and impressions of what they had observed and what had occurred.

The field notes were collected and entered into a computer database using the software *The Ethnograph* (Seidel, Kjolseth & Seymour, 1988). This software was used to group the field notes into major categories (for example, resident involvement, service provider involvement, government relations), and allowed easy retrieval and analysis of material in specific categories. To ensure consistency in the coding of field notes across the seven sites, training was provided to the local researchers.

Both individual and group interviews were used to collect additional data to supplement the information in the field notes from observations and site documents. An interview guide approach was used (Patton, 1990) in which a set of topics was covered by the interviewer, with the flexibility for additional probing to fully explore the topics. Interview guides were developed for use across the seven sites to ensure consistency. These guides were adapted for use with different kinds of project participants, and for both individual and group interviews. In addition to formal interviews, local researchers often supplemented their information with more informal interviews and conversations with a variety of project participants.

There were two stages in the analysis of the data. First, local researchers reviewed data from their field notes which had been coded into topics relevant to project organization and management, as well as interview transcripts and related documents. This material was used to prepare site reports describing project organization and management at the local Better Beginnings sites. To ensure consistency in the topics covered in each report, as well as to facilitate cross-site analysis, a report framework was developed collaboratively by the core research team, site researchers, and local research committees.

The second stage of analysis involved the compilation of information from each of the seven site reports. Each of the individual site reports was categorized and coded, using *The Ethnograph* software (Seidel et al., 1988), according to the major topics noted in the report framework. A cross-case examination was done for each area, and content analysis was used to identify the major themes. The quotes in the results section are taken from the individual site reports. Sometimes these are direct quotes of project participants, and sometimes they are quotes of descriptions or observations by site report authors. To protect the identities of individuals and organizations at each site, this report refers to the sites by number and to organizations by generic names.

PART II

3.0   VALUES AND PRINCIPLES GUIDING PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Developing an organization based on shared values and principles was important to the Better Beginnings projects. Members and participants in all sites spent much time and energy identifying, discussing, and clarifying the values and principles which would guide them in the development of their projects. In some cases, attention to values seemed to hold as much importance as the operating procedures themselves.

In some ways, the focus on values and principles comes from the original Better Beginnings document itself, and the way in which the project was initiated. As documented in *Communities Coming Together: Proposal Development in Better Beginnings, Better Futures* (Pancer, et al, 1993), one of the key factors that motivated people to become involved in the

proposal development process was that they strongly supported some or all of the principles which were outlined in the original Better Beginnings document (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1989):

> … several criteria or principles from the Better Beginnings, Better Futures initiative motivated people to get involved… One of these was prevention… related to this was the strong emphasis on research…, the emphasis on involving those people who will be accessing the services…, the emphasis on integration of services.…

Accordingly, five site reports (1, 3, 4, 5, 7) stated that one of the significant sources for their local values and operating principles was the Better Beginnings document:

> Better Beginnings, Better Futures's principles guided local values and operating principles as well…e.g. universality, flexibility, etc. (site 1)

> In the early stages of site development, Better Beginnings attempted to operate on a set of principles in large measure based on the goals of the model outlined in the original Better Beginnings proposal.… The organizers were committed to incorporate these principles as the structure of the organization and programs were developed. (site 3)

> Commitment to principles as described in "Better Beginnings, Better Futures: An Integrated Model of Primary Prevention of Emotional and Behavioural Problems." (site 4)

> Since the earliest days of funding, the way in which this project has organized and managed itself has been guided by principles. These principles have their origin in the government document upon which the project is based: *Better Beginnings, Better Futures: An Integrated Model of Primary Prevention of Emotional and Behavioural Problems* (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1989). The importance of this document to project participants is the way in which they refer to it as the "Better Beginnings book" or even, the "Better Beginnings bible." (site 5)

> The elaboration of this philosophy took place initially from the local project's original proposal and was inspired globally by the principles conveyed by the Provincial Government, as to the foundation and content of **Better Beginnings, Better Futures**. (site 7)

Some of the major principles identified in the original Better Beginnings documents are integration of services and programs, community involvement in identifying needs and developing programs, flexibility, comprehensiveness, universal accessibility, and high-quality programs

(Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1989; 1990). Articulation of some or all of these values was reported at all of the sites. However, of all these values, the one which was mentioned most frequently in all seven site reports was the involvement of community residents. Community participation is identified by every site as a guiding principle for project organization and management:

> We are committed to a community development approach in all aspects of our project. Community Development is a process in which the community identifies its issues and participates in solutions to them. (site 1)

> PRINCIPLES … To build leadership and partnership in the community… To pay attention to the residents' strength and knowledge and to understand their concerns and needs... (site 2)

> The focus is two-fold: organizational harmony and community empowerment.… [this site's management approach] is a dual approach to management, concerned with individual growth and community empowerment. (site 3)

> This principle is first articulated in the original proposal. In the section on Community Involvement it states: "The success of this project depends upon the involvement of the entire community…. Community control is evident throughout all levels, from [the steering committee] and set up for community control and participants as a regular part…" (site 4)

> This principle is foundational to the project, and facilitates the recognition of the role of neighbourhood residents. Intentional efforts to recruit, support, train and maintain community residents ... are based on a principle which allows every participant an opportunity to speak in their own voice to any discussion about the project.… It is clear that the involvement of community residents is a key principle throughout the project… (site 5)

> Another important value is that of community empowerment. Project participants used terms like "community-driven", "parent participation", and "power sharing" to describe the value placed on resident participation in project management. (site 6)

> Community Members Participation: The original proposal stated that [the Better Beginnings project] should be a community project. Therefore, the local project would rely on the parents' participation on many organizational and administrative issues.… the original proposal was centred on the reinforcement of a community which would take charge of its needs. (site 7)

The evidence for this emphasis on community involvement comes not just from the articulation of these broad principles noted above, but also by several other values and principles which flow from this commitment. For example, two sites included a specific principle of working towards community ownership and control of the project's management:

> Since 1991 when the proposal was approved, the tasks have been to … put into place a structure and organization that ensured not only community participation but community ownership and control of the management of the project. (site 2)

> Commitment to community ownership. (site 4)

The idea of inclusiveness and being open and accessible to all persons from the community was identified by three sites:

> Two additional and related principles of [the project] tied to community ownership are inclusiveness and operating from an anti-racism perspective. (site 1)

> … the key to making [community] involvement possible is the principle of allowing everyone a voice. Inclusivity is also an important facet of this principle. All persons are supported to participate, and the opportunity to have a say is the key way in which persons experience inclusivity. (site 5)

> A related theme is that the project aspires to be very open to the community. Implicit in this openness is recognition of the strengths of the community and its residents. (site 6)

Related to this, three sites identified the use of consensus in decision-making as a way of fostering inclusiveness and developing a process for involving community residents and fostering their participation:

> Management has clearly stated that the main reason for using consensus is to foster inclusiveness and ensure that resident participants' voices are heard. (site 1)

> The vision and principles have also helped reinforce the use of consensus for decision-making…. By using consensus and by having residents participate in [Steering Committee] meetings, the project has permitted the community to participate in decisions and to have its voice heard. (site 2)

> Active, meaningful, and equal participation by community residents has been a feature of this project since the proposal was written in the spring of 1990. Consensus decision-making has been one of the key ways in which this

participation has been encouraged and in which community leadership has flourished and grown. (site 5)

Two site reports also mentioned that the processes of community development and participation were considered to be more important than the specific content of decisions about programs or organizational structures themselves:

> Learning and sharing that the process of expanding prevention services through community development is the primary course of change, not the service themselves. (site 2)

> Process Orientation refers to an emphasis on process and developing social relations among people, rather than focusing on (infra)structure, hierarchy and outcome. A process orientation means that a value-based process of achieving a decision is, in many ways, more significant to the managers than the actual decision or end itself. (site 3)

Five sites stated that hiring community residents was a project principle from the beginning:

> (The project) has sought and encouraged hiring residents throughout the life of the project. (site 1)

> The hiring philosophy of the project was to give the position to community residents whenever possible. (site 2)

> Hiring employees from within the community was an ideal intended to encourage community involvement, promote skill-building for residents, and to provide economic benefits to the individual and community. (site 3)

> Since the earliest days of the project there has been a commitment to provide employment opportunities to neighbourhood residents. (site 5)

> The hiring of community residents has also been a major principle at this site from the project's beginning. (Site 7)

Finally, three sites singled out democratic and non-hierarchical management styles which seek to reduce or eliminate power imbalances. These principles were seen as being important to facilitate the involvement and participation of community residents:

> [The project's] principles have early in the life of the project, set the tone for the horizontal and egalitarian management and organization style of [the project]. The

principles have focused on promoting and developing partnerships, sharing and learning together and responding effectively to community needs. (site 2)

A democratic approach to management requires that staff share equally in the decision-making and power sharing…. Before managers can begin to share or delegate power, their first task is to lessen power differentials by building skills and the kind of confidence employees require to become more equal and valued contributors. (site 3)

There are several different ways that the project's values are concretely manifested in the day-to-day management of the project…. [P]roject participants experience the project as "more flat, not hierarchical".

> "It's sort of organized around power-sharing. That's sort of implied in the structural set-up." (site 6)

From all of this, it is clear that the notion of community involvement and participation was an important and widely held value among all the sites. What becomes clearer in subsequent sections of this report is that, while this value is shared by all the sites, the actual extent and ways in which community residents participate and are involved in project organization and management varied widely.

Compared to community involvement, none of the other principles outlined in the original Better Beginnings document received as much attention. It appears that while the Better Beginnings document provided a significant impetus for projects' values, these values were not subscribed to equally. For some reason, community participation had more resonance with project participants and leaders than the other values. For example, service integration, which received more emphasis in the original Better Beginnings document as well as the corresponding *Request for Proposals* (March 1, 1990), is explicitly mentioned as a basic guiding value in three site reports, while two site reports stressed the importance of partnerships between community residents, service providers, and staff:

Encouraging the development of partnerships between community members and service providers in responding to community needs. (site 1)

High community involvement was viewed as essential, as was collaboration with current agencies and other service providers, and triministerial co-ordination and cooperation. (site 3)

Equal partnership among integrated agencies and [the Better Beginnings project].
(site 4)

Partnership is the main principle on which the structure of the Better Beginnings,
Better Futures project is based.… [P]artnership refers to the relationship between
agency representatives, neighbourhood participants, and project staff. This
principle is evident as one of the six principles from the document of agreement of
1991. It has grown as a theoretical principle in the early days to an organizational
structure and management process in which collaboration between different groups
… is evident everywhere . (site 5)

Service Integration .… the implementation of common resources offered by the
programs is reached by the sharing of professional services, equipment, and
installations, which represents an integration of programs. (site 7)

This does not mean that concerns such as integration and partnerships were not important
at the sites or that progress was not made in these areas (for example, the *Building Bridges* report
(Cameron, Vanderwoerd & Peters, 1995) and the *Resident Participation* report (Pancer &
Cameron, 1993) showed the efforts and accomplishments in these areas). However, in the site
reports, resident involvement was given much more attention as a core organization and
management principle for the projects:

Organizational flexibility is also suggested in the original Better Beginnings
guidelines.

This idea of flexibility appeared to be important to several sites:

This site maintained organizational and program flexibility. (site 1)

This kind of spontaneous discussion informing programming change is common at
Better Beginnings. As the Project Coordinator explains, "A lot of things just grow
out of things… If this is something the people want, let's try and fit it in." (site 3)

The consensus model allowed for a flexible approach to solutions. In the three
examples given, each followed a slightly different path to arriving at a solution.…
Each situation required a different process, and this flexibility allowed the board
to arrive at consensus on every one of these difficult decisions. (site 5)

In terms of the lessons learned regarding the vision and values, people believed that
time, patience, and flexibility are required to build community involvement.

> "You have to be flexible, to have to be able to do things as they
> come up and to handle things as they come up." (site 6)

Flexibility as a guiding project value, however, was specifically articulated by only one site, where it was applied beyond programs to include organizational flexibility as well:

> Another principle is flexibility. For [this project] this has meant being open to changing organizational structures, management style, policies, etc.… The style of managing the project has been described as informal, flexible, frequently changing, and committed. (site 1)

The integrated model described in the original Better Beginnings document included an emphasis on developing high-quality staff. Perhaps related to this idea, at least four sites articulated a value of supporting and taking care of the staff of the project:

> [The project's] management style has reflected a deep commitment to the project and staff. Management has made changes in response to staff concerns to improve how the project functions. (site 1)

> This holistic approach to management assumes that many aspects of people's lives and their community are taken into account.… Better Beginnings not only treats its staff as employees but tries to develop a structure in which other aspects of their life are included in the daily management of the project.… Support is offered to those who need it for example, several food programs are offered to staff and residents… (site 2)

> The first feature of people-centredness is a focus on all individuals connected to the Project. At Better Beginnings, managers do not differentiate between staff and clients.… This valuing of the individual means that staff are recognized as having particular issues which can affect performance and for which supportive mechanisms by management are in order. (site 3)

> … in this project, prevention has also been applied as a principle to the project's organization and management. In the simplest terms, prevention refers to any activity or behaviour which enhances well-being and health. Prevention, therefore, is not viewed solely as a theoretical approach to "other" anonymous community residents for which programs are designed. Instead, prevention includes the way in which things are done so that everyone who is involved -- neighbourhood resident, staff, agency representative, or others -- benefits personally. (site 5)

From these descriptions, it seems the focus on providing for the well-being of staff was seen at some sites as being as relevant to the projects' prevention objectives as meeting the needs of volunteers or program participants.

Most of the Better Beginnings sites are located in communities in which the population is diverse in language, culture and ethnicity. Three sites felt it was important to develop principles around the way that people from multiple cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds would be included in the projects:

> [The project's] management and organizational development have been affected by its active efforts to include the participation of people from various cultures, races, and language groups. (site 1)

> The vision and principles also promote cultural representation and build strength within the cultural minorities. (site 2)

> "There is a melding of points of view of participants who don't necessarily speak the same language... (This) part allows for ethnocultural distinctness to infuse the project. (site 6)

Of these sites, site 2 addressed this issue at length in the development of their values and principles. In this site, it was important to recognize the existence of several separate cultural and language groups, and to articulate values which would honour this diversity and facilitate the involvement of each group:

> PRINCIPLES ... To ensure participation for [], [], and [] groups in structure and programming of the [project].... This principle has permitted transferring program management from the central office to the cultural groups.... It has also permitted the transfer of some management power to the cultural groups who were able to make decisions regarding the hiring, the type of programs and activities they needed. (site 2)

At another site, the issue was the specific intent of the project to focus on one specific cultural and language group. As noted in this site's report:

> It is to be noted that the original vision for the local project already focused on the dynamic of an [ethnic] community living in a minority environment. The cultural background of the [minority] population were displayed in the original proposal, whether by the range of organizations invited to participate, or by the choice of schools and the definition of the [Better Beginnings] territory. (site 7)

When the Better Beginnings communities were granted their funds, it was clear that the project was a demonstration project with a set timeline. Participants knew from the outset that the funding was not permanent. As is described in the later section on project independence, all the sites eventually began to deal with the question of what would happen after Better Beginnings funding ended. But even in the process of identifying project values and principles, four sites addressed this directly by stating a definite intention to seek resources to continue after the original funding ended:

> The vision of community ownership of [the project] that evolved conveys two significant points. One is an intent to build a sustainable organization that could be continued after the demonstration period. (site 1)

> PRINCIPLES … To build a community development process that will continue after the Better Beginnings project is ended. (site 2)

> Continuity and Stability: This principle, too, is included among the six operating principles of the 1991 document of agreement.… This principle is also behind the early push for incorporation and the development of procedures for an independent organization. (site 5)

> [This project] always promoted the development of the community's abilities to manage its own needs. Over the years, this remains one of the fundamental principles guiding all the Better Beginnings activities. (site 7)

A final value that was clearly articulated by all but one site was the notion that the Better Beginnings projects represented, in the words of one site report, "a new way of thinking and acting" (site 6). The descriptions and the language in some site reports suggest that people in Better Beginnings see themselves as being part of something that is new, unique, and, perhaps, even better than existing organizations:

> Instead of adopting the [sponsor agency's] organizational policies and procedures, [Better Beginnings] opted to develop their own. [Better Beginnings] believed this would allow them to develop systems that were more in line with Better Beginnings principles. (site 1)

> Involving the community in the management and organization of the project was from the very beginning, one of the most important goals of the project. This made it necessary for the project to create a different and original structure to

enable the community to participate at different levels on the management of the project. (site 2)

"I think we are really creating an alternative and it is not perfect, it could be a whole lot better but there is a really powerful alternative to boards that is happening here." (site 4)

The opportunity to be involved in a project which was innovative, creative, and not constrained by the limits of tradition or bureaucracy was documented as a motivation for agency representatives to participate in the development of the original proposal. This sense of creative innovation was carried through to the [board] and to neighbourhood participants. … [T]his principle was included among the operating principles of the document of agreement of 1991. … [One neighbourhood participant] said that her understanding was that this project was to organize itself not according to accepted practices and systems, but rather be innovative and creative. (site 5)

Most of us have been socialized within hierarchical systems, and it is difficult to make the transition to a new way of thinking and acting. … tensions surface between the project and more hierarchical systems, like the education system, because they are operating from different paradigms. (site 6)

Our site's representatives and the community members were also looking at creating a structure which would be different from the organizations that were already in place in the community. (Site 7)

This notion of Better Beginnings being different is not neutral. It is not just that the projects are different from other organizations, but also there is the implication at some sites that Better Beginnings is better than, or an improvement on, the management style of "traditional" organizations. Indeed, it would not be unfair to suggest that the word "traditional" at some Better Beginnings sites has become synonymous with "bad" ways of working:

… there was systematic attention to creating a welcoming space that "did not look like an agency office." (site 2)

Most people have been taught all their lives a particular way of management based on bureaucratic models in which the structure is very hierarchical and the power of top management people who give orders. The management style of a community organization is a very difficult task because people have lost the habit of exercising direct power. This is more true when working with people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods who have rarely the chance not only to participate in decisions regarding their community but have developed a fear of organizations that they

usually see as imposing programs on them that most of the time don't correspond
to their needs.

Each organization develops a structure and way of working that values
certain types of relationships. Community organizations such as Better Beginnings
have based their approach to management on a different vision in which power is
shared and divided between small teams and in which trust is put in people to give
them time to learn new skills in order to participate in the building of their own
community. This has helped develop more creativity in people who are given the
possibility to use their capacities. The strength of this management style is to
enable people to become self-reliant and self-motivated. (site 2)

"When I go to other board meetings and go to our [Better Beginnings] meetings,
there is such a world of difference into what happens. We have people chairing the
[Steering Committee] that are from the community. We have people on it that are
from the community and I wish all these other stuffy boards could come and see
the Better Beginnings [board]." (site 4)

"It is implied that a structure for accountability and lines of responsibility is
inherently bad and undesirable. The word hierarchy … is invoked like the word
"communist" in the 1950s. I was unaware that a collective was a goal of the Better
Beginnings projects as this is the only "non-hierarchical" structure that I am aware
of. (written communication from host executive director in response to the local
site report) (site 4)

"The overall vision/philosophy is very challenging. The perception is that you
can't really operate that way …. [Agencies] have a hard time getting their heads
around that it isn't someone from up top that makes decisions, that it has to come
from the people and the committees. We have to find the best ways of working
with other systems. People [in agencies] don't take kindly to being told that the
ways they do things don't work." (site 6)

In feedback to an earlier draft of this report, it was indicated that this attitude was evident at sites

1 and 5 as well. The wording and language from these excerpts suggests that these are strongly

held beliefs which to some Better Beginnings participants have become basic to their approach to

project organization and management.

The idea that Better Beginnings was to be different from other organizations seems to have

been sparked early in the project and was in one site report seen as initiated by the government

funders:

… the language of "creative alternatives" and escaping traditionalism, was not
solely initiated in this local project, but appeared to come from the government

itself. For example, the minutes of the board from February 13, 1991 included a
report from the funding announcement ceremony which project participants
attended in Toronto on January 29, 1991. This report included the following
points:

>Salaries: must be a good, living wage
>-must be an element of trust in staff
>-be creative and flexible versus traditional. CHANGE the
>bureaucracy. Ministry is available to help establish standards across
>all BBBF locations (emphasis original).

The wording of this report (i.e., the use of the word *must*) in the board's minutes
suggests that these points were recommendations, or at least guidelines, from the
government. Further, at a Better Beginnings Round Table meeting [organized by
the government funders] in March 1991, there was a discussion about
organizational development and the role of boards. The idea that Better Beginnings
should explore non- traditional alternatives to management and organization was
also reflected in the minutes of this meeting, which stated:

>…Better Beginnings projects are unique and may prefer to break
>away from traditional models.… (site 5)

The case that the government played a role in shaping and developing this principle is supported
by the fact that two sites (4 and 5) had nearly identical wording for principles in their first
agreements with sponsor agencies, including this principle:

>Commitment to creative alternatives to traditional methods (sites 4, 5).

Further, the introduction of another site's report suggested that:

>With the implementation of Better Beginnings, Better Futures, government officials
>requested the intensive participation from community members, and demonstrated
>their will for innovation.… By avoiding the use of traditional practices, the
>government recognized the richness and the existing potential in the chosen sites.
>(site 7)

It seems clear that Better Beginnings participants at some sites understood that this project should
explore different approaches to project organization and management.

The idea of doing something new and better resulted in choices being made in favour of
developing structures and procedures from scratch at some sites, rather than borrowing or
adopting existing ways of doing things. In a sense, there was a culture of intentionally
"reinventing the wheel", partly out of a belief that old ways of doing things were no longer

working, and, as noted above, were even part of the problem. This made for an atmosphere of tremendous excitement, commitment and idealism, particularly early in the project.

The perception that Better Beginnings is about creating new alternatives to traditional ways of project organization seems primarily to have been linked to the projects' focus on involving community residents in their organizations. Descriptions about alternatives are mostly centred on the mechanisms which the sites used to bring community residents into their organization and efforts made to support them in these new roles. This is consistent with the earlier observation that of all the principles identified in the original Better Beginnings documents, the value which most captured the imagination and commitment of project participants at most sites seems to have been community involvement and development.

4.0   ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNING STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

The organizational structures which the sites developed to govern their projects appeared to be similar. As will be seen later, however, this similarity was superficial. That is, the broad structures appeared similar, but more detailed scrutiny of each site revealed many more differences than similarities.

The heart of the organizational governing structure was the decision-making group with the responsibility to oversee the projects. These decision-making groups were intended to function roughly the way an agency board would. The decision-making group typically had a number of committees or groups reporting to it. Across six sites, groups were established with responsibilities in finance and budgets; personnel and hiring; physical space, buildings, and property; bylaws, agreements, and rules; and special events, recreation, and social events. In addition to these groups, the sites also had a number of committees (ranging from 2 to 5) focussing on specific program components, as well as a research group.

4.1   Evolving Structures

There were some similar points along the path which each site followed as their projects evolved. When the funding was announced in January 1991, most of the sites were still run by the group which had developed the proposals. As described in the earlier report on proposal development, *Communities Coming Together: Proposal Development in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project* (Pancer et al., 1993), these groups were characterized by an open, flexible membership, and in number and influence were dominated by service agency representatives.

These early decision-making groups faced two overlapping tasks in the first year or two after funding was announced. One of these was the challenge of taking the ideas from the original proposal and beginning to create and implement programs; the other task was hiring the staff:

> During this period the first after school program, noon hour programs and the first breakfast programs were developed.… More new staff were hired to run the programs as they were being developed. (site 2)

Feb 20/91 - "… this group will recommend that a Steering Committee be formed which will have the authority to hire short term staff..."
October 2/91 - Program Committee established at suggestion of [an agency] rep, "to look at the programs in the proposal to see if we wanted any changes or if they needed to be developed further". (site 4)

Program planning began in earnest in the fall of 1991. Schedule A, the term given by the government committee for the program plan and accompanying budget (Schedule B), was the primary focus of attention from 1991 to 1992. To complete this task, the board developed teams for each of the major program components identified in the original proposal. (site 5)

Early in 1992, the Project Manager was hired. Following the hiring of this person, the Coordinators of two of the program components were hired.… during this planning year of 1992 … there was the issue of refining the program model and budget (Schedules A and B). This required that the Project Manager and the Coordinators activate the program committees to solicit input on what the programs should be.… (site 6)

Adding both new staff and program committees influenced the way the decision-making groups functioned. The roles and responsibilities of the decision-making group, the staff, and the program groups came under scrutiny and forced the decision-making groups to re-think their roles. Coming to grips with the idea that their involvement was no longer as 'hands-on' pushed the decision-making groups to clarify roles which would give them continuing legitimacy within their projects:

The role of the steering committee changed slightly. Once the Project Coordinator (PC) was in place and established, the steering committee no longer had the task of hiring staff, except the Project Coordinator position. The PC also took over the role of directly liaising and negotiating with the funders. The steering committee continued to oversee and monitor the project. As program staff was hired and programs were well under way, the Resource Groups functioned as advisory groups to staff and as networking groups.… In general, as staff was hired, there was a shift in the balance of leadership from the steering committee to staff. The steering committee relied on staff to provide ideas on organizational and program issues. (site 1)

A service provider summarized: "We have a steering committee which is the decision-making body. The working group is a planner and an overseer and not an implementer". (site 3)

Oct 28/92 item in the minutes entitled: "Discussion: Role of the [decision-making group]" the minutes noted: "[The Project Coordinator] said that as new staff came on board, and will begin to do some of the work that the [decision-making group] has been doing, it is important to define the role of the [decision-making group]. Traditionally, the group that manages an organization sets the goals or policies. Policies come from values of [decision-making group] members. The [decision-making group] can prescribe the ends for the Better Beginnings project. The ends are what is good for what people at what cost. The [decision-making group] should stay out of the means. The means are practices, methods and activities that the staff are responsible for, except to say what is unacceptable". (site 4)

In the months before and after funding, the board was active in the daily operation of the project, and in particular, in decisions around specific programming issues. This was largely because there were few staff around to do this work, and the board was eager to develop and implement programs as soon as possible. Not surprisingly, this placed considerable demands on board members. Some of these demands began to decline after the project coordinator was hired. (site 5)

The board developed teams for each of the major program components identified in the original proposal. This process is addressed in more detail in the earlier *Program Model Report*. What is relevant here is how the program teams slowly changed the way the board operated. From late 1990 to mid 1991 the board had played a central, demanding, and time-consuming role. Once the specific program planning and implementation was shifted to the program teams, the board's role changed. Some board members began to feel that their role on the board was being supplanted by the program teams, and felt distanced from the key decisions. This issue was addressed at a Management Board meeting in September 1993:

A1: …there's been suggestions that the Management Board only receives information, that the teams make all the decisions or that the Leadership Team makes all the decisions and just goes to the Management Board for info.… It seems to me that the Leadership Team things are kind of rubber-stamped by the board here, so I have a question about our role as a board.

N1: I see it as giving the board a chance to ask questions about things that are being recommended or suggested, but that the work gets done before the board by teams and the Leadership Team.

N2: At the beginning we had so many items on the agenda that we needed it at the time...

S1: That's also why we had the other teams as well, because there was so much stuff coming at us, so we gave the teams authority to do things for the board.

A2: It's like a pendulum, first there's too much on the
board agenda, and now there's not enough. Maybe
we can continue to monitor this and find a balance.
S1: My perception is that the bulk of the board's work was
Schedule A, but now that implementation is going on
the teams are doing this work.

This discussion demonstrates the way in which the role of the board evolved from
the beginning of the project, when programs and procedures were being developed,
to later on, when implementation began. (site 5)

On top of the demands of sorting out the roles and responsibilities of the decision-making

group, newly hired staff, and program development groups, the sites also faced another task. This

was the challenge of developing an organizational structure which facilitated the involvement of

community residents. In all of the sites, this meant increasing the influence, numbers and/or

proportion of residents in decision-making roles:

Fourteen months into the project, service providers from local organizations
replaced [external] agency representatives on the Steering Committee. As well, an
equal number of seats for residents and service providers were designated…
Meetings were switched to an evening time in 1992 to enable working residents to
participate. The size of the Steering Committee was limited to 10 seats with 5
(reserved for residents). (site 1)

As soon as the funding proposal was approved, the initial coalition worked on
increasing community participation within the regular activities of the project
development and management. (site 2)

Initially the Steering Committee was comprised of 5 designated community
residents and 4 local service providers. The Steering Committee increased its
voting membership to 8 residents, two of which could be staff members. To
replace a member that was stepping down from the committee, the Project
Coordinator approached all the people nominated to her. She suggested that they
increase the community membership from 8 to 10. (site 3)

The original proposal had proposed "…establishing a volunteer Community Board
comprised of members of agencies involved in the project, and community
members who live in the project site area. Our plan is to have the Board ratio be
1:2 (agency : community members), likely to be approximately 18 members…."
April 17/91 - minutes of a meeting document the selection of 6 agency and 12
community members to sit as the first members of the newly formed [decision-
making group] with the first meeting being scheduled for April 24/91. (site 4)

When the first board was set up in November 1990, only three neighbourhood members, elected by the neighbourhood group, were on the board. However, in the first year, this was increased to six neighbourhood residents. It is clear from research field notes of the discussions around this increase that it was accepted that neighbourhood residents would be added to the board in a gradual process.... Once the board got to six members from the neighbourhood, in the fall of 1992, there was about 50% participation from both the neighbourhood and the agencies. (site 5)

The [decision-making group] was preceded by a steering committee, which was larger and had more service providers than parents. At a planning retreat in 1993, it was decided to restructure the steering committee to make it smaller with a majority of parents participating. (site 6)

The decision of having equal representation of parents and agencies on the [decision-making group] resulted in the reduction of the number of agencies participating in the project's administration. The original working group initially had eight active agencies. The rule specified that the [decision-making group's] composition be limited to six participating agencies. (site 7)

In some sites, developing a process for involving community residents was described as more of an early priority than developing formal prevention programs. As well, some sites identified community participation and community development processes as being one of the main purpose of their projects:

Learning and sharing that the process of expanding prevention services through community development is the primary course of change, not the service themselves. (site 2)

Developing the association with respect to the vision and principles was not easy. The initial coalition being essentially composed of professionals from local agencies who dominated the group. This intimidated the new community members who started joining the group. The need to create some criteria in order to increase community participation was perceived as important in reaching the goal of community ownership of the project. The first objective set by the (decision-making group) in 1992 was to decrease agencies' representation. (site 2)

A major issue was building an administrative structure that was in keeping with values held. This meant that it should allow accessibility in terms of staff to management, residents to staff, residents to committee structures. It also should bring together various parts of the community. As such there was an attempt to

keep people involved on committees from all the neighbourhoods within Better
Beginnings area. (site 3)

There are several different administrative units in the [project], all of which
provide a vehicle for the participation of community residents, service providers,
and the school.…
> "I think the structure and the way it's been built in our
> community…, I think the objective is to empower the community".
> (site 6)

As well, finding ways to bring community residents into the project's organizational
structure sometimes resulted in complex structures. In other cases, this goal significantly shaped
the organizational structure of the projects:

> The first general membership was organized in April 1994 and approved a model
> with two separate non-profit organizations. The two organizations of the model are
> based on the same vision and principles approved at the beginning of the project.…
> The new constitution has no provision for agency representation either in the new
> association comprised of all the members nor in the Council elected by the (new
> association). An agency could no longer be a member within the new structure and
> the Agency caucus ceased to exist a few months after BBBF's incorporation.
> (site 2)

> The partnership between the Neighbourhood Group and the Better Beginnings
> Management Board is central to the administrative structure of this project. Since
> the proposal development stage, these two groups have been mutually responsible
> for developing, monitoring and managing the Better Beginnings project. This
> shared responsibility has led to an administrative structure which is complex, fluid,
> and dynamic, and which combines both formal and informal processes. Thus there
> has evolved a parallel structure in which the board manages one part of the project,
> while the neighbourhood group manages another part. (site 5)

> [Project name] became a legally incorporated organization during the summer of
> 1994. The emergence of this corporation is part of the local community
> development process. (site 7).

All the sites had to contend with three simultaneous challenges in the first years of the
project. Arising from strongly held values for community involvement, the sites tried to devise
ways of involving community residents with the organizational structures and procedures. At the
same time, there were additional demands to develop and implement their programs, and hire all
their staff. Developing programs and hiring staff was challenging enough; doing these things while

also attempting to facilitate community participation sometimes seemed overwhelming. It is not surprising that at many sites, project participants found this to be a difficult challenge which required time, effort and patience:

> … several members had little experience sitting on a formal committee, let alone a committee accountable for such a complex project, and needed support.… Both staff and [Steering Committee] members have commented that the process of nurturing leadership within the [Steering Committee] consumed a great deal of energy and time from the Project Manager. (site 1)

> Consultant: "The capacity of [being able] to think of all the long-term and government machinations which go into making a project of this size work was new to a lot of people who were involved in it right now, and so for a lot of them 3, 4 years later they're still baffled. The risk is bringing everyone on board without acknowledging what the limitations are and without putting into place clear process to make sure that people have the skills or develop the skills over time to eventually really be able to maximize participation. … It has to be a gradual process … that could have been tied into the community development team in terms of them having part of the responsibility to develop and nurture those skills in people so that over time you're sort of building those skills. (site 1)

> In the organizational realm, the structure of the Steering Committee may be complicated to understand. There is a fairly long history of negotiations. Understanding the workings of Better Beginnings, the overall programming and the relationship history with the government takes time and may seem overwhelming. Some residents may feel they have nothing to contribute or wouldn't understand the process because a lack of familiarity with the procedure[s]. (site 3)

> … the board had to spend a great deal of time with the many details and demands of starting something new. There were no personnel policies, no bylaws, no accepted ways of operating, no procedures for board membership and selection. All of these types of issues had to be resolved, in addition to the demands of developing the program model. (site 5)

> Involving parents in project management has been an ongoing struggle. It must be recognized that it is a lot to expect of parents to become involved in project management on a long-term basis. (site 6)

> … the participation of so many contributors also had consequences on the time periods that were needed for consultation. Consequently, the decision-making process often required over-extended periods of time to be completed. It also required considerable energy to coordinate the work of all groups, considering the

number of people involved and the variety of their experience as members of decision-making groups. (site 7)

More recently, there has been one more common stop along the projects' path. As the projects grew in complexity and size, project governance became more challenging. In response, at least five sites made adjustments to simplify, formalize or clarify their organizational structures and/or procedures:

> To reduce the amount of time and work involved for [Steering Committee] members, an Executive Committee was developed in the spring of 1995. The co-chairs, project manager, and one other [Steering Committee] member sit on this committee. The purpose of the executive committee was to meet between [Steering Committee] meetings to discuss issues and come to the [Steering Committee] with recommendations. (site 1)

> This new structure has changed dramatically the way the project is managed. The project has moved from an informal model in which community involvement in the management of the project was becoming less and less clear (because of a lack of clarity about who was a member, who invited whom to meetings and who makes decisions), to a more formal structure in which an elected [decision-making group] directs and manages the affairs of the corporation and is accountable to the members. (site 2)

> …there was concern about clarifying the structures of the project so that it was more clear who belonged to the organization, how board members were selected, and what the relationship of the participating agencies was to the project.… The meeting was an opportunity to formalize a structure in which neighbourhood residents and agency representatives worked together in a formal partnership. (site 5)

> Another change affecting project management that occurred in 1993 was the restructuring of the Steering Committee. At the planning day, it was decided that the Steering Committee should be restructured into a smaller, stable group with 51% parent membership. (site 6)

> The transition from the reshaping of the project's structure, at the end of 1992, had direct impact on the decision-making process. The most visible one, and possibly the most important, is the simplification of the decision-making structure.… Since many parents used to belong to more than one working group and to participate at more than one decision-making level, some of them expressed their difficulty in maintaining their participation on such an intensive basis. Modifications aiming at reducing the numbers of possible participation levels were therefore seen as ways

to facilitate active and regular participation from everyone. Since the restructuring was also to decrease the frequency of meetings, chances were that it would equally allow participants to become more active in various organizational groups and in more than one component. The dissolvement [sic] of the Parents Representatives Committee and the regrouping of programs under three distinctive components eliminated intermediary levels of decision-making. (site 7)

4.2   Portraits of Project Governance

On the surface, there were similarities among the sites in both their organizational structures and in their paths of project development. What is more striking, however, is the differences between the sites. In order to appreciate these variations, Table 4.1 summarizes each site's organizational governance structure and characteristics. In addition, each site's governance structure, characteristics, and processes will be briefly profiled. It is important to note that these short descriptions cannot do justice to the volume of information contained in the site reports. To understand more completely what is going on at a particular site, readers are advised to consult the relevant site report. Given this limitation, the following portraits represent our attempt to capture some of the key elements and characteristics of each site's governing structure.

Site One

Structural Summary

Site one is governed by a decision-making group consisting of ten members, half community residents and half local agency representatives. The Executive Director of the sponsor agency sits on the decision-making group and the Finance Committee to link the sponsor agency to the project. Membership on the decision-making group was fairly fluid, especially in earlier years, and no set procedures were reported for selecting members. The decision-making group has a number of committees: finance, personnel, research, and several program committees. In 1995 an Executive Committee was formed consisting of three decision-making group members plus the project manager.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of Decision Making Groups at Better Beginnings, Better Futures Demonstration Sites

Characteristics	Sites						
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
Total members	10	13	15	18	22	7	12
# residents	5	11-13	10	12	12	4	6
# agencies	5	0	5	6	6	3	6
# other/at large	0	3	0	0	2	0	0
Staff on board/group	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
cultural/regional representatives	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes
Sponsor agency member	yes	n/a	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Meeting frequency	monthly	monthly	monthly	2x month	monthly	monthly	monthly
Set selection procedures	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
Supporting general membership	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no
Regular committees							
Executive	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes
Finance	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Personnel	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
program(s)	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

The terms of reference for the decision-making group state that this group had responsibility "… for setting policies and guiding the management of the organization". In practice, however, "….there has been confusion among some [steering committee] members, staff, and other participants in [BBBF] about the role of the [steering committee] at various points in the life of the project." Part of the lack of clarity seemed to be because of the project's commitment to a way of working which encouraged participation. As noted in the site report:

> The style of managing the project has been described as informal, flexible, frequently changing, and committed. A casual, informal atmosphere has been nurtured between staff and within committees. An open door policy has been supported to build an atmosphere where all opinions were considered valuable. People also have been encouraged to discuss issues both inside and outside meetings, more informally.

Over the years, the project made several attempts to clarify procedures and processes. However, some of these attempts at clarity may have been made more difficult by the project's commitment to certain principles, such as openness, inclusivity, informality, and flexibility, which seemed to push the project away from establishing clear procedures or structures. As noted in the site report:

> One factor which might account for some difficulties the [Steering Committee] experienced in the first year was its "openness". In the first year, the [Steering Committee] did not proceed with its plan of action described in the Original Proposal. Rather, it remained open to input from staff, the Parent Group, and from [Steering Committee] members who joined in 1991. The intentions were to be more inclusive and participatory in the development of the organization and programs. Negotiating the diverse and often contradictory ideas to make progress was a challenging process for the [Steering Committee].

Despite attempts at clarifying, it seemed as if participants in this site were aware that their commitment to these values was a choice which necessarily prevented them from becoming more clear and efficient:

> … some of these challenges resulted from adhering to certain principles of the organization. The project favoured being flexible, open to change, and inclusive to being extremely efficient.

More recently, the governance structure and procedures have stabilized somewhat. This may have been due in part to increased involvement from the sponsor agency in the project's management.

In particular, the executive director of the sponsor joined the project's steering committee, and the project decided to adopt the sponsor's personnel policies with minor variations. As noted in the site report, "the adjustment to more direct involvement from the [sponsor] via the executive director was a little rocky in the beginning but seen as beneficial in the following years".

Site Two

Structural Summary

Since 1994, site two has been governed by two incorporated organizations; one which governs the Better Beginnings project, and one which is able to receive charitable donations for other activities not funded by Better Beginnings. The Better Beginnings governing body consists of thirteen members who are elected by the general membership each year at an annual meeting. Ten of the thirteen members represent five groups within the project: four cultural groups, plus staff; the remaining three positions are at-large. The decision-making group holds regular monthly meetings. Membership in the organization is available to anyone who resides in the neighbourhood who subscribes to the project's vision and principles which are spelled out in the corporation's bylaws. People who are outside the neighbourhood can become members if they are sponsored by a neighbourhood resident.

This site was the only one which did not have a governing structure containing finance, hiring and program committees which the other six sites had:

> There was no permanent committee such as a personnel committee, or finance committee. All matters were discussed within the [decision-making group] and all participated. When an issue needed a specific committee to deal with it, only then, a committee would be created to work on it.

In addition, this site chose to organize its programs and representation of the governing structure around four distinct cultural groups within the neighbourhood. Each group, with the help of a paid cultural animator, developed and implemented programs to meet the needs of its particular constituents.

Site two also developed over time a unique governance structure. This site proceeded steadily towards the goal of community ownership and control. This was primarily because it made the decision to prioritize community involvement over agency participation, rather than attempt to do both:

… implementing the vision and principles had made it happen even though it created some struggles later on. The community and staff took over the [decision-making group] by voting (in April 1994) for a structure in which an agency could not belong as a member.

Eliminating agencies from any governance role cleared the way for the project to set up two independent, incorporated organizations: one to administer the project and receive the Better Beginnings funding, and the other to receive charitable donations. This also enabled the project to dissolve its ties to the sponsor agency and become autonomous.

Site Three

Structural Summary

This site is governed by a Steering Committee consisting of ten neighbourhood residents and five agency representatives. There is an informal agreement to get residents from several different neighbourhoods within the project's boundaries, as well as to allow two spots for neighbourhood residents who are also staff of the Better Beginnings project. There has been a consistent core of committed members. However, it is an ongoing struggle to have long-term attendance of residence in [a few of] these [board] positions. As noted in the site report, "… if people are interested in being on the Steering Committee they are welcomed and voting them in is just a formality". The sponsor agency did not have a spot on the Steering Committee until 1996, however, the project is represented on the sponsor's Board, and the Project Coordinator is accountable to the Executive Director of the sponsor. Reporting to the Steering Committee are several program committees, and committees for finance and research, and an adhoc hiring committee.

In this site it appears as if the organizational governance structures were vehicles to facilitate processes. These processes were focused on encouraging community participation, developing relationships among different groups (residents, staff, agencies) and on providing a range of supports to these participants. Because of the focus on process, the structure and procedures of the steering committee were initially quite flexible and open. However:

The government wanted more structure due to concerns about accountability.… With pressure from the government to have a voting structure, the Steering Committee structure changed. This was based on an implied belief that accountability can only be possible through structured groups.

Even after the steering committee shifted to a more structured format, with identified decision-making members and procedures, there was still a strong focus on relationship building between and among groups, and other processes to support and encourage participation.

Encouraging consistent membership from community residents on the steering committee has been a challenge. There has been high turnover, and the Project Coordinator has borne most of the responsibility for encouraging and maintaining attendance, including giving rides, making reminder phone calls, and occasionally providing food.

In the sponsor's organizational chart, the Better Beginnings project appears as one of several programs operated by the sponsor. The site report notes that the project is part of the sponsor agency, and:

> …is represented on the Board of the [sponsor] and the Project Coordinator is responsible to the Executive Director [of the sponsor].

As noted by the sponsor's Executive Director, this has allowed Better Beginnings to focus on its own priorities:

> "We have tried to provide additional administrative structure required to allow Better Beginnings to spend 95% of their resources on community programming, development and relations, rather than on payroll, etc."

Site Four

Structural Summary

The commitment in this site's original proposal to resident participation led to the establishment of a decision-making group with a 2:1 ratio of residents to agency representatives. In April 1991, the decision-making group was established with twelve community residents and six agency representatives. Any resident from the community, or any person working in an agency providing service to the community who had attended a minimum of two decision-making group meetings was eligible to be on the decision-making group. Turnover was fairly high, particularly in the first few years, and vacancies were filled by having nominees voted in by the decision-making group. The Executive Director of the sponsor agency sits on the decision-making group, and also is the chair of the finance committee and hiring committee. Decision-making meetings are held twice a month. In 1993 there was an attempt to shift to once a month, however members felt there was too much on the agendas. Since then, meetings have been held twice a month, but one meeting is designated a business meeting at which decisions are made, and the other

*meeting is an information meeting. In addition to the Finance and Hiring
Committees, there are committees for bylaws, space, special events, newsletter,
and a number of program committees.*

Steering Committee meetings seemed to be important events in the life of the project,
judging from the frequency of meetings, the provision of a meal at each meeting, and especially
the high number of persons who attended who were not decision-making members.

A unique characteristic in this site was the regular use of a variety of strategies for
discussions and decision-making at the steering committee level. This included small group work,
exercises, and pairing off. Another interesting feature of the Steering Committee's operation was
the high number of persons who regularly attended meetings who were not members:

> … there is consistently large attendance from others in the project. Often there are
> more visitors and guests than there are board members in attendance…. Usually
> these persons are community members and staff.

For many of those who attended, the Steering Committee meetings were an opportunity to connect
with others in the project and build relationships. The regular provision of a meal before each
meeting acted as an incentive and a facilitator for participation and interaction.

This site received strong leadership from its sponsor agency. As well, the site based its
program model on providing staff enhancements to existing agencies. This meant that the sponsor
agency and other organizations which received enhancements played a key role in the project,
particularly in relation to the staff and programs. It is not surprising then, that some project
participants, particularly staff, questioned the role and authority of the Steering Committee:

> Most staff saw the [sponsor agency] and/or the Executive Director [of the sponsor]
> as being at the top (some also saw the project coordinator either sharing the top,
> or being just below the [sponsor/Executive Director]). Very few staff suggested
> that the [Steering Committee] was at the top of the structure, despite the fact that
> the [Steering Committee] views itself as the key decision-making body of the
> project.

> The Executive Director (of the reporting agency) has been very involved in the
> governance of this project. This person has been a decision-making group member
> since 1991 and minutes show that this person's participation has been both
> consistent and frequent. This person has also been on the Hiring and Finance
> Committees. In both instances this person has played a key role in facilitating the

hiring processes. Community members have remarked many times that this person's participation has been a cornerstone of this project. There is little question that the Board relied heavily on this person in terms of continued sponsorship of the project. Additionally several members of the decision-making group have also served on the Board of the sponsoring agency, this has fostered a better understanding of the responsibilities of each as well as to provide community residents with experience. (written communication from site research team, April, 1997)

While the sponsor did have financial and legal authority, the Steering Committee was described as having responsibility for monitoring the programs. This was facilitated by managers of specific programs regularly attending and reporting to Steering Committee meetings. The sponsor's Executive Director sat on the steering committee, and was also chair of the Hiring and Finance Committees. This allowed the sponsor agency's representatives to monitor the areas for which they held accountability. In other areas, particularly program development, the sponsor was not seen as playing as central a role. As the executive director noted:

> "It's kind of a hands off role. You give people the autonomy and they develop a culture of their own, give the broad guidelines and support when people ask for it and then stay out of it".

Because of the model of staff enhancements used in this site, the Steering Committee has not had to devote as much of its time to personnel and financial issues. These were determined by the participating agencies, particularly the sponsor. Without these responsibilities, the Steering Committee was able to concentrate on program development and monitoring, and perhaps even more significantly, on creating a space and opportunity for community participation and relationship building.

Site Five

Structural Summary

Since 1994, this project has been governed as an incorporated organization with a board made up of twelve community residents, six agency representatives, and two at-large members. Board members are elected by a general membership at an annual general meeting in the fall. Board members from the neighbourhood are approved by a separate Neighbourhood Association; neighbourhood residents who are staff persons of the organization are also eligible for Board membership subject

to the Neighbourhood Association's approval. Board meetings are held once per month. Administration is facilitated by an Executive consisting of two neighbourhood and two agency members, as well as the Project Coordinator. The sponsor agency has a permanent seat on the Board, and since 1990 this seat has been filled by the Executive Director of the sponsor agency. Reporting to the board are committees with responsibility for finance, personnel, research, as well as a variety of program committees. Despite being incorporated, the project has maintained its reliance on the sponsoring agency for legal, financial and administrative auspices and support.

This site's governance is characterized by its attempt to balance competing priorities. In particular, this site has attempted, in both principle and practice, to facilitate meaningful community participation and to build partnerships with other organizations. The organizational structure, with two decision-making groups, reflects this balance:

> The Board has the official responsibility for managing the project, particularly for being accountable for the Better Beginnings funding. Reporting to the board are a number of committees or teams as they are called. This includes program teams (Healthy Lifestyles, Child and Family Focus, Youth) and administrative teams (Leadership Team, Finance Team, Personnel/Human Resources Teams).… Participation on the board and its teams is roughly a 50/50 mix of neighbourhood residents and agency partners.…

> The Neighbourhood Group is responsible for a number of neighbourhood programs. It also has a role in selecting and approving neighbourhood residents for leadership positions within the project. Reporting to the neighbourhood group are program committees (Family Care, Recreation, Newsletter) and administrative committees (Leadership Group, Fundraising). The membership of the neighbourhood group and its committees is made up of 100% neighbourhood residents, with occasional participation by staff persons.

Juggling these two priorities has, at times, created difficulties and uncertainties. For example:

> … the link between the board and the neighbourhood group was flexible, informal, and at times, therefore, uncertain. [There has been a] lack of clarity about the role of the neighbourhood group within the organizational structure of the project.

In addition, the project has been deliberate in clarifying which agencies, under which conditions, should participate in the project:

> There was a general concern … about how to prevent the "wrong" person from an agency to be on the board, and the need to maintain some kind of control over the

selection process, while at the same time ensuring that certain agencies are represented.

After several years, the project was able to develop a structure which seemed to satisfy these priorities, as well as allowing the project to meet another objective, that of moving towards independence. The project became incorporated in 1993, and in 1994 held its first board elections. The procedures established at this meeting, while complex, allowed the project to meet several of its objectives:

> [The annual general meeting in 1994] was a key moment in the history of this project, particularly in relation to its evolution towards independence. It marked the evolution from a commitment to independence and incorporation from the earliest days to the realization of that independence as a fully incorporated body.…

> Another reason why this meeting was a momentous event in the history of the project was because it served as a public recognition and a formal acknowledgement of the level and breadth of neighbourhood resident participation in this project. The meeting was an opportunity to formalize a structure in which neighbourhood residents and agency representatives worked together in a formal partnership.

Even though this site became incorporated as an independent organization, its commitment to partnership led it to choose to retain its formal relationship with the sponsor agency, which continued in its role of receiving the funding and providing personnel, financial, human resources and other administrative services. The move towards independence, therefore, was tempered with the reality of the challenge of going it alone:

> … the project did not have all the skills and capabilities to take on all of these responsibilities, and did not really have the resources to develop them, so the purchase of service arrangement was the most efficient way to manage the finances.

Site Six

Structural Summary

This site is governed by a seven-member Steering Committee consisting of four neighbourhood residents, the local school principal, and two agency representatives. The Steering Committee meets once per month to oversee the project and to provide consultation to the Project Manager. Under the Steering Committee are the following committees: letter of agreement [with the sponsor

*agency], personnel, research, as well as several program committees. The site
report notes that the committees have considerable autonomy; for example,
"…each of the program sub-committees make decisions about how the budget for
that program area will be spent". To guide the Steering Committee, annual
planning all-day meetings, plus bi-monthly meetings of the general project
membership, are held. There do not appear to be set procedures for membership
selection to the Steering Committee.*

What perhaps most represents this site's experience with organizational governance are the challenges it faced in attempting to fit a comparatively small, informal and flexible project under the umbrella of a large public bureaucracy:

> The project was bound by the regulations of the [sponsor]…, which did not
> necessarily suit the needs of the project.

This project faced numerous and lengthy challenges attempting to develop ways of working which fit with project principles and at the same time adhering to the sponsor agency's procedures.

The decision-making group underwent a significant change after two years. Initially, there was a large Steering Committee which was dominated by service providers. However, this group did not allow sufficient opportunities for residents to have a role, and also was felt to be too cumbersome. As a result, "… it was decided that the Steering Committee should be restructured into a smaller, stable group with 51% parent participation." This smaller group included four neighbourhood parents, the principal from the local school, and two other agency representatives. This group, "… is responsible for overseeing the project as a whole and for giving direction to the Project Manager."

This small decision-making group focussed on major decisions or changes, and allowed committees considerable autonomy to make their own decisions. This resulted in a fairly efficient process for making decisions, and, as noted in the report, "… is consistent with the idea that the project does not have a lot of bureaucratic levels."

Two additional features were important to the governance structure and processes. One was the consistent use of annual planning days:

> Since 1992, the project has hosted an annual planning day. The planning days have
> been held off the project site, and they provide an opportunity for all stakeholders
> to look at what has been accomplished in the previous year and to develop a

strategic plan for the upcoming year. These retreats typically involve the staff coordinators reviewing their respective program objectives and activities and reporting on related work and future directions. As well, wider project issues are discussed and team-building exercises are conducted. Ideas generated at the planning days are followed up on by the various sub-committees. Finally, the planning days have been used to examine and to modify the organizational structure of the project.

The other was regular meetings of the larger membership. Originally intended as a forum for community input, these meetings have evolved into festive, celebratory events. Although this was not the original intent, these meetings have been valuable as a way of building relationships in the project, both between community residents, particularly from different cultural backgrounds, and between community residents and agency representatives.

Site Seven

Structural Summary

The decision-making group for this project is made up of six neighbourhood and six agency members. The group meets once a month to govern the project and to monitor activities from its various committees, including personnel and a number of program committees. The sponsor agency holds one of the agency seats on the decision-making group; two other agency seats are reserved for school boards, while the final three agency seats appear to chosen by the agencies based on the perceived relevance of their services to Better Beginnings. There is also an Executive Committee consisting of neighbourhood members in the President and Vice-President roles, and the sponsor agency in the Treasurer role. There do not appear to be any prescribed procedures for selection of neighbourhood members, although there are attempts to get representation from various school communities served by the project. In 1994, the project established an independent incorporated organization with structures and membership which mirror the current governance structures, with a view to taking over all responsibilities for the prevention project.

This project was described as being managed jointly by both the decision-making group and the sponsor agency. The sponsor agency had legal, financial and personnel responsibilities, while the project's decision-making group was able to develop its own hiring policies and to develop and monitor the programs. This site went through a substantial change in its organizational structure shortly after the funding was awarded in 1991.

During the proposal development and initial stages of the project, there was a Parent's Committee which was separate from the decision-making group. This committee was seen as a way of facilitating resident input and participation. However, the processes to include this Committee became complex and time consuming, and the Parent's Committee was eventually phased out. Instead, the new decision-making group had an equal number of residents and agency representatives. In addition, residents also had opportunity to participate through various working groups. This change made organizational procedures more clear and simple, but still allowed residents to have a role in project governance.

The simpler structure relied somewhat on the role of the Project Coordinator. For example, the organizational chart depicts the coordinator as the conduit through which the working groups report to the decision-making group. As well, the report noted:

> …the Coordinator's duties have always occupied a central position. Indeed, the Coordinator must continually maintain a detailed view of the whole organization of the project, either at the administrative level, at the personnel management level, or regarding the programs.

Another feature highlighted in the report was the challenge of involving persons from the community and from agencies who have varying expertise and experience in organization and management:

> … the project depends on the participation of various people (parents, agency representatives and other community members), [and] it had to deal with a large variety of competencies, knowledge and expertise, which generated diversified view points.

This too placed a burden on the project coordinator:

> [the Project Coordinator] works in interaction with all the categories of participants, often acting as an intermediary between the [decision-making group], the sponsoring agency, the remunerated personnel and the project's volunteers, the working groups and the families.

In 1994, this project went through another change in governance. The project set up an independent legally incorporated body. The intent was to shift the financial responsibility from the sponsor to this new organization. However, the government funders did not immediately agree

to this. The project still intends to do this, but in the meantime, the incorporated body remains intact, although with limited responsibility.

4.3   Competing Dynamics in Project Governance

At least two dynamics have become apparent in examining the projects' governance structures and processes. First, the sites have struggled with trying to accommodate two purposes which pulled them in different directions. On the one hand, they were attempting to develop structures which would efficiently and effectively enable them to manage their projects. At the same time, the governance structures which they developed were also vehicles to facilitate the participation of community residents. Managing these dual aims was, without exception, difficult.

A variety of creative strategies were employed to bring community residents into the organizational structures. One tactic reported by at least five sites was using food and social events as prominent and regular features of meetings:

> Community events are also used to promote resident participation. Celebrating with the community helps create networks, bring people closer and also make the staff more aware of resident needs by maintaining close contact with them. Most events are organized around food, music and children's activities to increase community participation. (site 2)

> In an effort to make the Steering Committee meetings more friendly and less intimidating, one of the meetings was a potluck supper. Bringing food was not mandatory because it was felt that some would not attend if they could not bring food. The event was successful and it was decided to have potluck several times a year. The process was more laid back. (site 3)

> … meetings have been held twice a month (with the exception of a brief time in '93 when it met once a month), from 5 to 7 p.m.; a meal is included; the meetings appear to be important social events for the project.… An example of this is the following description from researcher field notes from the January 20/93 meeting:
>> "There was a very high attendance at the meeting tonight. The parent visitors and child care assistants were at this meeting to be introduced to the (decision-making group) and the community members who attend. At 5:20 there were 40 people in attendance.… The meal was very good, chicken, rice, salad, and bread. People were asking each other how their holidays were,

seeing how this was the first meeting since the Christmas dinner".
(site 4)

The unique feature of the meeting time, though, is the fact that the time was made more accessible to both agency and neighbourhood partners by providing supper from 4:30 to 5:00 p.m. The supper has been prepared by neighbourhood residents who were hired and paid by the project.

A number of times over the years the practice has been questioned, particularly by newer members, with the suggestion that the monthly dinner is extravagant, unnecessary, wasteful, or unfair. However, each time the board has considered this feedback it has continued to affirm the practice. As one board member commented during one of these discussions,

> "… what the board members receive [ie the meals] is a drop in the
> bucket compared to what they provide in time and energy, so it's
> money well spent.

Not only has the board continued to affirm the practice, but it has expanded it. In the past year, the dinner is now also provided for the children of board members, who are being cared for by the child care program during the meeting. In this way, the dinner is seen as a way of reducing the barriers to attending the meeting from different groups. As well, the half hour of dinner time at the beginning of the meeting provides opportunities for social interaction, which have become so important in relationship building and in facilitating partnerships in this project.
(site 5)

… the [membership meetings] have been organized as community focus with specific themes (e.g., the child in the community, Black History month, etc.). These events have brought in large numbers of people and have been festive in nature, often involving food and ethnocultural exchanges. Early in 1995, The [decision-making group] reviewed the format of the [membership] meetings. One person posed the following questions:

> "Do we leave it (the format of cultural celebrations) as is or does
> the format need to take on a different form? Are we achieving all
> that we want to?"

One community resident argued for keeping the focus of the meetings on cultural celebrations,

> "I like the way it is set up … grown used to the celebration part …
> keeps the community together and keeps them informed. I like it the
> way it is, not sure if we can get more - getting people to be more
> involved - new people … not sure if we need to change the format.
> Before, we intimidated people by asking more from people, to get
> more involved. I think at this point, we ran into problems that this
> wasn't such a nurturing format". (site 6)

Another related idea described in four site reports was the deliberate use of informal, casual or flexible ways of operating:

> … maintaining a casual tone was argued to be less intimidating for members, especially residents. Some people mentioned that following strict procedures like Robert's Rules of Order were too restrictive and would intimidate some people from participating. Maintaining some flexibility in terms of procedures was seen as important in adapting to new members with perhaps different needs. (site 1)

> … making [meetings] more welcoming so that people want to come back …, emphasis on informality. (site 3)

> A decision was made to intentionally keep the meetings open so that any project participant would be welcome to participate and attend any meeting. The only exception to this was if there was an agenda item about a personnel matter, in which only board members would be allowed to participate. Flexibility was seen as being an important element in the way the agendas were developed. (site 5)

> … the adaptability of the [decision-making group's] functioning methods were attained by holding the meetings in a less formal atmosphere and by insisting on the comprehension of the procedures used and of the issues discussed at the meetings. Such an approach permits the persons with less experience regarding organization, coordination and administration, to learn about the project's functioning methods and to acquire the necessary skills for their full participation. (site 7)

As previously reported in the *Resident Participation Report* (1993), several sites provided residents with concrete supports, particularly child care and transportation, to remove barriers and encourage them to participate:

> …making it easier for people to physically get to the meeting by … finding transportation, supplying babysitting money… (site 3)

> …the provision of childcare and transportation assistance to enable people to attend meetings has been consistent and was prioritized by the project as a way to encourage and facilitate greater community involvement. (site 4)

> …children of board members are cared for by the child care program during the meeting. (site 5)

> Providing childcare so that parents can attend meetings, making the meetings informal…, and having a Fun and Recognition committee … are all ways that have been used to encourage parent involvement. (site 6)

In attempting to balance meaningful resident participation and develop efficient organizational structures, what seems clear from these examples is that some of the sites placed more of their resources and creativity into the former:

> This push and pull resulted in the [Steering Committee] putting more emphasis on these tasks (e.g., hiring a community worker rather than a Project Coordinator) than on developing policies and procedures. While organizational issues continued to be discussed, it was always done in relation to how residents would be involved. (site 1)

As well, attempting to develop efficient organizations while encouraging resident participation appeared to be a difficult mix:

> A commitment to community participation over the duration of the project requires making trade-offs in other areas of program operation (ie meeting timelines and overall efficiency). (site 1)

> According to field notes from that meeting, the issue was how formal, traditional structures limit the ability of a project such as this where people regularly perform multiple and overlapping roles:
>
>> A1 suggested that this conflict of interest issue be discussed at the neighbourhood group as well.… A2 said it's ironic because one goal of the project is to have neighbourhood ownership, but unfortunately corporate law doesn't allow this. S1 added that this is an example of how informal groups, like communities, are hindered by formal restrictions. N2 said that traditional structures don't fit what we want to do, and S1 added that there is no model for blending the formal and the informal. (site 5)

The other dynamic was an ambivalence between whether these projects are to be governed as independent organizations, or whether they should be under the auspices of existing organizations. All of the sites, to varying degrees, operated as though they were independent organizations. Through their decision-making groups, or sub-committees, most projects had some responsibility for many of the activities which a board would normally have such as finances and budgets, developing policies, and hiring:

The [Steering Committee's] stated functions at the time were developing the organizational structure. This included developing personnel and other policies and programs, hiring initial staff, negotiating and liaising with the funders, and monitoring the budget. (site 1)

Within the new structure, the project manages its own finances. Now the [decision-making group] has to approve the budget prepared by the Project Co-coordinator. The monthly all-day staff meetings are used to present and discuss the budget with the staff even though they have no final decision on how much will be spent for each program. When there is a surplus, the decision on how it will be spent belongs now to the [decision- making group] who looks at the needs of the different programs. (site 2)

This committee has had a fairly consistent membership of two community people, the Project Coordinator and the Financial Officer from (the sponsor agency). This committee has usually met at the beginning of each year to create the budget and go over the auditors' report. It also meets before the other quarters to review the budget. (site 3)

Finance committee: to meet all the financial obligations of Better Beginnings and to make sure that the project stays within its budget. (site 4)

Roles and responsibilities [of the] Finance team: To monitor project finances and provide financial and property information and recommendations to the [project's decision-making group]. (site 5)

The [decision-making group] represents the project's administrative unit. In this position, the [decision-making group]… determine the local guidelines and adopts the formal resolutions for all questions related to the budget, financial statements, personnel, employee's salaries and benefits, the project's organization and structure, etc. (site 7)

At the same time, sponsor agencies in all but one site (2), continued to exercise the ultimate financial and legal accountability, and staff persons from the sponsor agencies played a significant role in these areas for most of the Better Beginnings projects. This had an impact on the first dynamic, because, with the sponsor agencies doing much of the work and holding the final responsibility, particularly in legal, financial and personnel matters, the Better Beginnings projects in theory were freed up to concentrate on involving community residents and programming.

Part of this ambivalence came from a lack of clarity about what was expected in the original mandate. For example, the sites were expected to facilitate integration among existing

service organizations, including, as stated in the *Request For Proposals* (March 1990, p. 10), the expectation that sites, "… must eliminate inter-ministerial, inter-agency segmentation barriers" (p. 10). As well, the sites were encouraged to explore non-traditional methods of operating, which, presumably, would not have been compatible with traditional ways of working in existing organizations. These messages were interpreted at some sites as meaning that the sites needed to have a certain level of autonomy and independence. Added to this, the knowledge that the Better Beginnings initiative was a short-term demonstration project led a number of sites to begin searching for options for long-term survival, which often included the notion of organizational independence. At the same time, the emphasis on service integration was seen to mean that the structural relationships which the projects' developed with sponsor agencies was an indispensable strategy for realizing integration[1].

In this context, the sites were left to balance two objectives which pulled them in different directions. On the one hand, they were to develop project organizations which would have sufficient autonomy to create new ways of working, to influence external systems to become more integrated, and which would be prepared for the inevitable end of their short-term funding. On the other hand, they were to further the objective of integration by maintaining their linkages with a sponsor agency. In addition, they were to find ways to facilitate meaningful participation and involvement of community residents. The sites struggled in various ways to achieve all of these differing expectations. The involvement of community residents appeared to have received the greatest investment of attention and resources at most sites.

4.4 Resident Involvement in Project Governance

Given the commitment and efforts to involve residents, it is not surprising that in all of the sites residents occupied at least fifty percent of the positions on the projects' decision-making groups. This marks an increase from what was reported earlier in the *Resident Involvement Report* (1993), where most sites had fewer than 50% resident participation on their decision-making

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[1]More details and discussion of the issues around organizational independence are in section 11 - Host Organization and Project Independence.

groups. Two sites (1 and 7) reported having exactly 50%; two sites (5 and 6) had 60%; two sites (3 and 4) had two-thirds; while site 2 had between 85% and 100% residents.

Further, residents took on greater roles in the projects' governing bodies than in earlier years. For example, all seven sites reported that residents played roles as chairpersons, or co-chairs with agency representatives, on the decision-making groups:

> The [Steering Committee] made several changes in the last couple of years which enabled residents to take a more active role. The chair role was assumed by two residents in January 1995. (site 1)

> The reduction of agency representatives made the residents more active within the [decision-making group]. Residents started to be more important in numbers and started chairing meetings. (site 2)

> The format of the chair of the Steering Committee has also changed over time. Initially there was one chair who was a service provider. Currently there are two co-chairs, both from the community. In July 1994 the co-chairs decided to alternate chairing meetings rather than performing jointly. While there has been changes in chair membership, this method remains. Presently the co-chairs are a service provider representative and a community representative. (site 3)

> … chairing of meetings was assumed at the beginning by an agency representative who also was a community resident for many years. There was never any rule or formal decision about chairpersonship, and no one ever questioned this person's suitability as chair. This person served consistently as the chair for most of the time from early 1991 to mid 1995. The only exceptions were when this person was absent and others (usually agency reps, but sometimes community) filled in. Community members began to become more involved as co-chairs and this became more formalized in 1993 when the (decision-making group) switched to a format of alternating between business and information meetings (the first information meeting was June 2, 1993). Then the chairperson role alternated between community and agency members fairly consistently through until mid 1995. (site 4)

> The "co-chair" structure, in which an agency and a neighbourhood member of the board share responsibility and signing authority for the project, formalized this partnership. (site 5)

> The composition of the [decision-making group] includes four [of 7] parents, one of whom is the Chair. (site 6)

> … the [decision-making group] relies on three specific positions: the president, the vice-president and the treasurer of the project. The people in these positions

form the Executive Committee, to which the project's Administrative Personnel refer to when necessary. During the first months which followed the creation of the [decision-making group] the presidency was taken by one of the agencies representatives who had participated in the preparation and submission of the original proposal, together with a parent as vice-president. In December 1991, elections were held following the leave of the initial president. Since that time, parents have always assumed the role of project president and vice-president. (site 7)

It seems clear that the projects have successfully managed to bring residents into project governance roles. In addition, several site reports gave examples where participation of residents had obvious influences on important governing decisions:

> The community and staff took over the [decision-making group] by voting (in April 1994) for a structure in which an agency could not belong as a member .… This change had a major impact by increasing the role of the community and by giving to the neighbourhood the possibility to elect their own representatives and to hold them accountable. (site 2)

> [Involving community residents] appears to have had a significant impact on the decisions, for example the decision to not use [an agency's] model for home visiting was largely due to community participants' reservations about [this agency]. (site 4)

> … [the decision-making group] decided to table the decision until the next meeting. Each of the members was asked to discuss the issue with their networks and be prepared to make a decision at the next meeting. Agency representatives consulted with their agencies, and community members engaged in discussions with their neighbours and peers. (site 5)

> Residents have also had an influence over important decisions made in the management of the project. At one meeting of the [decision-making group], the issue of replacing one of the Family Visitors who had resigned was discussed. There have been three Family Visitors, two of whom represent the dominant ethnocultural groups in the community. When [one] worker resigned, the Project Manager proposed that the hours for the other two workers be increased as a way of filling that position. However, a community resident on the Steering Committee argued against that decision, stating reasons why it was important to find someone from [that cultural] community to provide outreach to [those] families. Her argument persuaded the staff and [decision-making group] members to search for a [cultural group] Family Visitor. (site 6)

Despite the progress the projects made in involving community residents in their organizational governing structures, many sites faced ongoing challenges in recruiting and maintaining resident participation:

> … supporting residents to play an active and meaningful role on the [decision-making group] has been an ongoing challenge. (site 1)

> Better Beginnings is always on the lookout for potential new members.… People coming on and coming off [the decision-making group] is fairly fluid.… While there seems to be changes [the Project Coordinator] also notes that she has half a board that is consistent and solid. She feels we have "done incredibly well". It is however [consistently difficult] to be continuing to find members. (site 3)

> Constant challenge over the five years is the lack of attendance for quorum. Related to this is the constant resignations and elections of vacant positions. It seems as if there are rarely times when there are not vacant positions on the board which require filling. (site 4)

> … involving parents in project management has been an ongoing struggle. It must be recognized that it is a lot to expect of parents to become involved in project management on a long-term basis. There is a small core group of parents who have shown a very high level of commitment since the early days of the project … recruiting new residents into the project is an ongoing job of the project staff and volunteers.
>
> > "I guess the challenge is … that we're not good at growing leaders, and I guess the question becomes "How do you do that?" We've got some people that are natural spokespeople and leaders and they've taken on that role, but we haven't figured out a sort of a system, and system might even be the wrong word, but a way of sort of growing leaders." (site 6)

> The participating parents as members of the [decision-making group] rotated over the years. Six seats are reserved for the parents. Three of these are occupied by parents who were pioneers in the project and who have been participating in [the decision-making group] since its creation. However, the other three seats have seen a rotation of eight parents between 1991 and 1995. (site 7)

Consistent with what was reported in the *Resident Participation Report* (1993), residents who were involved in the projects typically reported positive benefits from their participation:

> "I have gained valuable experience working on the [Steering Committee] over the years and hope when I'm ready to work full-time, I can use these experiences and

the staff will provide a positive reference.... The best thing about working on the [Steering Committee] ... gave me confidence, allowed me to make a difference in my community." (site 1)

"As a consistent resident on the [Steering Committee], there was some influence there making sure there was a resident voice ... trying to encourage other residents [from Parent Group to get involved] ... [by doing initial needs assessment for [Steering Committee], I opened a lot of people's eyes to what residents can do... some members trusted [me to do the job] more than others ... those professionals learned something.... Would frustrate me all the professional bashing .... I've learned respect for all the other agencies." (site 1)

[A community member who was resigning] thanked the Better Beginnings project for being there when she needed them. She said they had been a support to her and boosted her self-esteem. [Another community member] commented that […] had changed since she first became a [decision-making group] member. She that at first […] was really quiet and now she was quite vocal at the meetings in expressing her ideas. (site 4)

"I think the community really feels they have a voice here. That's one of the main things is the community voice that drives the project. I think they are heard." (site 4)

"I am asked for my opinion and feedback … I found the service providers went out of their way to make you feel comfortable.... They didn't treat you as if they're above you." (site 6)

[According to] the comment of one pioneer parent who is involved in various organizational and administrative activities … her participation and commitment to Better Beginnings "… are good, because they make me feel useful in the community." (site 7)

As well, the projects have made progress in reducing the barriers to participation (which were also described in the *Resident Participation Report*, 1993). Residents have grown more comfortable participating in these projects and report feeling less intimidated working together with agency representatives and project staff:

"At first it was the (staff) show. We do have a parent chair, but it's really been a challenge … getting better … luckily nobody is intimidated by our agency person." (site 6)

"[Residents] had to get used to us and to agency people. They've been around for three years now … and we all do things together now. We make parents feel that they're wanted. We've become close, become friends. We've cried. They know they have someone to talk to." (site 6).

"What I understand from what is being said, it's like there are stages to encounter and the first step is to break the barriers that seem threatening … The second step is to bring the people to find confidence in themselves … As you were saying earlier, sometimes people need to be pushed in the beginning, so they may become confident in themselves, but once this has started, they realize all of which they are capable of doing and they identify themselves to the project … And when all of this is done, like Person C said, it is time to start working with everyone, to supply the material, so the people may continue on their own … And finally, if I refer to what you are saying, the biggest challenge of a community project like this one, is to go through all of these steps successfully." (site 7)

Nevertheless, barriers to meaningful resident participation remain. Despite the gains made, comments from at least five site reports suggest that the challenges of resident participation in an empowering fashion still exist:

[Do you feel you have a say?] "I don't feel like it. I'm not well educated yet I'm trying to learn about this stuff. Sometimes I don't feel I have much to say because the higher people [have more experience]. I like working with big officials [other Steering Committee members]. I felt nervous sometimes. I always say they're higher than me because of the job they do but they seem very nice and friendly." (site 1)

"I don't have the experience or the whole mind to see the whole picture [in reference to incorporation] .… This is a really major decision … laying in hands of mine … I'm a sheep led by a shepherd." (site 1)

… the structure of the Steering Committee may be complicated to understand. There is a fairly long history of negotiations. Understanding the workings of Better Beginnings, the overall programming and the relationship history with the government takes time and may seem overwhelming. Some residents may feel they have nothing to contribute or wouldn't understand the process because a lack of familiarity with the procedure. (site 3)

"From talking with community people on the [decision-making group] sometimes they don't understand what is being said at all, the level of discussion, the words that are being used and it is very difficult to put your hand up and say I don't understand .… Sometimes I wonder if there is enough sensitivity to really explaining things .… Like I will be sitting beside a member and they will whisper

to me "I don't have a clue what they are talking about" and I whisper back "neither do I"." (site 4)

"(Residents can relate) more to the day-to-day stuff than policy stuff ... overwhelming for them. They don't really know about the project. It's just all new to them. It's just a process of learning a lot of stuff before they can really talk about ... even language." (site 6)

"... people don't always know how to do ... they need tools ..." (site 7)

While these experiences represent real challenges, overall the Better Beginnings projects have made substantial progress towards meaningfully involving community residents on their organizational governing structures.

4.5   Service Agency Participation in Project Governance

Building Bridges: Service Provider Involvement in Better Beginnings, Better Futures (Cameron, Vanderwoerd & Peters, 1995) described the ways in which service providers were involved in the local sites. Other than the role and relationship with the sponsor agency, service provider involvement in the demonstration projects was not directly examined in this report. Nevertheless, a number of sites reported that there were specific issues regarding the involvement of agencies in their organizational governing structures. At four sites, it was reported that there were concerns about the extent to which the projects could control or limit which agencies would be represented in their projects:

> The issue of criteria for membership remained unresolved …. In a [planning] session, reevaluating membership came up as an issue. In particular, agency representation and recruiting more resident members. (site 1)

> There was a general concern … about how to prevent the "wrong" person from an agency to be on the board, and the need to maintain some kind of control over the selection process, while at the same time ensuring that certain agencies are represented. (site 5)

> "… having the right agency people involved on the committees. At first, I had people who had their own agency agendas and you sort of have to convince them that they were there for the project's agenda/community agenda and not their own." (site 6)

> The original working group initially had eight active agencies. The rule specified that the Coordinating Committee's composition be limited to six participating agencies .... According to the information obtained by the researchers, the selection process was based upon three major aspects linked to child development: health, education, community and social services. Each selected agency had to have a field of expertise in either one of these facets. (site 7)

> [The Project Coordinator] said she would show the pro and con list to the Children's Aid Society. [The Chairperson] said that the Children's Aid Society would be invited to speak at the next Business Meeting before the vote [if the Children's Aid Society should be on the project's decision-making group]. (site 4)

Compared to the attention and efforts directed towards involving community residents, overall there were few concerns about agency involvement in governance, other than what is described in the subsequent section regarding the relationship with the sponsor agency.

5.0   DECISION MAKING ON PROJECT BOARD AND COMMITTEES

Three of the seven sites (1, 2, 5) reported that decision making was by consensus in principle and in practice. Two sites (4, 7) reported that decision making was by more traditional voting methods, while in site 6 there was a commitment to consensus, but from the descriptions of decision-making methods, it appeared that decision making was a mix of consensus and majority voting. At site 3, decision making was originally by consensus but a voting structure was established in 1992. Reportedly, consensus can be reached on many issues, while important issues are voted upon. This marks a slight change from the *Communities Coming Together: Proposal Development in Better Beginnings, Better Futures* report where it was stated that all of the sites indicated they were using an informal consensus method for decision making.

These four sites are described as having had a strong commitment to consensus from the beginning.   This is supported by the existence of formal procedures to implement consensus and/or a clearly articulated confirmation of this style of decision-making:

> … during a staff retreat in April 1994 … staff spent some time spelling out the project's philosophy around decision-making. This process reaffirmed the project's commitment to using consensus as the main method of decision-making. (site 1)

> Since its beginning, the project was committed to using consensus as the decision-making process …. The consensus process is now used at all meetings, from the staff management team to the [Steering Committee]. It is included and defined in the bylaws .… The new bylaws reaffirmed the consensus decision and brought more precision on how it will be applied. (site 2)

> In all aspects of Better Beginnings there is an attempt to be or to appear to be consensus oriented in decision-making …. Early in the formation of the administrative structure … it was formally decided to have open, rather informal meetings with decision-making based on consensus. (site 3)

> The importance of a consensus style of decision-making was demonstrated by the fact that the very first meeting of this new [Steering Committee] on November 26, 1990, included a lengthy presentation and workshop on a consensus model .… It was agreed to proceed with implementing this consensus model. (site 5)

In these four sites, this emphasis on consensus is closely linked with project participants' priority for the inclusion of community residents in the decision-making process:

[Better Beginnings] advocates another principle of decision-making which is being inclusive. Inclusive means giving a chance to all members who are affected by an issue to have a say in the decision. Community resident participation in decision-making around management and program decisions is especially promoted .... Inclusion of all members in the project in decision-making, community consultation, and using consensus have been ideals the organization has been working towards. (site 1)

"This is the first group I have been in that continually uses consensus. Because of this, I find it difficult now when it is not used in other places. I have a voice and would like people to hear it." (site 2)

... all members have a chance for their input. There is a conscious effort to ask people for their opinions and to establish a safe, relaxed atmosphere so that people will feel safe to speak .... when the decision makers were for the most part service providers there was a concern that there was not enough input from the community. It was formally decided to have open, rather informal meetings with decision-making based on consensus. This was seen as a means of making the meetings more people friendly and encouraging participation by community members. (site 3)

Decision-making processes are one of the most visible ways in which the project has put into practice some of its most important principles. The principle of allowing every project participant an equal opportunity to have a voice, be included, and have a meaningful role in the project is put into action partly by the procedures which have evolved around how decisions are made. The principle that conflicts are opportunities for creative solutions, rather than barriers to progress, is also made a reality by the way in which decisions are made about difficult and challenging problems. The principle of partnership is realized partly by the decision-making process which allows all partners a role and an opportunity to participate. (site 5)

The clearest reason for consensus was that it allowed those with less power and status the opportunity to be heard and respected, and thus to be involved in a meaningful way, as opposed to being "tokens". The history of the process was cited by some [participants] who suggested that without consensus, the neighbourhood voice would have had a much more difficult time being heard, and perhaps would have eventually become irrelevant. Originally there were three neighbourhood members on the board when it was first established in November 1990, and the consensus model was seen as the only way to ensure that the

neighbourhood would not be "outvoted" and thus overpowered by agency and non-neighbourhood participants. (site 5)

While these four sites appeared to have the strongest practice of a consensus decision-making method, the principle of inclusion and allowing community residents a voice was not limited to these sites. In site 4, for example, the decision-making procedures reflected an intentional effort to formalize the important role of community residents. At this site, decision-making is by majority vote, but the ratio of community to agency representatives is 2:1, and quorum is defined in such a way to preserve this 2:1 ratio. In site 6, the main decision-making group was restructured partly because the decision-making procedures were not allowing sufficient opportunities for community residents to participate:

> … a smaller group was necessary to govern the project, and … this was required in order to encourage more active parent participation in project development and management …. At a Planning Day in March 1993, the representatives recognized that the [Steering Committee], as it was then structured, made making decisions difficult and did not encourage 51% parent participation. (site 6)

Similarly, at site 7 the decision-making procedures incorporate practices which allow different groups to be consulted and included in decision-making:

> The decision-making model now in place at Better Beginnings respects the initial local philosophy …. It still remains focused on the participation from all organizational levels. The representatives still promote the use of all the consultation strategies which can facilitate the expression of the participating groups' view points …. The President chairs the agenda's process while ensuring everyone's right to express themselves. (site 7)

Despite the fact that four sites reported a commitment to consensus in principle and practice, three of them reported that there were difficulties, ambiguities, or a lack of certainty about how consensus was actually to be done:

> "Last year the [Steering Committee] … passed … that all decisions were going to be made with consensus … we have mixed things up … sometimes we vote, sometimes … we as staff we want to reaffirm [using consensus]." (site 1)

> Discussion of how to use consensus has crept up quite often throughout the life of the project. There has been confusion about how, when and where to use consensus. At both [Steering Committee] and staff meetings, for example,

consensus has meant different things. Sometimes it has meant the chairperson going around the room and getting a response from each person on a decision. It has also meant approving a decision if no expressions of disapproval are heard. Sometimes it has meant glancing around the room to look for nods and expressions of disapproval. On the odd occasion, hands being raised and majority voting was used. (site 1)

[Using consensus] was not always easy and the process was sometimes lengthy. Not everybody understood how to use consensus .... [Better Beginnings], at its beginning, had to clarify how and when to use consensus. (site 2)

[There was] a sense among some project participants that the consensus decision-making procedures were potentially problematic and needed to be reviewed .... [A] growing number of project participants had joined after the board's inaugural meeting in November 1990. These participants had no formal opportunity to learn about consensus, and therefore were uncertain about how consensus worked. As noted by the field notes from the board meeting in March 1993:

> Many new members of the board do not understand the consensus-building process (site 5).

At site 5 the procedures for consensus were quite clear (even though, as noted above, some newer members were unclear), with specific details about how to implement this style of decision-making and how it differed from traditional voting procedures:

At board meetings, a unique method was developed in which all members could voice their thoughts about an issue and the board could arrive at a decision. This method has become known in the project as the *go-round* [emphasis original].... A go-round consists of each member in turn giving their thoughts about the issue at hand. During go-rounds every member is given the opportunity to speak.... In addition to the go-round, other features have been incorporated into the consensus procedures which are used at the board.... When a member did not agree with a position or a recommendation, then that member could *block* [emphasis original] the board from making that decision. The board developed a number of options to deal with these stalemates. One possibility was that members were allowed the option to *stand down* or *stand aside* [emphasis original]. This meant that a person did not agree with a particular decision, but would agree to go along with the rest of the board.... the board also decided on a format for minute taking which demonstrated the consensus process. According to this format, agenda items were recorded under three headings: DISCUSSION, CONSENSUS, DECISION. This method of minute taking provided an alternative to the MOVED, SECONDED, CARRIED method which is commonly used in voting organizations. (site 5)

The development of these detailed procedures for consensus decision-making is partly due to the importance this site has put on providing training opportunities around consensus decision making, both early in the project and recently, for decision-making participants:

> … the thirteen members in attendance learned some of the concepts and roles of consensus decision-making from a person who was specially invited to share his experience with this style of decision-making. This important event was noted in the minutes as follows:
>> [A facilitator] joined the meeting to discuss the concept of decision-making by consensus. This process is particularly important to ensure that all participants/groups have equal voice .… It was agreed to proceed with implementing this consensus model.

> Motivated by the need to have newer participants better informed about consensus, … the board decided in the spring of 1995 to organize another training session about consensus making procedures. After a number of logistical delays, the training session was finally arranged in November 1995. (site 5)

This focus on training around consensus decision making was also mentioned at two other sites:

> The [Steering Committee] and staff identified the need for training on how to use consensus at several points in time. Some discussion to define consensus decision-making has taken place, but training on how to use it and how to resolve conflicts has not taken place to date. (site 1)

> … the project has also trained community residents and staff to become mediators in order to help resolve issues that may arise between members. When there is conflict or when consensus is blocked, the mediators play the role of finding a suitable compromise .… (site 2)

Two sites reported that decision-making was made by more traditional voting methods:

> The [Steering Committee] has consistently made decisions by a majority rule voting system. This was formally decided in a bylaws committee meeting in June 1991. The motion which defined a quorum for the [Steering Committee] in the June 12/91 meeting also confirms majority rule decision-making. However, in some committees and staff groups decisions have been made by a fairly loosely defined consensus. There have been recent discussions about formally adopting consensus as a decision-making practice at the committee level, but not at the [Steering Committee]. (site 4)

> The [Steering Committee's] members are … called to vote on a variety of subjects .… The [Steering Committee] utilizes the functioning rules enacted by the … Code

for the unfolding of these meetings .… Each decision consists of a properly formulated recommendation and is discussed before its approval or dismissal. All recommendations are recorded in the [steering committee's] minutes. (site 7)

In site six the decision making methods appeared to be a mix of consensus and voting:

In principle, it seems, decisions are to be made by consensus in the [steering committee], as well as in the sub-committees. However, there do not seem to be any written policies regarding consensus in decision making. Motions are made by a voting member, and then a vote is taken (site 6).

Sites reported that a number of different strategies were used to share information among decision-making members and facilitate the process of decision making. Three sites reported that the project coordinator or other staff persons played an important role:

The project manager has been mainly responsible for gathering the information to initiate and guide decisions at the [Steering Committee] level. The [Steering Committee] subcommittees are also responsible for gathering information and making recommendations. The project manager participates on all subcommittees. The project manager is the link between the [Steering Committee] and the staff. This person brings forth [the Steering Committee's] decisions or requests for information to staff and vice versa. (site 1)

Most of the business arising and new business is in fact explained by the project coordinator. If no one is present who was at the working group meetings, she also presents this material [footnote: A cursory view of four [Steering Committee] meetings in 1994 indicates that of 36 major topics discussed, 25 were introduced and described by the project coordinator].… A similar, but less obvious situation occurs in the working groups. All of the working groups are led by staff members. (site 3)

The [Steering Committee] continues to rely considerably on the information brought forward by the project coordinator. At each meeting she submits a report for the carrying out of activities since the last meeting. She is also responsible for the presentation of the financial statements .… She also assumes the short and long-term planning …. Finally, the project coordinator and the administrative secretary are responsible for writing minutes and for preparing the meeting's agenda …. The project coordinator is usually the person responsible for the application of [the five decision-making] steps. She may choose to delegate this responsibility or to share it with another member of the project's managerial staff, depending on the type and the extent of the decisional issues. (site 7)

Three sites also reported that decision-making processes were characterized by informal and flexible procedures:

> The groups involved in making decisions have varied according to the situation at a particular point in time and place rather than the pre-determined accountability structure on paper. This seems to be in line with [the project's] principle of being flexible in responding to different situations. (site 1)

> It was formally decided to have open, rather informal meetings with decision-making based on consensus. This was seen as a means of making the meetings more people friendly and encouraging participation by community members …. There was an explicit demand by government representatives to have a more formal [Steering Committee] structure …. The formality of the structure, however, was consciously counterbalanced by an informality of meetings, again to encourage participation by community members whose past experience in such environments may have been limited. (site 3)

> … the consensus model allowed for a flexible approach to solutions … this flexibility allowed the [Steering Committee] to arrive at consensus on every one of these difficult decisions. (site 5)

Finally, one site (4) reported frequent use of small groups and pairings during meetings to facilitate discussion and decision-making processes:

> One strategy that appears to be used frequently is to have people work in smaller groups or pairs around a particular issue and then report back. Examples:
>
>> April 29/92 re: goals for a visioning day: [The Project Coordinator] spoke about the day long meeting planned for the [Steering Committee] on Friday …. [She] asked the [Steering Committee] to break into small groups to set our goals for this day. Those present who were not members of the [Steering Committee] were also invited to participate …. The small groups worked together, and presented their goals to the larger group.
>
>> Oct 5/94 re: vision day priorities: [The Project Coordinator] handed out cards and asked people to choose the three items they thought were the most important from the lists developed at the Vision Day. Next, people paired up and chose the three most important items from their six. These items were marked off the list.
>
>> April 19/95 re: having [an agency] on the [Steering Committee]: [The Project Coordinator] then wanted to know how the community felt about having [the agency] on the [Steering Committee] ….

> Members paired off and were asked to come up with three pros and three cons regarding this issue. Once everyone was finished [the Project Coordinator] wrote all the pros then cons down. A list of them all will be compiled for the next meeting. (site 4)

Five sites reported that attention was paid to who should participate in decision-making. For four of these sites, procedures were developed in which decision-making authority at the steering committee level was limited to those who were members:

> … there has been a structure with 15 designated voting members … (site 3)

> In addition [to the 18 [Steering Committee] members] three alternate [Steering Committee] members will be selected for the [Steering Committee]. They will include two community representatives and one agency representative and will have voting privileges at the [Steering Committee] meetings when regular members are absent. (site 4)

> At most meetings there are persons present who are not "decision-making members", that is, they are not officially board members, but are in attendance as presenters, staff, researchers, or guests. These persons may participate in go-rounds which are intended to hear the issues, but do not participate in decision-making go-rounds. (site 5)

> … parent members who become staff should resign [from the Steering Committee], but … they may remain as non-voting members of the committee. (site 6)

All of the sites reported a variety of challenges and difficulties in developing consistent decision-making procedures which allowed the projects to make decisions efficiently, effectively, and in a way which honoured project principles. Two sites reported that consensus decision making had been marked by a fear that a decision could be "blocked" by one or a small number of persons:

> "… the relationship between people has become so close and so friendly that it's difficult when you have to make decisions by consensus and quickly, and when everybody is watching you. You don't want to pointed out by the community for blocking consensus." (site 2)

> … some participants began to fear that consensus hampered, rather than helped, to resolve differences because it allowed one or a few people to "block" a decision when everyone else was in favour. The [following] comment reflects this fear:

> "What if 18 people agree but there's one person out there who
> doesn't? That person could really screw things up for us." (site 5)

Two other sites reported that there were difficulties because of unclear lines of communication and accountability, and uncertainty about which groups were responsible for which decisions:

> Some people thought too wide a net was being cast in getting input for some issues. Others thought it was too narrow. The overriding issue that many staff members have identified, however, was being clear and consistent about which areas warrant which groups to have a say in the final decision. The groups involved in making decisions have varied according to the situation at a particular point in time and place rather than the pre-determined accountability structure on paper. This seems to be in line with Better Beginnings' principle of being flexible in responding to different situations. (site 1)

> [The Project Coordinator] said the issue was about where [Steering Committee] decision-making ends and Better Beginnings staff decision-making begins .... [The Project Coordinator] said the [Steering Committee] needs to decide what decisions staff should make and what decisions the [Steering Committee] should make .... [There] appears to be some uncertainty about the nature and process of decision-making among different participants. At the [Steering Committee] there are a number of occasions when questions arose about how decisions are made -- this generally referred to the process, the implementation, and the followup, and not the mechanics (ie voting, quorums, etc.). This issue seems connected to frustrations and concerns expressed by some staff about how decisions are made. There were different perceptions among participants about where the decision-making authority lay: some felt it lay with the sponsor agency and their director, some felt it lay with the Project Coordinator, and some felt it lay with the [Steering Committee] - and by extension, the community:
>> "I think theoretically the [Steering Committee] is at the top but in practice I think it is different." (site 4)

Two sites also reported that there difficulties getting consistent attendance and participation from members of decision-making groups:

> If people are really going to be able to make informed decisions, their consistent and relatively long-term attendance is important. Keeping resident volunteers involved on the [Steering Committee] has been a challenge .... Since the decision in December 1991 to have voting members, 49 different residents have attending [Steering Committee] meetings. Not all of these have been designated voting members, having come because of a specific issue .... Despite the attendance of a core of committed members, it is an ongoing struggle to have 10 residents willing to attend [Steering Committee] meetings on a regular basis. (site 3)

One problem is the difficulty in consistently getting a quorum. This seems due to a number of reasons: active members are not present at meetings (in Aug 91 the [board] agrees to add alternate positions so that [board] business is not held up by lack of quorum); a high number of resignations means that there are not enough members around (in first year: 17 people resign, 15 new members are elected; 7 alternates are elected, 1 resigns … a lot of meeting time has been spent over the years in issues around quorums and electing new [Steering Committee] members and alternates. For example, during one period from early 92 to mid 93 half of the meetings began with no quorum; sometimes members would arrive late and quorum would be reached, but there were several times when decisions had to be tabled until subsequent meetings; on one occasion decisions were tabled for two meetings when there was no quorum for two consecutive meetings. (site 4)

Finally, five sites reported that decision-making was made difficult because of the time needed to consult with so many different groups, and because of the difficulty of community members being well informed and able to understand the issues which were being discussed:

This was definitely voiced as a concern at this site as well. One example is the issue of incorporation. Residents did not know what incorporation meant, what the process entailed and how to go about incorporating. Staff and Steering Committee spent time bringing everyone up to speed on what it meant before making the decision. (site 1)

The project also encouraged people to make decisions on different levels of the project by reducing the number of non-residents and professionals at the beginning. This was not always easy and the process was lengthy. (site 2)

"I think part of my concern with the whole thing, the way the [Steering Committee] is run - and this is from having talking with the community people, people on the [Steering Committee] -- sometimes they don't understand what is being said at all. Just the level of discussion, the words that are being used and it is very difficult to put your hand up and say "I don't understand." If you have a specific question, you need to understand a certain amount to have a specific question and sometimes I wonder if there is enough sensitivity to really explaining things. I think that is what [] was talking about. That's kind of the empowering, helping people really understand what is happening. Like I will be sitting beside an [Steering Committee] member and they will whisper to me "I don't have a clue what they are talking about", I whisper back "either do I"." (site 4)

Staff also seemed to recognize that reaching decisions has been made easier since participants (e.g., project staff, parents, school staff) have gained a much better understanding of the project. (site 6)

… the participation of so many contributors also had consequences on the time periods that were needed for consultation. Consequently, the decision-making process often requested over-extended periods of time to be completed. It also required considerable energy to coordinate the work of all groups, considering the number of people involved and the variety of their experience as members of decision-making groups. The people having experience in this field were often ready to take decisions without much delay. Inversely, those with less experience often expressed the need to obtain further information, requested advice so as to distinguish the relevant information, and needed guidance to participate actively in the decision-making process. (site 7)

Despite the challenges faced by all of the sites in developing satisfactory decision-making processes which incorporated disparate participants and principles, four sites reported that generally most decisions had been relatively functional, and that the procedures had become comfortable for participants to use:

From sharing and learning from each other, people have now integrated the process in their way of working. (site 2)

Comments from the staff suggest there have been conflicts in decision-making but that these are probably less than what might be expected given the number of different people involved:
"I find it amazing that even the difficulties there, the number of people involved, the number of decisions that have been made and how well the program works, it's still quite astounding to me, the number of people involved in the decision that have worked …. [You] hear a lot of bitching …, but when you look at what this program has achieved in three years and all the people involved. It is amazing!"

"It has worked well"

"There have been some very good decisions."

"There has; something is working." (site 4)

The majority of decisions that are made within the project do not involve significant differences of opinion among participants. Typically a recommendation is made, discussed, perhaps altered slightly, and the group readily agrees. (site 5)

In most cases … reaching consensus at the [Steering Committee] and in the sub-committees is usually not difficult. At the point where a motion is to be made,

there has been a considerable amount of discussion and information sharing; thus usually all perspectives and issues have been addressed. (site 6)

Only two sites specifically addressed issues in which conflicts arose in the course of making decisions. One site report illustrated the use of trained mediators to help resolve conflicts:

> … the project has also trained community residents and staff to become mediators in order to help resolve issues that may arise between members. When there is conflict or when consensus is blocked, the mediators play the role of finding a suitable compromise between those who disagree. (site 2)

> After several meetings, consensus couldn't be reached on all issues. The policy of consensus was put into application and a mediator as well as a facilitator were chosen with the approval of the people who represented the extreme positions. After small group meetings and the executive committee meeting, consensus was reached around both issues…. The policy of consensus included in the By-laws was followed by the group. The mediators and facilitators were all members of the project. Cultural integration is one of the regular areas of tension, but through internal discussions, and the use of consensus solutions have been achieved in order to respond adequately to different cultural needs. (written communication, November 1996) (site 2)

The other site described in detail three examples where the project had to resolve difficult conflicts at the Steering Committee level. The experience of resolving these difficulties was seen as providing some valuable lessons at the site about conflict resolution and about the decision-making process used at this site:

> These three examples reveal a number of lessons which illustrate the value of the consensus model in resolving difficult conflicts…. the consensus model allowed for a flexible approach to solutions. In the three examples given, each followed a slightly different path to arriving at a solution…. Each situation required a different process, and this flexibility allowed the board to arrive at consensus on every one of these difficult decisions. (site 5)

Related to the discussions of conflicts noted in the two sites above, three site reports described issues regarding conflicts of interest in decision-making at the Steering Committee level:

> The decision to declare a conflict of interest has become standard procedure for the [Steering Committee]. There are numerous instances in meetings where members of the [Steering Committee], both community members and service providers, have abstained from a vote that involved their agency or group. There have even been

times when people have physically removed themselves from the room when discussion has taken place. (site 4)

Key features of decision-making are the role and responsibility of different participants and the question of whether there are "conflicts of interest" based on different roles. This issue has its roots in the unique role which many neighbourhood residents play as both the designers *and* recipients of programs. This dual role is central to the project's principle of participation in decision-making, but has led to uncertainty about how to handle cases which other more traditional organizations would label as "conflicts of interest". Since there did not appear to be any examples to follow on how to handle this, the project had to sort out its own way of handling these apparent conflicts of interest. (site 5)

… the project developed a policy and procedures regarding conflict of interest situations:

> The [Better Beginnings project] strives to ensure fairness, real or
> perceived, in all its activities. Staff, directors and volunteers must
> be aware of possible avenues where conflict of interest may arise.
> For purposes of the [Better Beginnings project], conflict of interest
> is defined as a situation in which an individual or individuals uses
> or perceives to use information, influence, and/or resources of the
> [Better Beginnings project] for personal benefit or for that of related
> individuals to benefit organizations to which they belong without
> prior disclosure of affiliation. This applies to other relationships
> which individuals in the organization may perceive place them in a
> conflict of interest situation. (site 6)

In one of these sites, the conflict of interest issues were seen as being linked to the multiple roles of community residents in the project. Project participants viewed the concept of conflict of interest as being potentially problematic as it was applied in other organizations, and therefore struggled to find a way to define conflict of interest in their project in a way which still allowed community residents to fill multiple roles as designers, decision makers, implementers, participants, and receivers of programs and services:

The concept of conflict of interest in traditional organizations posed a dilemma for the project because it limited the equal participation of all members. As a result, the board was forced to adopt procedures which were satisfactory to the parameters of other organizations, but also allowed the full participation of all partners, particularly neighbourhood residents. Perhaps this dilemma is best summarized in the words of one neighbourhood resident:

> Every neighbourhood person has a potential conflict with this issue
> because any one of us could apply for the job. But if we removed
> every neighbourhood person there would be no neighbourhood
> participation at all.

Although this comment referred specifically to a job vacancy the principle applies throughout the project: neighbourhood residents participate as decision makers and designers of programs that potentially they could also access themselves. Thus, the nature of community participation is that people put themselves in a "conflict of interest" because of their motivation to involve themselves in something which directly affects their lives. In this project, therefore, conflict of interest is not a problem to be solved, but an indication that meaningful participation is occurring. To paraphrase the above comment, if there were no conflicts of interest, there would be no participation. (site 5)

Summary

- Four sites reported using some type of consensus model of decision making model. Two sites reported voting methods, while one site reported a mix of voting and consensus. This represents a shift from when the original proposals were developed in 1990, where all the sites reported using some form of consensus decision making.

- In all the sites, regardless of which style of decision-making was used, the procedures were described as being linked to the values and principles of inclusiveness, particularly allowing neighbourhood residents an opportunity to participate in decision-making. The articulation of these principles in all of the sites suggests that developing a method for decision-making in which a number of different constituencies have an equal role is at the heart of all of the sites' decision-making processes, whether consensus or some other style. Therefore, it would not be accurate to conclude from these data that consensus is the only way or the best way in which projects were able to involve community residents in decision-making roles.

- The focus on flexibility and informality around decision-making in some sites also seemed to result in a lack of clarity in how decisions were made, who should be involved, and who was responsible for decisions.

- Staff, particularly Project Coordinators, played a key role in decision-making on the Board and Committees in three sites, usually in setting agendas or providing information to other decision-making members.

- Challenges and difficulties around decision-making were reported in all sites:

  - much time was needed to include multiple groups (4 sites)

  - in consensus decision-making decisions could be "blocked" or held up by one or a few people against the wishes of the rest of the group (2 sites)

  - unclear lines of accountability and responsibility (2 sites)

  - inconsistent attendance from decision-making members (2 sites)

- Four sites noted, in contrast to the challenges noted above, that most decisions and the procedures around them were generally productive and comfortable.

- Two sites reported issues around resolving conflicts and conflicts of interest (3 sites).

6.0 STAFFING PROFILES

Table 6.1 describes the staff positions for each demonstration site as of June 1995. Table 6.2 shows the numbers of residents and non-residents employed at each site as of June 1995. Several patterns are evident from these two tables:

- A substantial number of people were employed at each site: Site 1 - 25 people; site 2 - 24 people; site 3 - 25 people; site 4 - 20 people; site 5 - 15 people; site 6 - 17 people; site 7 - 26 people.

- Many of these positions were part-time or contracts for limited duration or levels of service. Most of these kinds of positions were held by residents[2]:

   > … There was a feeling that employment opportunities should be made available to as many neighbourhood residents as possible and not concentrated on full-time positions for fewer people. (Site 5)

   > The project has also preferred having more part-time staff in order to spread the money between more people rather than hiring fewer professionals. (Site 2)

- Overall, the site reports indicated that as of June 1995, Better Beginnings, Better Futures had 75 residents hired compared to 77 non-residents. However, a much higher proportion of front-line staff were residents (57%) than management positions (15%).

- Most sites had formal education and management experience criteria for choosing Project Coordinators. A few also wanted community development experience. Six sites (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) had non-resident Project Coordinators and one (2) had a resident.

- Sites had between one and five management positions in addition to the Project Coordinator. Most sites sought formal education and management experience qualifications for these positions with the exceptions of sites 1 (except for the Childcare/Family Support team teader) and 2. Most of the managerial positions were occupied by non-residents (85%). In addition, these were typically full-time positions.

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[2] At site 7, resident does not refer to living in a particular neighbourhood. Instead, it indicates being a parent of a child at one of the schools participating in the project.

- 57% of front-line positions were held by residents. However, there were very large differences between the proportions of front-line positions held by residents across the various demonstration projects: site 1 - 64%;

    site 2 - 75%;
    site 3 - 32%;
    site 4 - 53%;
    site 5 - 33%;
  site 6 - 65%;
    site 7 - 31%.

In terms of the proportion of front-line positions held by residents, the sites can be divided into two groupings: 53% - 75% (sites 1, 2, 4, 6) and 31% - 33% (sites 3, 5, 7). Two cautions are in order in interpreting these patterns. At some sites front-line employees were residents when first hired and later became non-residents. For example, while in June, 1995, 32% of site 3's front-line positions were held by residents, at the point of hiring residents represented 57% of these positions. Also, resident and non-resident employees may have had many socio-economic and daily living experiences in common. Finally, every site put effort into hiring residents and many factors contribute to the pattern observed at any particular site.

Table 6.1 STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Project Coordinator / Manager	• 1 full-time equivalent position (FTE) • 1 person • 1 non-resident	• 1 FTE (.67 in management, .33 in CD • 1 person • 1 resident • q: post-secondary education & experience • bilingual	• 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident	• 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: post-secondary education & experience in management and CD	• 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: post-secondary education & experience	• 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: formal education & experience	• 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident* • q: college or university degree & professional experience
Other Managers	(1) Program Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • 1 qualifications sought (QS:): 3 years experience in management, familiar with community development and health promotion • Chinese (2) Team Leader • 3 FTE • 3 people • 1 resident • 2 non-residents • % personal attributes plus experience, ECE diploma for 1 • 1 First Nations/ Italian • 1 Italian	(1) Office Administrator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: relevant experience • Native/ Francophone • bilingual	(1) Family Visitor Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: graduate education and experience • francophone (2) Playgroup Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: ECE diploma and experience	(1) Family Visitor Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: postsecondary education including infant & child development plus minimum 3 years experience (2) Community Developer • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: degree and experience	(1) Community Developer • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: degree or diploma and experience (2) Community Health Nurse • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: Registered nurse and experience	(1) Inschool Program Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: formal education and experience (2) Family Support Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: not available • Yugoslavian	(1) Program Supervisor • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: college diploma and experience (2) Community Developer • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: university degree and experience

* At this site Resident means a parent of a child at one of the involved schools.

Table 6.1 (continued) STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Other Mana-gers (cont-inued)	(3) Office Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes • white/First Nations/Dutch			(3) Office Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: post-secondary education & experience, skills (4) Community Programs Worker • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience	(3) Child & Family Focus Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: ECE diploma, experience	(3) Community Development Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: college degree and experience • Caribbean (4) Office Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: college diploma & experience • Guyanese	
Non-Mana-gers	(1) Community Visitor • 7.2 FTE • 9 people • 8 residents • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience • 2 black Canadians • 1 black Caribbean • 1 Somalian • 3 Vietnamese • 1 Latin American	(1) Bookkeeper • .75 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: relevant experience • bilingual	(1) Family Visitor • 6 FTE (2 FT/6 PT • 9 people • 3 resident • 6 non-residents • q: parenting/ caregiving experience • Somalian • Francophone • Arabic	(1) Family Visitor • 6 FTE • 4 full-time • 2 residents • 2 non-residents • 4 part-time (hours as needed) • 3 residents • 1 non-residents • q: personal attributes and experience • 2 black Canadians	(1) Community Home Visitors • 2 FTE • 4 people • 1 resident • 3 non-residents • q: personal attributes and experience • 1 Chinese • 1 El Salvadoran	(1) Nutrition Programmer • 5 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes	(1) Breakfast Attendant • .75 FTE • 4 people • 2 residents • 2 non-residents • q: personal attributes & experience, French language skills

Table 6.1 (continued) STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Non-Managers (continued)	(2) ECE Worker • 1.7 FTE • 2 people • 1 resident • 1 non-resident • q: ECE diploma and experience • 1 black Caribbean (3) Community Development Worker • 1.48 FTE • 2 people • 2 non-residents • q: personal attributes and experience • 2 black Caribbeans (4) Receptionist/Office Assistant • 1.6 FTE • 2 people • 1 resident • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes & experience, specific skills • 1 Ethiopian • 1 black Canadian (funded by Job Incentives Program until 1994)	(2) Community Worker • 2 FTE • 2 people • 1 resident • 1 non-resident • q: college degree and experience • Native • bilingual (3) Membership Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 residents • q: university degree and experience • Native/Francophone (4) Family Visitor • 1.86 FTE • 2 people • 1 resident • 1 non-resident • q: college and experience • 1 Native • 1 Francophone	(2) Administrative Assistant • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: skills and experience (3) Playgroup Worker • 15 hours/week • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes and experience • Native (4) Toylending Worker • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience • purchase of service agreement	(2) Childcare Assistants • 3.5 FTE • 4 people • 3 residents • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience (3) Childcare Casual Worker • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: experience working with children (4) Administrative Support • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: grade 12 or equivalent skills	(2) Childcare Assistant • 1.5 FTE • 3 people • 2 residents • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience (3) Family Resource Coordinator • 1 FTE • 2 people • 1 resident • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience (4) Janitor/Custodian • .35 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes	(2) Family Resource Centre Program Worker • .75 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: degree and experience • Francophone (3) Education Assistant • 2.5 FTE • 3 people • 2 residents • 1 non-resident • q: ECE-diploma and experience • South American • Uruguayan • Caribbean (4) Family Visitor • 1.5 FTE • 3 people • 3 residents • q: community resident and personal attributes, linguistic skills • Caribbean • South Asian • Uruguayan	(2) Toy Lending Library Assistant • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes and experience (3) Playground Monitor • 9 week summer position • 3 people • 3 non-residents • q: personal attributes and experience (4) Family Worker • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience

Table 6.1 (continued) STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Non-Managers (continued)	(5) Maintenance Worker • .37 FTE • 2 people • 2 residents • q: personal attributes • 1 Japanese/ Italian (6) Childcare Assistant • casual staff hired as needed • both residents and non-residents	(5) Childcare Worker • 9.2 FTE • regular part-time positions • 13 people (includes 5 part-time nutritionists) • 10 residents • 3 non-residents • q: some college, some secondary education and experience • 6 Anglophones • 7 Francophones (6) Nutrition Coordinator • 1 FTE • regular part-time positions • 3 people • 3 residents • q: personal attributes and experience • 1 Native • 1 Anglophone • 1 Francophone	(5) Teacher • .4 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: ECE diploma and experience • purchase of service agreement (6) Bookkeeper • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: business or related diploma and experience, skills (7) Childcare Worker • 10 hours/week • variable number of people • purchase of service agreement	(5) Health Educator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: certified nurse and experience	(5) Youth Coordinator • .6 - 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: degree or diploma and experience (6) Summer Camp Staff and Youth-in-Training • 3-5 summer camp staff • 3-5 youth-in-training in summer (7) Special Grant Workers • non-BBBF money • 1-2 at any point in time	(5) Assistant Community Developer • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: community resident, personal attributes and experience • 1 Caribbean (6) Before and After School Workers • 1.2 FTE • 3 people • 2 residents • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience, linguistic abilities	(5) Family Visitor • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes and experience (6) Family Vacation Camp Monitor • short-term contract • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience (7) Volunteer Coordinator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience

Table 6.1 (continued) STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Non-Mana-gers (cont-inued)			(8) Community Nurse • .6 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: nursing certification and experience • secondment from host agency (9) Settlement Worker • .5 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience • 1 secondment from agency • 1 Somalian (10) Multicultural Outreach Worker • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: social assist-ance recipient & language skills • SSEP grant position • Somalian			(7) Toy Librarian • 12 hours/week • 1 person • 1 resident • q: personal attributes and experience • Greek (8) Occasional Workers • fee-for-service work • 20 people • 17 residents	(8) Administrative Secretary • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: secretarial college and experience, fluent French & English (9) Early Child-hood Educator • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: ECE diploma and experience (10) School Facilitators • 5.5 FTE • 6 people • 3 residents • 3 non-residents • q: personal attributes and experience

Table 6.1 (continued) STAFF POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7
Non-Managers (continued)			(11) Playground Support Worker • 12 hours/week • 2 people • 2 residents • q: personal attributes and experience • purchase of service agreement (12) Playgroup Cleaner • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience (13) House Cleaner • 7.5 hours/week • 1 person • 1 resident • purchase of service agreement				(11) Cultural Assistant • 1 FTE • 1 person • 1 non-resident • q: personal attributes and experience

Table 6.2
NUMBERS OF RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT EMPLOYEES BY POSITION IN BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES DEMONSTRATION SITES

		Positions			
		Project Coordinators / Managers	Other Managers	Front-Line Staff	Total
Site 1	Resident	0	2	14	16
	Non-resident	1	3	5	9
Site 2	Resident	1	0	17	18
	Non-Resident	0	1	5	6
Site 3	Resident	0	0	8	8
	Non-Resident	1	2	14	17
Site 4	Resident	1	1	10	12
	Non-Resident	0	3	5	8
Site 5	Resident	0	0	5	5
	Non-resident	1	3	6	10
Site 6	Resident	0	0	11	11
	Non-resident	1	3	2	6
Site 7	Resident*	0	1	7	8
	Non-resident	1	3	14	18
Total	Resident	2	4	72	78
	Non-resident	5	18	51	74

* At this site Resident means a parent of a child at one of the involved schools.

- Only sites 1 and 6 had many different ethnic and linguistic group members within their staffing compliments. Sites 2 and 3 incorporated a few different ethnic and linguistic group members as staff.

- Based upon the numbers[3] of each type of front-line position at the sites, five sites (1, 2, 3, 4, 7) appear to be allocating most of their program staff resources to one or two program approaches.[4] Two sites (5, 6) do not appear to have a central focus to their program staff positions. Most sites, with the exception of site 1, 4 and, to a lesser extent, site 2, have a broad range of types of workers engaged in different kinds of program activities. In addition, most sites appear to have supplemented their Better Beginnings, Better Futures budget with external funding for program staff whose activities often appear to fall outside of the original Better Beginnings mandate.

Without a doubt, the levels of resident employment in Better Beginnings, Better Futures are exceptionally high for human service organizations. When resident involvement in demonstration project governance is added to the levels of resident employment, Better Beginnings, Better Futures clearly represents a unique opportunity to learn about the nature and impacts of resident involvement and empowerment in prevention projects as well as human services in general. As this report demonstrates, the requirements of resident involvement and empowerment have coloured many aspects of Better Beginnings project organization and management.

These staffing profiles also suggest that there may be important differences in the prevention programming strategies that have evolved at the various sites. This suggests that there is a need in our research to provide a clear description of each site's prevention philosophy and programming in order to properly understand the outcomes for each site.

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[3]These estimates should be accepted cautiously because of the risk in projecting the content of jobs from the available job titles.

[4] This may be less true at site 2 where child care workers may in fact be engaged in quite different kinds of activities (e.g. after-school programs, nutrition programs etc.) and divided between different ethnic/linguistic program groups.

7.0   VALUE-BASED PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Most demonstration sites have invested a great deal of time into clarifying how staff relations and management should be. As we shall see, attempts to define and implement value-based project organization and management have had major impacts at most sites. However, the site reports also suggest that there are differences between sites in terms of the specific values emphasized and the extent to which these values have guided project organization and management:

> … inspiring a particular kind of relationship between staff and community. Individual workers develop egalitarian, empowering relationships among themselves and reproduce these relationships as staff engage in the community … (site 3)

> … based … on a different vision in which power is shared and divided between small teams and in which trust is put in people to give them time to learn new skills in order to participate in the building of their own community … (site 2)

> … the early development of the vision and principles and the commitment to community ownership helped set conditions that permitted community participation as staff. (site 2)

> … partnership is the major principle on which the structure of Better Beginnings, Better Futures is based … refers to the relationship between agency representation, neighbourhood participants and project staff… management processes in which collaboration between different groups … is evident everywhere … personal relationships … the key to real partnerships in which participants regard one another as colleagues, peers and equals. (site 5)

> … there were no widely agreed upon procedures to follow, which meant that everything had to be decided upon 'from scratch'. At the same time, there were values and principles which were held and in many cases the struggle was to find ways to develop procedures which adhered to people's shared values.… One of these values was clearly that the organizers of the project should be 'different' and 'newer' and not trapped by the traditions and practices of other older organizations… Therefore every new procedural challenge required a comprehensive approach which clarified the values and assumptions… because it is a new project which is trying to do things in a new way. (site 5)

… several guidelines and principles were developed and acted upon over the years… Hiring community residents was one such guideline …. (site 1)

The challenges of trying to implement value-based project organization and management has not been simple and not always well understood by those asked to participate:.

Things such as resident participation in decision making and the collaborative, non-hierarchical approach of the project were new to many people and difficult to get used to … whatever we were doing, it was the first time … there was nobody to say… this is what you're supposed to do. We had to struggle. (site 6)

The development of the team management structure was a difficult process because most of the staff were not used to the model … It's only after much training and clarification during the first years of the project that the teams become functional…. (site 2)

Most staff don't have experience in team management …. Team management has been very poorly defined, too loose, we need to define it more clearly …. When staff have problems, they don't sometimes know who to go to in order to solve these problems…. (site 2)

8.0   AN EMPHASIS UPON PROCESS

8.1   Requiring a Substantial Investment of Time and Effort

A characteristic of staff relations and management procedures at many of these demonstration sites has been the substantial amounts of time and effort invested into group processes between staff, between staff and managers and among staff, managers and resident volunteers. However, there did appear to be substantial variation in the amount of time invested into group processes involving staff from site to site. For example, our calculations estimate that at site 2, including weekly meetings of full-time staff, monthly all-day, all-staff meetings, weekly program team meetings and two all-staff, week-long meetings a year, the equivalent of about two working months a year are spent in staff meetings[5]. Staff participation in project governance and other meetings would be in addition to these meetings. This could represent one end of the staff group participation continuum for these projects. At the other end might be site 4, where in response to an earlier draft of this report, the following feedback was received,"our staff meetings are once monthly…it's not clear that (the project) spends any more time in meetings than is necessary. The following quote from site 1 illustrates the importance attributed to participation processes in management::

> … management has applied the principles of community development to developing and managing the staff component. There has been an emphasis on building staff systems and procedures from the bottom up. Management has tried to be as participatory as possible, nurturing leadership and ownership over all parts of the project. (The project) has tried to support individuals to build their skills and knowledge on the job to take on new roles and responsibilities. The value of frontline staff participating in making all kinds of project decisions was often favoured over the goal of efficiency. (site 1)

> … often a long and complex procedure … ensured maximum representation from all categories of people connected with the project … often required over-extended periods of time to be consulted … also required considerable energy to coordinate the work of all the groups. (site 7)

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[5]In response to an earlier draft of this report, the following feedback was received: Meetings are used to train staff, to discuss issues, to do planning, discuss budgets and that, in total, meeting time represents less than 17% of staff time. (By our calculations, 17% would equal about two months a year of work time.)

The central management meets once a week with the full-time staff to discuss project development activities, new issues and planning. All the staff and the management meet once a month in an all-day staff meeting. These meetings help maintain a regular supervision of program development and activities. The Project Coordinator also uses these meetings to do program evaluation with the staff, present the budget, deal with conflicts or offer training when needed.… (site 2)

Twice a year there is a week-long training and planning review for all staff. This helps break the isolation between different staff teams. (site 2)

All the staff teams run their own programs … once a week program groups meet to plan and evaluate. Once a month, all programs are cancelled and the project holds an all-day, all-staff meeting. Sometimes during these meetings, the project undertakes a participatory workshop that involves all staff in making decisions … that are usually relegated to management: budgeting, evaluation and review of staff programs. (site 2)

Lots of time and energy were needed to evolve, revisit and shape these essential principles and forms and to clarify the process such as consensus, community participation and integration. The struggle to include and deepen community participation was more important than struggles for efficiency and clarity at the beginning. (site 2)

"… the job is not seen as a job in which the focus is only the participant. The focus is also the worker. What this means is that work time is often not efficient and concentration is not always on the task .…" (site 3)

"… an emphasis upon process rather than outcome also influences the manner in which conflicts among staff are handled … Most things are between people. They need time and space to talk about it .…" (site 3)

"When we take our day (staff retreat) … we want to talk about how we handle feeling overwhelmed personally and as a group … How do we make sure that we keep a place that is safe enough to talk to someone … safe enough to broach those issues?" (site 3)

Management at the demonstration sites is characterised by various staff, management, planning and stakeholder meetings. For example:

… on a formal level, meetings of all staff are held monthly to discuss issues of program coordination and to share information. A meeting of project coordinators is also held monthly. On an informal level, there are daily discussions between the Project Coordinators and among other staff members. (site 6)

Work has been coordinated across teams by means of entire staff meetings (once a month), program teams (once a month) and management team (once a week) meetings. (site 1)

Since 1993 … has been organizing an annual series for all employees … brings all employees together for two concentrated days … workshops are held … and deals with staff professional careers … also allows participants to meet in a less formal environment. (site 7)

Staff meetings … held 2-4 times a month. (site 7)

… democratic power sharing is facilitated by weekly staff meetings where staff members are invited to share the agenda, explore their concerns about their work or relationships with one another and with the managers and support and value one another. (site 3)

… every two weeks there is also a Family Visitor staff meeting … used as a vehicle for peer supervision … a way to supervise the bosses so to speak. (site 3)

Two key events … in team building and project coordination … one of these is the annual planning meeting …. This day long meeting involves all staff, Executive Team members, teachers, residents and others involved in the project … an opportunity to reaffirm the project's key goals and to insure that the individual project elements link together … The other key element … in terms of team building is the project's annual fun and recognition dinner … room lavishly decorated by project members… gowns and ties in abundance. (site 6)

… the membership composed of community residents meets at least three times a year in a day long meeting. Their role is formally to do long-term planning and visioning, evaluate the whole project in light of the vision, elect the council and approve the financial report. The high participation of these membership meetings shows the growing interest of residents in the management of the project. (site 2)

The process demands of project organization and management for Better Beginnings are augmented by the need to coordinate the efforts of different types of employees, varying work hours and work locations. At some sites, there is also a requirement to bridge linguistic, ethnic and cultural differences among project personnel:

… the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the staff provided a powerful learning experience for the staff members themselves … have learned to share, accept and acknowledge other cultures. (site 6)

"… there is a wide range in the number of hours different staff work and when they are present in the project ... (establishing relationships among staff) was hard to do ... to be able to build that friendship and that relationship was really amazing." (site 6)

… communication with staff with different levels of proficiency in English is more difficult, this was not identified as a major tension. Resources and time were put towards supports for ESL staff to speak their opinions and to support four English-speaking staff to communicate effectively with ESL staff … different cultural interpretations of language made communication across language groups even more difficult … staff has participated in cultural sensitivity and anti-racism training sessions .… (site 1)

… a very limited number of people are linked to each program component and there is very little cross-checking from one section to another as to the skills and experiences …. (site 7)

… transferring program management from the central office to the cultural groups … programming is based on cultural caucuses created in 1991 … helped … to give to each cultural group autonomy, space and internal strength in reaching their specific goals ... it can prevent some mingling with groups to be open to other cultures, being separate has prevented this. (site 2)

This situation incited many discussions; during the first meeting, the [decision making group] recommended that all funds from any activities be managed by a central administration office, in the project account, and that by asking for donations, the [cultural group] were perceived as breaking the universality of programs and putting parents in situations which would perhaps make them feel like they had to donate something. Members felt that all the programs are free and that no donations should be linked to program activities. On the other hand, [cultural group] felt that parents were not obliged to make a donation in order for them to participate, and a few [cultural group] parents were invited to support that point. (site 2)

… difficult for the Family Visitor Coordinator to keep track of what part-time people are doing, when they are doing it ... they are often changing their schedule …. Some seem to resist supervision of that kind of thing. (site 3)

8.2   Participatory Processes are Central to Prevention Project and Program Development

Perhaps the strongest reaction to an earlier version of this report was in relation to our suggestion that the emphasis upon process may have costs as well as benefits. For example, we

wondered whether the process emphasis may lessen the concern with efficiency or take time away from the details of prevention programming. What became clear from this feedback was that the participatory processes of creating and running the project organizations as well as the programs were seen as central to good prevention. It is evident that Better Beginnings, Better Futures cannot be described without understanding the pivotal role that participatory and empowerment processes play at the various sites. However, once again, it seems to be necessary to pay attention to the differences in how and how much these processes are emphasized at each site. The following statements clearly illustrate the strong conviction and the passion with which the commitment to participatory and empowering processes are held at some sites:

> The authors should understand that when you develop prevention programs using a community development approach, the process takes 60% of the time. People have to learn new skills. Team management, consensus decision-making etc. have to be learned through processes and an important part of the learning takes place during meetings. (site 2)

> Unless the community has a voice they won't be able to negotiate with agencies. We needed to create that united voice. (site 2)

> The involvement and participation of community leaders was the <u>vehicle</u> by which primary prevention objectives were possible. (site 5)

> Prevention programs were developed and evolved <u>because</u> of this continuing process of community involvement. The experience of people working on the front lines in this project is of an intimate connection between resident involvement and prevention outcomes, one becomes possible because of the other. (site 5)

> It is (this project's) experience that while it is important to have local residents as staff and volunteers, that a great deal of time is required for training, support, and supervision and that this is time well spent. It is also the case (here) that the processes were not ends in themselves. (site 6)

> People believed that in order to create a successful prevention program, community has to be involved in all facets…. They acknowledge that they have, at times, spent inordinate amounts of time in meetings … but that was absolutely necessary…. People are trained on the job and learn in meetings how to be a committee member or chair…. We have to listen to discern the community's needs and how best to fulfill them. This can be time consuming, but was seen as a necessary but not

sufficient part of prevention \programming…. Trust takes time and it is difficult
to establish. (site 4)

Community involvement in the planning, decision-making and implementation of
project plans is required for the model … (also) community involvement in these
areas increases participation in the programs. (site 4)

(The project) management has applied the principles of community development
to developing and managing the staff component. There has been an emphasis on
building staff systems and procedures from the bottom up. Management has tried
to be as participatory as possible, nurturing leadership and ownership over all
aspects of the project…. The value of frontline staff participating in making all
kinds of project decisions was often favoured over the goal of efficiency….
Developing systems with open participation, however, takes a lot of time and
energy which were always in high demand. (site 1) [This citation comes from the
original site report.]

8.3   Process and Personal Development

In addition to demanding large expenditures of time and resources, the process emphasis

was characterized by particular approaches to staff relations and employee development.

Particularly striking at most sites was the concern with the personal development of staff and, in

some instances, a desire to be involved "with the whole person" and a nurturing approach to staff

support and supervision:

… one is the supportive environment. Staff felt that they could count on each other
for support whenever it was required, this provided a profound sense of
connectedness within the staff group …. "There's always a shoulder here that you
can go and weep on". (site 6)

… Project manager … strives to foster a culture of trust, support, openness,
respect and sharing… also relates to people using a great deal of humour, and …
is very informal. (site 6)

"The management has been very nurturing in the organization. Management has
nurtured people and trained them … believed in those people and supported those
people to develop their skills and knowledge … has tried to be very open with the
staff." (site 1)

"(the project) has provided so many opportunities for confidence building, skill
development, friendships to be born." (site 1)

> One thing that we have to show to others that they have something positive .. . that
> they can give .. . Often people do not see themselves like that.. . they realize …
> yes, I am able to do this .. . not only to do things for myself … also to do things
> for others. Once people realize this … they get on board and it works. (site 7)

> This holistic approach to management assumes that many aspects of people's lives
> and their community are taken into account when services are developed .. not only
> treats its staff as employees but tries to develop a structure in which other aspects
> of their lives are included in the daily management of the project .. . shows a very
> high regard for human resources as well as high regard for task accomplishment
> through continued training. (site 2)

> … to have patience, allowing people to make mistakes and that makes them
> stronger, part of their process of growing. (site 3)

> "It is this being cared for when we are struggling … that makes working in what
> is often chaos and crisis sane, safe and possible. I will never forget the birthday
> party they gave me in February just because they seemed to sense I needed
> something to celebrate. My birthday is in November!" (site 3)

At two sites, the priority on personal development and nurturing seems to have led to a blurring

of the distinction between supporting employees and helping program participants in the projects'

prevention rationale. Staff development and support were seen as an integral element of the

community prevention strategy. :

> Decisions are not carried top down. Staff and residents input carry the same
> weight. There is a lot of respect for people's decisions. (site 2)

> … time is taken to listen to staff who have specific needs … several food programs
> are offered to staff and residents … We can say that the organizational climate is
> very conducive to human resource development and that the project cares about the
> development of the staff and (board members) beyond their involvement in the
> project. (site 2)

> At Better Beginnings, managers do not differentiate between staff and clients. The
> emphasis is on individual support and empowerment regardless of the individual's
> position in the project. (site 3)

> … also assures a respect for the place, ideas or beliefs that (staff) may currently
> hold … a belief in the unfolding or development of the individual through safe
> exploration and learning. (site 3)

… a group of genuinely caring people, not just with clients but with each other. We seem to have created a culture that cherishes each of us, perhaps more for our differences than our similarities. (site 3)

A parallel to the emphasis upon staff support and development has been a priority for staff training and education identified in some site reports:

One of the ways in which staff were helped to handle their job successfully was by providing them with extensive training and support … computer skills, first aid, conflict resolution, anti-racism, self-employment and economic development, active living, CPR …. (site 6)

… management has enhanced opportunities for personal and professional development by providing ongoing staff training using both internal and external resources…Training has not only focused on programming issues but also on interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and broader organizational issues. (site 1)

… But education is not the main criteria for hiring, living in the community, agreeing with the vision, being able to work with children were some of the criteria for most positions. The regular training has helped staff develop skills needed for the job. (site 2)

But hiring community members also meant putting in lots of training in order to give them the skills to do the job. During the first two years of the project, (there were) lots of discussion around money for training. (site 2)

A central element to staff development was creating an environment in which people felt safe. Basic to this sense of safety was trust between participants and, for this purpose, the creation of positive personal relationships was considered essential, but not always in evidence at every site:

… (a) management process in which collaboration between different groups … is evident everywhere … personal relationships … the key to real partnership in which participants regard each other as colleagues, peers and equals. (site 5)

… the experience of neighbourhood residents … was critical in building a sense of trust in engaging the process … part of this trust comes from having experienced that their participation really does make a difference and that if it doesn't work one way another way can always be found.… (site 5)

.. relationships and meetings tend to be informal … people are on a first name basis … People laugh and share personal experiences so that many friendships are made. Feelings of warmth infuse the project. (site 6)

… project staff also indicated that they felt listened to by the Project Manager and the Executive Team. This contributed to their feelings that they were valued members of the project…. (site 6)

Despite the tensions and struggles staff experienced, a great deal of friendship has been observed. Several staff members enjoy each other's company outside working hours. Staff has come together to enjoy milestones and special times of the year…One staff said:"The staff is like a family and we offer support to each other.". (site 1)

"I feel guarded because I don't feel (managers) have … leadership skills, conflict resolutions skills, communication skills.…" (site 4)

"… a major stress for me (is that) I don't feel that … my feedback .. . if it is not positive, is welcome .. . I feel it is met with defensiveness." (site 4)

… one element that has partially become a reality is the dialogue between the professional agencies and the parents … we noticed that generally the atmosphere seemed to rely mainly on the goodwill of all the partners in joining their efforts… Because of this goodwill we observed many actions … which contributed to an atmosphere of collaboration. (site 7)

The daily operation of the project requires a strong collaboration between staff members … Consequently, a sense of team work between the members of the managerial staff, the programs and working group personnel is established. (site 7)

During meetings, a few minutes are taken at the beginning and at the end to circle in or out. This is an occasion for people to talk about anything … This social support is very important in keeping staff and members' energy up and showing appreciation and respect for people's feelings. (site 2)

… the creation and provision of a psychologically safe place for people to grow and develop. This acceptance .. . demonstrates the genuine belief of managers that people are both the community's and the Project's greatest assets. (site 3)

Among the elements seen as vital to people-centred project management at a few sites have been flexible and responsive procedures and egalitarian management structures and procedures. At sites 2 and 3, the site reports included clear statements from the Project Coordinators

expressing their strong personal reluctance to exercise the authority over staff often assumed by executive directors of social agencies. On the other hand, confusion about responsibilities and overly complex methods of decision-making and work coordination have been amount the most common sources of conflict and frustration at these demonstration sites. The site placing the highest emphasis in its site report upon flexible and changing management procedures also talked the most about staff conflict and frustration. Whatever the merits of flexible and egalitarian project management, it is apparently easy to step over the line and create excessive ambiguity. With this ambiguity may come conflict and a loss of feelings of trust and safety:

(The value placed on flexibility)

> … because roles are fluid, it provides residents with choices as to how they want to participate in the project. They can participate as volunteers, as participants, or as paid individuals without any role posing limitations on the opportunity to play other roles. (site 6)

> … staff appreciated the freedom that allowed them to be creative in developing their jobs. In addition, they learned to be flexible so that they could adapt to the changing nature of the project and the community. (site 6)

> Management has … promoted flexibility in how the project operates… A few examples include changes in the original structure, front-line and management roles, and communication and reporting procedures … have resulted in positive developments and many lessons learned. At times, change and/or how it was brought about created uncertainty and conflict within the project. (site 1)

> A flexible working style is a written or unwritten requirement of all staff positions… Change is difficult for most people. Some staff, however, need and want flexibility, others work best with set responsibilities and procedures. (site 1)

> … the employer must show great adaptabilities … to obtain maximum flexibilities from… employees … flexibility of their working schedules and their degree of participation often depend on their responsibilities towards their families … on the other hand, this type of task management necessitates … a constant coordination and supervision of the employee's responsibilities … the conditions surrounding teamwork must be clearly defined and constantly reminded … the tasks performed deserves an ongoing coordination from the managerial staff. (site 7)

> Most of the general planning and paper work … is done by the central management. But in reality the small self-managed teams … takes charge of

running the programs and managing the different program sites … as one interviewee stated: "We spread responsibility through several people. One person does not have only one job". (site 2)

… the manner in which managers and workers consolidate the small size of the organization with the large amount of work that needs to be done. Staff and managers routinely assist in tasks outside of their job description … managers pitch in to do the heavy or maintenance work required to keep the community house in order … Categories such as overtime and voluntarism collapse under the seamlessness with which those workers move back and forth between paid and unpaid work with the project …. For employees who are residents, the boundaries between employment, voluntarism and being a good neighbour are particularly fluid. (site 3)

I have never worked in a situation where collectively the boundaries between work, home, family, hope, vision and daily experience are permeable for everyone. People live and work here. There are cross overs …. (site 3)

(egalitarian organizations)

Another feature… is the egalitarian nature of the organization. Front-line staff believe that their work was valued, that their input was just as important as that of anyone on the project. (site 6)

The … round table type of organization … means that anyone in the organization is free to seek support, advice, assistance and action from the project managers …. (site 6)

An open door policy has been supported to build on atmosphere where all opinions were considered valuable. People also have been encouraged to discuss issues …. This has helped people to be more active in decisions. (site 1)

The staff organizational structure and job descriptions conveyed a clear accountability structure. From the beginning, however, management has promoted, at all levels of staff, open participation and sharing in decision-making about administrative, programming and organizational issues … Putting the principle of inclusion into practice while trying to be efficient and clear has been a challenge …. (site 1)

This theme is one of the key elements of the project philosophy. The project chose a flat salary structure. The Coordinator now earns annually only $4000 more than the community workers. She has twice refused a salary increase. (site 2)

I believe in people's ability to supervise themselves... I feel embarrassed to supervise people. I am a deep democrat... I don't want to be seen as the boss ... I believe in kindness and sharing ... I rarely visit the programs because I don't want staff to think I am coming to supervise them …. (site 2)

… supervision. I do not see it as a great word…. (site 3)

(ambiguity)

Part of the difficulty … was that most neighbourhood staff also played roles as community leaders. In these roles they sat as equals among other partners …. As neighbourhood staff, they were under the supervision of professional staff … the solution was to shift to a Team supervision approach. (site 5)

(board) decided that a parent could not be a paid, regular part-time or full-time staff member and continue as a member of the (board) ... (but) parents who were hired could continue on the other (board) committees as volunteers … mixed feelings at the (board) about this issue. (site 6)

"Everything was new, no one was sure which was the right way … everyone was very territorial, this is mine ... and that ability to really work and share wasn't as strong as it is.(site 6)

The unclear... boundaries between the Project Manager's and the (board's) role and authority in addition to the Project Manager's direct relationship with the Government Site Supervisor probably added to the high level of accountability the Project Manager assumed over the process. (site 1)

… Some people viewed the inconsistency as necessary to respond effectively to different situations. It was a matter of being flexible. There were indications that inconsistency had its drawbacks as well, such as creating room for distrust and conflict between managers and between front-line staff and managers. (site 1)

Changes occurred in all three program areas and in administration... Adjusting to these changes required a great deal of energy and put extra demands on staff and financial resources. One person said that "work is really busy and so chaotic and it's very hard for people to sit down and breathe" (interview, January 1996) …. Another change has been staff turnover and numerous maternity leaves and sick leaves … most leaves were taken by Team Leaders … the frequency of the moves in program and, particularly, office locations also affected staff…. (site 1)

… what impacted me the most, for a long time I felt frustrated that why wasn't I given more clear directions and why were there all these contradictory messages" (January 1996). (site 1)

> One of the challenges for the managers has been to set out the authority they have to make decisions about aspects of programs for which they are responsible and … balance this decision-making authority against two other authorities … the (board) and the sponsor agency. (site 4)

> There was an issue of whether staff could vote … "are you a resident first or an employee first?" … decided that two staff persons who were also residents could be on the (board) as designated community representatives. (site 3)

> … In general, the word supervision (at the site) means support… It is nice to know who is the boss but they don't seem to know. You feel what you do is as important as what they do.… (site 3)

In response to the frustrations of excessive ambiguity and conflict within some projects, a common response has been to seek to establish clearer procedures and, in some instances, to simplify decision-making, governance and management procedures. There has also been a pattern of developing or adopting more formal policies and procedures to guide decision making and behaviours:

> …the implementation of a team approach combined with clearer personnel policies and individual performance evaluations was able to defuse much of the tensions around these issues and provide a workable model for … supervising neighbourhood residents. (site 5)

> The transfer of management and leadership responsibilities from service providers… to the Project Manager and the Program Coordinators … (created) stress … required a clarification of roles and time to sort out these changing roles. (site 6)

> One of the lessons learned was that a smaller group was necessary to govern the project and this was reorganized in order to encourage more active participation in project development and management. (site 6)

> … incidents such as these led to more formal systems and procedures related to supervision and performance appraisal being implemented in the project, which also helped deal with these kinds of difficulties. (site 6)

> As programs and staff grew … management decided to initiate the management team to maintain ongoing communication and coordinate planning across programs. Another major change was the addition of … a Program Coordinator to take up some of the duties of the (Project Manager) … supervising the team leaders and overseeing the day-to-day program operations. (site 1)

Promoting clear communication lines within staff and between staff and (the steering committee) has been made to enhance the decision-making process …. The staff team has also worked with an organizational consultant … to clearly define staff roles and procedures for communication, decision making and conflict resolution. (site 1)

In 1996, the (steering committee) approved the adoption of the personnel policies and procedures (of the host agency).… (site 1)

… hiring a Program Coordinator with administrative experience was viewed as a success.… (site 1)

The (board) needs to decide what decisions staff should make and what decisions the (board) should make …. The sponsor agency representative said that she thought agencies were not included enough in the decision-making process. (site 4)

… different perceptions among participants about where decision-making authority lay: some felt it lay with the sponsor agency and their director, some felt it lay with the Project Coordinator and some felt it lay with the (board) and by extension the community. (site 4)

… the project has moved from an informal model in which the community involvement in the management of the project was becoming less and less clear.… (site 2)

… have developed personnel, volunteer and sexual harassment policies since they've been elected.… (site 2)

9.0 RESIDENTS AS EMPLOYEES

Hiring residents was described as a priority at every demonstration site. Typically, resident employment was seen as an important aspect of empowering both those employed as well as their communities. It was also considered a way to increase the economic resources available to the host communities. In a few site reports, local residents were identified as having some unique advantages as employees:

> In addition to increasing community employment, [the project] considered hiring residents as staff as key to carrying out successful programs. Hiring resident staff was considered an advantage for doing outreach and front line work because they could better identify with the experiences and issues of parents living in the community. Resident staff are also in a good position to also help identify community needs and desires. (site 1)

> "It is not like I'm a family visitor and this is my client, it's like we're both at the same level …. It's things that you generally have gone through … you know what it's like and you know how they're feeling." (site 6)

> … community members are knowledgeable about the values and beliefs of the community … bring a different perspective to program planning, monitoring and evaluation … two-thirds of (project) staff are community members … community staff … share information about what they are learning with friends, family and neighbours. (site 7)

> (most) project staff are community residents. This keeps them in regular contact with the community, makes them able to hear and understand their needs. (site 2)

> … ensures that staff wages, training, energy and leadership are more likely to stay in the community after work hours and after contracts end. (site 2)

The language used by residents to describe their experiences as Better Beginnings, Better Future employees was consistently positive across the sites. The most common appreciations expressed were the opportunity to do work which they considered worthwhile and their personal growth which they attributed to their work experience:

> "I've learned. I've grown. This was the best thing I ever did. The project has moulded me … I would say that I had good instincts, abilities but the project just went deep and.. yanked them out to the surface … it has brought me to the point

where I know I can go anywhere in my community and actually do lots of stuff ….
It's been a life saver." (site 6)

"Empowering and freeing. These are the two words I think of when I think of my
experience here." (site 6)

…much of the growth appears to have come from staff's sense of the importance
of the work they are doing and their identification with the goals and values of the
project. (site 6)

… residents said the following were benefits of being employed by (the project):
financial security, enhanced parenting skill and knowledge, enhanced professional
skills, gaining self-esteem and confidence, developing a deeper understanding of
other cultures, and new friendships. (site 1)

Many state their experiences about how (the project) has enriched their daily
lives… many interviewed parents indicated that the experience acquired through
the project, as an employee or a volunteer, has given them the initiative to join
other activities and to participate in other committees and organizations in the
community … "made me feel useful in the community." (site 7)

• "… working with the community is what I found really rewarding …
• … when you see what you have started with and what's been accomplished, it
is rewarding that way …
• … when I go out into the community, I feel appreciated and that is what keeps
me going …
• … seeing results of quality inherent in the (day care) centres … affecting families
in the centres …
• … it is with seeing the results, but being empowered and taking on leadership
roles and it is just so exciting." (site 4)

• "… I have a great deal more pride living in (the neighbourhood). I like being
able to channel information between the community and programs …
• … I really feel like the whole community is like a family …
• … I have made a lot of friends … the more people you know the more contacts
you have .… this really makes you feel safe walking the streets. It is good for the
kids to see us .… as a familiar face they know that they have a safe place to go …"
(site 2)

• "… They stop you in the street and talk to you …
• … kids aren't afraid to run to my house if they are in trouble …
• … I have been recognized as someone who can be trusted with children and with
information. It is good that people in the neighbourhood trust other adults …

● … my children have met many of these people. It has become an extended family for them. All of the changes I am making will benefit my children…" (site 2)

● "There is a lot of training. There is lots of education given to us freely. It has changed my life-communication, how I work with other people…
● The training has boosted my self-esteem. I have a better understanding of where people come from and it's easy to share…" (site 2)

● "… It got me out from within myself … they brought it out of me … I might not have done it on my own …
● … I found it broadened my horizons … I used to stay closer to home. I met more new people, made new perspectives. I know the neighbourhood on a grander scale…
● … taking the head out of the ground is not always positive …. All of a sudden I saw these horrible things going on … (the project) made me aware of how much better thing could be … but then I wanted to get to another place (reference to doing drugs when she became overwhelmed)." (site 3)

There seems to be general satisfaction of staff working (for the project). There seems to be a sense that… they are different from other organizations .… Family Visitors indicated … they enjoy helping people and they feel they are really making a difference. (site 3)

"I'm going to school now. I've worked with kids before and liked doing it. This just topped it off. It gave me the initiative to go back (to school)." (site 3)

As described in earlier Resident Involvement Report, hiring community residents has siphoned off some of the volunteer leadership available to the projects and created a few tensions as residents competed for some jobs:

… there was a loss of volunteer leadership when residents became neighbourhood staff … also conflict about holding two positions, staff and volunteer leader .… (site 5)

.. the issues (residence versus experience) arose and lingered throughout the hiring process for the frontline positions …. I've had some feedback that the positions should be advertised as they were intended and others feel we should do it differently because there was so much pain in the previous method. (site 5)

… the designation of neighbourhood staff was ended …. The qualifications for all positions were not limited to neighbourhood residents above other qualifications …. These recommendations made it clear that the permanent positions were not employment training positions … other money was needed to design an

employment training program which was open only to neighbourhood residents….
(site 5)

… the person who chaired the Executive Team and the Steering Committee from
the inception of the project … was successful in obtaining a staff position .…
(site 6)

… some parents have become less active in their volunteer roles as they have taken
jobs .… a challenge to recruit new parents on an ongoing basis .…. (site 6)

Some staff feel that they are sometimes no longer involved as community
members. It also creates some jealousy at the beginning a source of difficulty
between residents. Lots of volunteers applied for positions within the project and
this sometimes created competition and deception for those who did not get the job.
(site 2)

… the effect of hiring all of these people for Family Visitors is that you have taken
away the core of volunteers - will it be like starting from scratch? (site 3)

Residents as project employees as well as their employers had to confront the challenge
of setting boundaries around neighbourhood employees' work and deciding if outside-of-work
expectations should be different for resident and non-resident employees:

Another challenge for hiring neighbourhood residents was the high expectations
that were placed on those persons from their peers in the community .…
"Sometimes we feel like we have a certain code and that people have certain
standards for us even when we're not working .…" This issue arose when some
neighbourhood residents began to question the conduct of .… neighbourhood staff
persons during their 'off-duty' time … placed the neighbourhood staff under
intense scrutiny .…. (site 5)

Another concern related to being a resident staff member was that some people
held different expectations for resident and non-resident staff. Some staff expected
residents to be more active in community development activities outside their work
(with the project) to encourage other community parents to do the same .…(site 1)

… whether employees (residents) are taking part in programs as staff or
participants they are always role models for other parents and must always behave
in a professional manner. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. (site 4)

One of the challenges that I have seen occur within the staff groups has been the
balance of work life and personal life .…. For those people who tend to be more
private about their personal lives there is pressure to be more accessible in a

personal way .… Particularly for staff who also live in the Better Beginnings community. It is not uncommon for someone to be a Family Visitor by day and see that family at the grocery store when shopping … or to have the family as a neighbour. In a sense there is a pull to have personal and work life merge and this is an ongoing challenge with the project. (Site Research Team's comments, April 1997). (site 4)

"It is hard living in the community that you work in sometimes. I have to learn that certain days are just for family …. In some ways workers may change after being hired … we are not in many ways the eyes and the ears of the community to the same degree that we were." (site 2)

… a consideration has been whether the behaviour of a staff person on a weekend should affect his or her employment and the degree to which personal staff crises reflect on the Project's over-all credibility. Living in the neighbourhood means that personal issues of staff are common knowledge .… issues concerning staff have included hard drug use and dealing, the possibility of assault charges being laid and the abuse of a staff member by a violent partner. (site 3)

"… difficult for people in these neighbourhoods. Nobody's private lives are ever going to be completely clean … cannot expect members to be forever a role model." (site 3)

Non-residents are seen by residents as having the ability to get away from the community and see a different picture. Not being able to [get away] is seen as a difficulty by some and not by others. (site 3)

Despite the projects' public value of employing residents, very different proportions of staff have been residents from site to site. Five sites (1, 2, 3, 4, 6) have reportedly stressed being a resident as a criteria for employment for many of their positions. Others (5, 7) seem to have given greater weight to formal qualifications and experience. In addition, in several site reports, concerns were raised, usually by program supervisors and managers, about the suitability of the skills of some resident employees for their responsibilities and about the extra supervision challenges and the training requirements of resident employees:

… the commitment to hire from within the neighbourhood … had to be balanced with the Better Beginnings commitment to providing a high quality program … getting the best possible staff … paying them well … minimizing turnover. (site 5)

… Another challenge in hiring community residents has been balancing the desire to hire someone with the skills and qualifications necessary .… and … having a

person who was familiar with the community ... particularly problematic where a job called for a particular set of skills and qualifications which few community residents had .... (site 6)

... the real issue was hiring people who had very little work experience and who required on the job training to fulfill the job description. As well, making sure adequate systems were in place to support those staff who had little to no previous work experience was an issue. (site 1)

... Even if the majority of the positions ... required no specific formal education, many employees hold (formal) qualifications which facilitate the delivery of high quality programs .... (site 7)

[A major challenge was] in training of peer staff to have the skills that they need to do the job ... (we were) not dealing with people who had a set of professional skills .... (site 4)

"I guess I feel that there are people who are not skilled to do their job ... I wonder if we (family visitors) have the skills to do the job as we are expected (to do) ... I guess I feel as a (family) visitor more exposed ... because there is our evaluation forms...." (site 4)

"What is it like to manage community residents? ... I feel like I have them on a bungee cord, to help them keep focus...." (site 4)

(Family Visitor Coordinator) ... feels that supervision is higher for para-professionals and the needs are different. (site 3)

(Playgroup Coordinator) "I always have to remind them to ensure quality; they are preoccupied; I always have to be on my toes and do it tactfully ... always have to be reminded how important it is to disinfect the toys, to do particular functions." (site 3)

... the Family Visitor has no certification ... are they qualified to do their jobs (in other organizations)? .... It appears that there is some suspicion about what they do .... One Family Visitor asked staff (at the host agency) "so what you are saying is that we are half-assed?" (site 3)

Some (Family Visitors) seem more able to follow through independently than others. There is difficulty for the Family Visitor Coordinator to supervise the differing skill levels ... the emphasis is to support the weak areas to improve them. This may mean more work than initially foreseen. (site 3)

10.0 MANAGERIAL EXPERIENCES AND PROCESSES

10.1 Burden and Benefits

Several site reports highlighted the pivotal importance of the Project Coordinator/Manager in the creation and the maintenance of their demonstration projects. The influence of the Project Coordinator is evident in many sections of this report. Their experiences, preferences and working styles account, in part, for the clear differences observed between sites:

> During the first year of the project, service providers and a small number of parents managed the project. It was not until the Project Manager was hired that the project began to grow and develop ... it is important to hire key staff early on. (site 6)

> The unclear boundaries between the Project Manager and the Steering Committee's role and authority in addition to the Project Manager's direct relationship with the Government ... probably added to the higher level of accountability the Project Manager assumed over the process. (site 1)

> (The Project Coordinator) ... ensures the general coordination of all programs and their relevance ... assumes responsibility for the project employees' performance appraisals ... answers for all the project's actions to the Coordinating Committee ... sponsoring agency ... Government representative ... (site 7)

> ... The (Project Coordinator's) charisma, influence and her ability to cultivate a [team] have ensured that her ideological persuasion forms the cornerstone of (the management approach at the project). (Site Research Team's comment) (site 3)

In addition to the Project Coordinators' people-centred approach to management and their efforts expended to coordinate diverse staff, programs and other stakeholders, the site reports communicate that most of the Project Coordinators/Managers have a heavy, expanding and, at times, for some, onerous workload:

> The workload for management was immense. The workload plus the multiple and often competing priorities from external sources added to the challenges of managing (the project). The management's commitment to the community and ensuring success in a community that had become cynical of research and program interventions exerted a great deal of pressure on management. (site 1)

"… it's never ending ... There is also a great deal of work involved … supervision … working with … committees .. . coordinating with the (host agency) and outside agencies, helping develop the research and being accountable to the government. This makes the job very demanding … especially demanding when the project was signing its first contract … (looking over the last six weeks) …. my stress level … my kids said you lied when you said you would have more time for us … (the) amount of time (I put in) over June per week was 60 hours. (site 6)

… the Coordinator' duties progressively expanded … works with all the categories of participants often acting as an intermediary between the Coordinating Committee, the sponsoring agency, the (staff) and the project's volunteers, the working groups and the families … "it is like there are many bosses. The instructions and the expectations come from many sources and you have to put it all together. It is an experience which definitely makes one grow." (January 1996) (site 7)

(the Project Coordinator) has performed admirably under considerable pressure and confusion and their only concerns were about stress. (The Project Coordinator) was encouraged to take time [off]. (site 4)

"It's been difficult at times, mostly around staff. For me that was the biggest challenge.. . I've had to work through a lot of things and you know, I've had to deal with a lot of very difficult things.. . It has helped me to grow professionally …." (site 4)

Things are not always easy for the central management which also deals with lots of different community requests … and the management of projects funded by other grants …. It was a very busy project. Right at the beginning we received lots of money from different sources, there were lots of projects running at the same time. We have lots of people always coming and consulting with the office .. . "this is available to the community, we don't turn them down." (site 2)

"… Project coordinator is beyond reproach. She puts her heart and soul and I don't know how she is still here. She is stretched in so many directions like a piece of hot bubble gum …." (site 3)

● " I have a fair amount to do with (host agency). I go to management meetings one morning every two weeks and a staff meeting for two hours every two weeks … (I am the) staff representative to the community relations committee … on pay equity committee … work in the community fair …"
● At supper (the Project Coordinator) was sweeping the floor, cleaning the table, mopping floors and all of the people from (the host agency) marvelled at her and said "you get grants and mop floors …"

●… when the Playgroup Coordinator was particularly busy and tired, [the Project Coordinator] decided the best use of services was for herself to go in several mornings a week to help set up …

●… has spend a lot of her time concerned with issues of grants and grant applications .… (site 3)

"… can we put our hearts into this knowing that it might end? A lot of us, from what I feel personally and from them, we feel overwhelmed, tired, feel most of us have too much to do already, now we have to raise 4.5 million dollars in 6 months." (May 1996) (site 3)

While comments about feeling that they were carrying an excessive burden were more common for Project Coordinators/Mangers, there was some echoing of these concerns, along with other concerns, from managers in two site reports:

"At the same time (as an open door consultation process), the leadership team is responsible for ensuring that things get done … and that the project's programs meet reasonable standards of quality. This can produce a very stressful and frustrating environment for the project managers … filled with expectations to be all sorts of things for all people … so it can get a little bit crazy .…" (site 6)

"Being a manager can be a much more isolating experience than being a frontline staff person. It's been like being on an island … every now and then the way off (the island) tends to get slammed shut on you … so you're left isolated." (July 1995) (site 6)

"All of a sudden it grew bigger and the administration of the project became very important and that became an onerous task that we all had to grapple with and I don't think that was where any of our areas of expertise were … It happened to the team leaders who ended up having more management and administrative tasks as opposed to the area of expertise they had." (interview, January 1996) (site 1)

On the organizational level, on the level which required long-range, strategic thinking, planning … many people who were involved in that work didn't have the skills or the experience to operate from that perspective. People always seemed to be … very reactive … running up and down because there's this crisis." (interview with organizational consultant) (site 1)

"Everyone felt too much ownership especially among management. That group needed to sometimes relax." (interview, January 1996) (site 1)

The workloads for management was immense ... plus the multiple and often competing priorities from external sources. The management's commitment to the community ... exerted a great level of pressure on management." (Site Research Team's comments) (site 1)

However, although these comments were less prevalent in the site reports than descriptions of management burden, there were descriptions of the personal benefits of being a manager at a Better Beginnings, Better Futures demonstration site:

The leadership team ... also describe a number of benefits and gratifications that they derive from their jobs ... expressed appreciation for the kindness and support that were provided and enjoyed the opportunities to be involved in an innovative program that had a chance to provide some significant benefits to children and families. (site 6)

"Personally it's helped me heighten my awareness and increase knowledge of infant's and young children's needs...I've also learned about other cultures...My life experiences are richer because of this." (site 1)

"... offers the possibility of experiencing many types of administrative methods and different approaches. From my point of view it is very pleasant. We acquire lots of experience since we have the latitude to try new things when we believe that they will work and to change them if they don't work." (site 7)

"I've always enjoyed it since the beginning, it is creative, never a boring moment ... sometimes I would like to have more time, not to have people [knocking on] my door. Always busy. I've learned a heck of a lot. I'm still learning and it's wonderful." (May 1996) (site 3)

"Stressful. Over the years the role has expanded. Now it involves teens and the community ... There is no more money, no more resources yet we are doing so much more ... But I don't want you to think that ... I am complaining. It's good here." (July 1996) (site 3)

"It's been a gift to have this experience of learning. I have learned an awful lot from the people I've worked with and the people in the neighbourhood ... lots of opportunity to be creative ... I believe that it's made a difference ... moments of frustration, vision and hope ...." (site 3)

While there are areas of agreement, the overall impression is that there are substantial differences in management methods, burdens and pleasures from site to site as there have been for many of the other topics discussed in this report. Also, some caution is recommended in

drawing conclusions about management at any particular site from this report. We have been limited by the depth and scope of information contained in the site reports and, even then, there were many organization and management patterns described in individual site reports that could not be incorporated into this cross-site report. For more detailed information readers are referred to these site reports. Nonetheless, as highlighted in earlier sections of this report, there does not appear to be any single approach to project organization and management that characterizes every or even most of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures demonstration sites.

10.2   Staff Supervision and Education

Two of the site (2, 5) reports included strong statements that group or team supervision was the preferred approach for staff work coordination and, in some instances for program design and development. Team supervision was supplemented by other staff and management meetings and sometimes by individual managers' monitoring of staff and programs:

The solution (to tension between non-professional frontline staff and professional supervisors) was to shift to a team supervision approach … teams were formed around specific functions or program components and teams would be responsible for managing the programs, identifying problems and developing solutions. (site 5)

… in reality the small self-managed team composed mainly of (program workers) take charge of running the programs and managing the different program sites… (site 2)

… committed to … team management. Basic is the value the project puts on individual workers and their responsibility to their particular teams, which in turn are accountable to the larger staff collective, the Project Coordinator and finally the [board] …. Project staff use team management to run the programs. The team meets on a regular basis … they divide tasks, organize their work daily or weekly … staff are grouped by program sites .… (site 2)

Developing a team management approach was not an easy task .… For the staff not having a clear supervisor gives them more ownership but also could create some confusion in boundaries …. "Most staff don't have experience in team management… Team management has been very poorly defined, too loose, we need to define it more clearly … when staff have problems, they don't sometimes know who to go to solve those problems.…" (site 2)

The site reports for sites 1 and 7 described a more formal and individualized approach to staff supervision:

> … the Program Coordinator replaced the Project Manager in supervising the Team Leaders (except for the community developer) … the Project Manager has always supervised the Office Coordinator … the Team Leaders supervised the program component staff. The (Family Visitors) were jointly supervised by the Team Leader and the Program Coordinator. The Team Leader did case management supervision while the Program Coordinator did performance supervision and evaluation. (site 1)

> … this type of task management necessitates … a constant coordination and supervision of the employee's responsibilities … a person may end up with the feeling of performing other duties besides his/her own … the conditions surrounding team work must be clearly defined and constantly reminded … our task performance deserves an ongoing coordination from the managerial staff. (site 7)

Individual staff performance appraisals were carried out in a fairly traditional manner and were becoming more formal at various demonstration sites:

> .. the supervisee is provided with a job description and is given the opportunity to participate in refining the job description through priority setting and clarifying job expectations. Goals are set … and these form the focus of ongoing and regular constructive feedback .. … Each employee receives an annual performance appraisal which is related to her/his goals and job description. (site 6)

> … with a permanent position, the employee goes through a performance appraisal after three months ... usually receives a verbal evaluation by the Project Coordinator and … the person responsible for daily supervision … the first formal evaluation is after six months .. . the criteria … are based on personnel … policies adopted by the project's [Board] .. . a written document is finally prepared for the employee .. . signed by the Project Coordinator and the employee .. .. (site 7)

> Project Coordinator is responsible for supervising and doing performance evaluations for the management level staff. In turn, each of the management persons then supervises and does performance evaluations on the persons in the team …. Two members (… one from sponsor agency and one community representative) of the Hiring Committee … (carry out) performance reviews of the Project Coordinator. (site 4)

> Recently the (Board) has developed a more formal process for staff evaluation. Annual job reviews for each individual staff is done with the Coordinator. Staff are

first encouraged to write their job descriptions describing what they are really doing … the Personnel Committee is now the body which establishes the process for staff evaluation. The Coordinator ensures that staff evaluations are done while the Committee ensures that the Project Coordinator is evaluated by the [board] … evaluation of the Project Coordinator includes staff who meet, make comments and send them to the evaluation committee. The research team also participates in the evaluation of the Project Coordinator. (site 2)

10.3   Hiring

Hiring their complement of staff for the project was one of the first major challenges confronting demonstration sites and in most site reports it was described as a huge and somewhat intimidating undertaking:

Assembling a team of staff persons was one of the largest challenges the project faced. As a new project, it had no established procedures or policies for hiring. (site 5)

… Schedules A and B were not approved until the end of '92 …. Once this was done the Government Committee indicated that project staff should be hired and the project should be operating by January 3, 1993. This put a great deal of stress on the project ... we're talking about hiring 4 - 5 positions within the next three weeks ... just before Christmas …. (site 6)

Certain hirings were rushed due to imposed time constraints by the funders (e.g. December 1992 10 people hired on 3-month contracts) (site 1)

Assembling and preparing a complement of paid staff appears to have been one of the most challenging and time-consuming tasks of the first two years … the biggest challenge was the timelines to get everyone hired, given the nature of the project where the community had to be involved in all of the decision-making ... a really strenuous time … from March '92 to March '93 … to hire 20 people essentially. (site 4)

At every site, residents were involved in the hiring process and, in some cases, a variety of other project stakeholders as well. Some sites also used non-traditional ways of advertising, particularly for positions in which residents were more likely to be interested, such as in local newspapers, posters and word-of-mouth. Only the site 1 report described any substantial concerns with staff turnover or dismissals:

Another … change has been staff turnover and numerous maternity leaves and sick leaves … of significance is that most of the leaves were taken by Team Leaders …. (site 1)

Three managers said that they either left, were asked to leave or were intending to leave the project, in part because their working style was in conflict with the style of other managers. (site 1)

11.0 HOST ORGANIZATION AND PROJECT INDEPENDENCE

11.1 Evolving Organizations

Project organization and management at these seven demonstration sites is clearly a work in progress. Organizational governance and management structures and procedures which have the potential to be reasonably stable over a period of years are not yet in place at most sites. Indeed, at most sites, it is not clear what organizational and management arrangements are likely to become in the upcoming years. It does seem that there is a trend towards clarifying procedures and adopting more formal polices and procedures:

> This discussion of salaries also reflects the extent to which the management of this project is in its infancy and reflects the lack of procedures and protocols for doing basic things. (site 5)

> … it was not until late in 1992, more than a year after the position was filled, that a performance evaluation took place. What prompted this was an increase in the responsibilities of the (Project Coordinator) because of a major additional funding grant. (site 5)

> We're starting to develop a lot of (written policies) … we feel that it is important for us as an organization … if we want to go beyond 1997. (site 5)

> By 1993 … the (Board) put aside the notion of incorporation and in 1995 finally discarded this as an option ... (yet) investing a great deal of energy and resources in developing an organizational structure, policies and procedures separate from the sponsor agency …" (site 1)

> … officially incorporated in April 1995 breaking away from the (host agency) ... transferring more management and administrative powers directly to the community. (site 2)

11.2 Relations with Host Organizations

Four site reports (1, 4, 5, 6) indicated that relations with the host organization are governed by a written agreement with the project and two site reports (1,5) said that the host organization is paid an administrative fee for their services for the project. Six projects (1, 2, 3,

4, 5, 7) had a single agency located within or providing service within their geographical area as
the host organization. These hosts included a Children's Aid Society, two community health
centres, a mental health/social agency, a neighbourhood community service agency and a native
friendship centre. Generally relations with these host agencies were described in positive terms,
although there were specific areas of tension at most sites. One site was located within a primary
school with a Board of Education as its host. This site reported far more extensive and ongoing
difficulties in host-project relations than the other sites. This may be because a bureaucracy as
large as a school board has less interest in and capacity to modify its procedures to accommodate
a local project:

> Since the project came under the auspices of the Board of Education, this had
> implications for personnel issues, particularly advertising and salaries. The project
> was bound by the regulations of the Board on these issues which did not necessarily
> suit the needs of the project …. Also, the process was conflictual … an us versus
> them quality to the interactions. (site 6)

> One of the most persistent and difficult challenges … in terms of staffing had to
> do with the fact that the project was sponsored by the Board of Education … was
> expected to adhere to the personnel policies, salary schedules and employment
> procedures of the Board … the members of the project's Steering Committee were
> very unhappy with their lack of control over the way … the first staff positions …
> were advertised … were not sent out to community newspapers and did not
> mention Better Beginnings by name or its philosophy. Living within the constraints
> of Board policies and procedures was a constant challenge for the project. (site 6)

> … a representative of the school stated that staff at the School Board office tend
> to see the services they provide to the project as something they're giving that is
> not valued. "They don't say thank you" (August 1996). Both project staff and
> volunteers and School Board staff have stated they do not feel valued by one
> another. (site 6)

Most demonstration projects received a standard set of services from their hosts who signed
legal agreements for the project, assumed responsibilities for finances and legal liabilities,
provided accounting services and paid project employees and provided employee benefits, and
offered administrative/managerial consultation and support. The amount of autonomy of the
project from the host organization varied from site to site and a number of site reports described
some ambiguity about where the actual authority for major project decisions rested. Most host

organizations had a representative on the project's governing body and selected governing committees. Use of project money to provide staff to enrich programs which already existed in established agencies was done at several sites, but site 4 had a unique arrangement in which all of its staff were employed and supervised by existing agencies, in the end, mainly by the host organization. Most of the other sites seemed to occupy an 'inbetween' space where, even though their staff were legally hired and paid by the host, they worked to a substantial extent following directions set by the project's governing structures and in project-identified work teams. Most sites were obliged to or chose to adopt the personnel policies of the host organizations. At the end of the time period for this report, only site 2 had ended its legal and administrative reliance on a host organization and established itself as an independent project organization:

(services and benefits from host organizations)

> (there is) a formal document of agreement which spelled out the responsibilities and accountability for each partner … (the host agency provided) … financial management and accounting, personnel and human resources, additional administrative consultation (about) … structure and organization, property management, staff supervision …. (site 5)

> … financial relationship between (the host agency) and the project has been overwhelmingly successful … the (host) finance manager has provided invaluable leadership and assistance on managing the finances, handling the elimination of a deficit and stickhandling through complex negotiations … with multiple funders. Finally, he has been flexible .… in the gradual transfer of more and more financial management and administration functions to the office manager of the project .… (site 5)

> The Board provides the host setting and space .… services in the areas of personnel, accounting and finance .… liability coverage for employees …. (site 6)

> The (agency name) is the sponsor agency .… (It) was requested to play that role because no other key player could … final contract was approved by the (project and the host) boards in August 1992 ... the contract stipulates a hands-off relationship between the two parties with respect to program development ... main role to issue financial accountability to the funders by providing financial services and budget management supervision. (The project) pays an administrative fee … for this service … contract stipulates that the Executive Director (of the host organization) be a member of the (project's Finance Committee).… (The) Executive Director also decided to join the (project Board) as she was directly

accountable for (the project) to the (host) board. In the area of personnel, the (host) plays the role of advisor. The host's legal liability … makes (them) responsible for signing employment contracts and termination letters …. (site 1)

The referring agency totally performed its management role … including the financial duties and ensuring a constant presence in relations between the project and the government. (site 7)

The sponsoring agency holds the legal responsibility for the project. It is therefore the sponsoring agency's representative who sign the contracts with the provincial government and who oversee the transfer of funds to the project … maintains the accounting systems, together with legal verification for its financial statements by an accounting firm at the end of each fiscal year… (project members) benefit from the sponsoring agency's professional protection insurance for their actions … guarantees the necessary supervision … participates in the training of project employees … does not (do) more than other agencies regarding the projects' various organizational aspects such as job openings, selection of employees and elaboration of internal (policies) …. These questions belong to the (project Board) … (host agency) remains open and available in offering supplementary support, always at the project's request. (site 7)

(report to project Board by host agency …) things that make integration hard: as sponsor agency having the responsibility (financial and legal) while allowing decisions to be made by the (project Board) … hours of (host) staff time, particularly the Executive Director and Administrative Assistant for conflict resolution, contract review, program development, hiring, personnel management, financial management, activities organization, (project Board) participation, inter-agency liaison, Ministry negotiations…. (site 4)

(The host) … choice happened after the (project) reviewed the philosophy and policies of that organization … (host organization) played an important role in hiring, contracts, financial proposals until the project's independence … has influenced much of the structure of (the project) … (host) chosen because … promoted an egalitarian, holistic approach to management … always used consensus decision making and did regular visioning of goals by individuals, small teams or the entire centre …. Assistant Director (of host) … was the direct supervisor of the … project and attended (Board) meetings … and the (project's) employees (were) employees of (the host). Their pay cheque is from the (host). The (host) has to account for the money … at most times does not interfere with programming …. All finances such as payroll, petty cash, etc. … were also organized through the (host). This was not always easy because it created another step in a lengthy decision process. (site 2)

… in return (the project) has resources you wouldn't otherwise have, nurse but also doctor and counsellor … there is the benefits package … resources such as projector, photocopier, grants that you can apply for that otherwise (you) couldn't …. The actual control in terms of programming is purely minimal - not a lot of power and control issues and therefore not a great need to be independent .… it also brings training, internally posted jobs for the staff.… (site 3)

Every demonstration site has adopted some or all of the personnel and management policies of the host agency. Also, there was substantial variation in the extent to which the demonstration projects were considered to be part of the host agencies. It is also clear that at some sites there was confusion about what authority rested with the project and what power the host agency held over the project. In every case, except for site 2, the host organization continued to hold legal and financial responsibility for the demonstration project:

"… there are still vestiges of a superior-inferior relationship between (the host agency) and (the project). The (host's) Manager of Finance embodies this relationship and thus is intimidating. (site 5)

"… the (host agency) is truly our employer, we have to go by their philosophy and the way they do things … may be slightly different .…" In the focus group with the frontline staff … questions were raised about whether the (project board) really had the ultimate authority in decision-making or not … "theoretically the (project Board) is at the top but in practice I think it is different." (site 4)

"(As Executive Director of the host agency) … I think I have a great deal (of influence) as the Executive Director responsible for all of the operations .… It's kind of a hands-off role … you give people the autonomy and they develop a culture of their own…" (site 4)

"As you know, personnel management deteriorated to a point where I (Executive Director of host organization) have taken direct management involvement and have attempted to implement a management style more consistent with the approach used at the (host organization). It remains to be seen if this improves personnel problems." (site 4)

Most decisions made by the (project's Board) had to be approved by (the host agency) board … never vetoed or held back a recommendation (from the project).… (site 2)

"I'm very firm about no deficit and monitoring the budget and employment … coaching the (Project Manager) through personnel issues. I invited the lawyer to

come to the (project Board) and I think that's helped…" the adjustment to more direct involvement from the (host agency) via the Executive Director was a little rocky in the beginning but seen as beneficial in the following years… (site 1)

Technically (the project) is part of the (host agency) … As such it is represented on the board (of the host agency) and the Project Coordinator is responsible to the Executive Director (of the host agency). While (project) staff are encouraged to go to the staff meetings at (the host) and sit on various (host) committees, realistically it is only feasible for the full-time staff to attend … (site 3)

11.3   Demonstration Project Independence and Long-Term Survival

When the site reports were written, the expectation was that demonstration project funding would end in 1997. This expected instability has coloured project organization as site representatives sought ways for their initiatives to continue beyond the anticipated termination of Better Beginnings project funding. Solutions were sought in locating program staff in existing agencies in the hope that these agencies would continue to support them, in seeking additional sources of funding, and in the establishment of the projects as independent non-profit corporations. Once again, we see different approaches being implemented at various demonstration sites. However, whatever the approaches tried, it did appear that Better Beginnings, Better Futures demonstration projects' survival at anywhere near their existing levels was unlikely at any location without a continuation of their base funding.

In the early stages of the demonstration projects, a few sites indicated that incorporation as an independent non-profit organization was considered one of their possible long-term goals:

(It was) understood … that the project would move towards incorporation as an independent organization as soon as possible… to function as a freestanding charitable organization … the agreement (with the host) was seen as … temporary. (site 5)

… the project also considered incorporating as a separate entity but this was discouraged by the government (December 1992) … the government is once again taking a dim view of Better Beginnings projects incorporating. (March 1995) (site 6)

… (Board) started thinking about incorporation in 1991 … option … was not pursued for several reasons … nevertheless, incorporation surfaced again … as the

end of the funding grew near. From April to June 1995 (debated) incorporation and decided against it ... not an easy decision to make.... (site 1)

As of 1996, three demonstration sites had incorporated. Site 2 now administers its funds and delivers its programs without any affiliation with a host organization. Site 7 has created an independent corporation and indicated its desire to run all prevention activities through this new corporation, but has not begun to do so. Site 5 has incorporated but was expressing some ambivalence about severing its arrangements with its host agency. The other sites were at various points on a continuum between pursuing organizational autonomy and integrating into the host organization. Except for sites 2 and 7, the site reports did not include a clear statement about a desirable long-term organizational status for the projects. With the acquisition of stable funding, the need to decide about the status of ongoing organizational structures for the demonstration-projects is likely to become increasingly necessary:

> In April of 1993, (the project) was finally incorporated ... had to revisit the arrangement with (the host agency) .... "We don't have trained financial staff to manage this large budget so I'd prefer to have it purchased ... government representatives prefer ... an established and credible agency managing the money" ... agreed that (the host agency) would continue to be the sponsor agency ... continue to have accountability for the financial management and accounting ... eventually the project began to handle more of the personnel and payroll responsibilities. (site 5)

> The most recent communication from the (Board of Education) (March 1995) is that discussion at the executive level has suggested that the project pursue incorporation rather than seek a vehicle through the Board. Also, it is felt that the use of the Board's charitable number would not be possible. (site 6)

> At the time of writing this report (October 1996) the project is in a strategic planning process with three other organizations ... to consider its future in the context of other agencies and the needs of the community. (site 6)

> (Incorporation was) not seen as a priority... was (seen as being not) compatible with the funder's integration objectives ... services providers provided their own perspective, which was against incorporation. The residents said they decided against incorporation because of experience and fear of being legally accountable for an organization ... also it would be extremely difficult for a new organization to survive with ... a climate of fiscal restraint ... Another means of long-term survival ... considered was integrating all the parts of (the project) into other

agencies... In the summer of 1995 ... prepared an integration proposal for (outside agency)... but ... progress has been slow ... Another method ... considered was integrating with the sponsor in the hope of securing long-term funding from the Ministry of Health ... still under consideration in June 1995... (site 1)

... Since the legal procedures for the corporation have been completed ... (the news corporation) appears to be developing at a slower rate than anticipated by its representatives ... hoping that the government would agree to transfer from now on the funds allocated (to the project) to (the new corporation) ... the government has chosen to delay their support to study the possible impacts of these endeavours ... caused many disappointments with (new corporation members) but it also motivated them to develop creative solutions in order to ensure (the new corporation's) autonomy when implementing activities. In the meantime (the new corporation) members will work at pursuing the (new corporation's) objectives (which are similar to the project's) ... by offering primary prevention programs and activities .... (site 7)

Within the Better Beginnings staff group there has been an unclear understanding about the role of the (host agency) .... And there seem to be differing views about how the (host agency) fits into the structure of Better Beginnings ... In spite of the lack of consistency or clarity there is clearly agreement ... that people want to continue this relationship and believe it has been very beneficial to Better Beginnings and the community as a whole .... (written communication, April 1997) (site 4)

What arrangements have been made for project independence from the sponsor agency? I guess I've been off base on this for many years .... I never knew this was a goal of (Better Beginnings) model. (written communication, April 1997) (site 4)

(The incorporated project) ... (board members) now take on the administrative work that was previously done by the sponsoring agency ... have developed personnel, volunteer and sexual harassment policies since they've been elected. (site 2)

In the last year, the project has started to focus on alternative ways to keep the project alive. (Board) meetings are becoming a forum in which ideas are shared and short-term solutions for people facing difficulties are being looked at as well as long-term solutions for the survival of the project. (site 2)

Better Beginnings is more of a struggling. We take it one (day) at a time and play it by ear. We have to be constantly reacting to the government .... Better Beginnings is struggling to survive .... (July 1996) (site 3)

Long-term survival has only recently become an issue. The Project Coordinator is facing many meetings away from the site in the upcoming year and is concerned what this will do to the local organization. At the same time, the other staff are seeing her under increasing stress and feel the stress themselves. (site 3)

PART III

12.0 GENERAL THEMES AND PATTERNS

12.1 There are Important Differences as well as Similarities in the Various Sites' Approaches to Project Organization and Management

Not surprisingly, given the different settings and the broad mandates of the demonstration sites and the emphasis on participatory development process at each site, the demonstration sites have important differences in their approaches to project governance, involving residents,[6] staffing, management, relations with the host agency, project independence and long term survival. While there are important characteristics shared between most sites, it would be inappropriate to look at arrangements at any particular site as if they are representative of organization and management for all of Better Beginnings, Better Futures. While project language is often similar across sites, actual project organization and management methods show substantial variance in many areas. In our opinion, this points to the importance in our research of understanding each demonstration site separately before trying to draw conclusions about the overall demonstration project's organization and management.

In reaction to an earlier draft of this report, some respondents highlighted the need to identify the project organization and management similarities among the demonstration sites as well:

(1) Each site has a group of trained community leaders.
(2) Each site has designated sub-groups with distinct responsibilities.

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[6]Resident in this report refers to someone who would be a potential adult participant in the demonstration site's prevention programs. This might be a person within a geographic neighbourhood or a parent of a child attending a particular school.

(3) Major decisions are made by consensus whenever possible; some groups make decisions by consensus only.[7]
(4) All sites have a holistic vision for service delivery.
(5) Each site has developed a process to ensure that community members have safe venues to participate.
(6) Each has a staff leader. (Site 2)

While there are many differences between the sites in how each is managed, they all appear to remain true to some clearly defined principles of management and practice. (Site 5)

I too found that there existed more similarities than differences among the sites. All emphasized participation over what we may term efficiency…. All sites consist of a volunteer board with 50% to 60% community participation; all have a commitment to consensus decision-making and each are working with the guiding principle of skills development. Another commonality … is their belief that community participants have a strong voice and have ownership of the project. Most sites(5 of 7) rely heavily upon their host organization and truly integrate services with them.…. (site 4)

As authors, we do not question these similarities. However, we do caution that there may be important differences in how things are done even in these areas of similarity. We maintain that it is necessary to understand each site on its own terms before concluding that there is a common Better Beginnings, Better Futures approach to project organization and management. We may find that the differences are as important as the similarities.

12.2   A Strong Commitment Based on a Firmly Held Belief in the Value of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures

There is no doubt that many paid and volunteer participants have been very committed to Better Beginnings, Better Futures and they have invested a great deal of time and energy into creating these demonstration projects. This is true at all sites. It is also clear that these efforts often have been guided by strongly held principles and beliefs. At all sites, key participants have been motivated by the original prevention principles built into Better Beginnings. At most sites, there has been a strong emphasis upon participatory development principles and processes. In

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[7]The data in Section 5.0 suggest that the use of consensus decision making was not as consistent as this quote and the following quote from site 4 propose.

addition, at some sites, participants' values about 'alternative' approaches to project governance, staff development and management have had a substantial impact upon how they wanted to carry out these activities. For example:

> "… it is like we had to fall in love with the project … to be able to work to do things." (site 7)

> … the Project Coordinator taught magic tricks to the children, the Program Coordinator and the Administrative Secretary applied make-up … before the Halloween party, the Family Visitor offered a cooking class, the Volunteer Coordinator gave a science workshop for recycling paper and the Community Developer was responsible for a music workshop. (site 7)

> This theme is one of the big elements of the project philosophy. The project chose a flat salary structure. The (Project) Coordinator now earns annually only $4000 more than the community workers, she has twice refused a salary increase. (site 2)

12.3   A Great Deal To Do

The mandate originally given to the demonstration sites, in combination with the expansions to these original objectives added by the sites, led to project ambitions that appeared to be greater than could have been satisfied within the time and with the resources available. As a result, these projects were still very much in the process of evolving at the time of these site reports. From our perspective, this activity 'overload' had several contributing factors:

1.   Over a five year period, demonstration sites carried out a demanding agenda of neighbourhood/community development, the creation of a project organization, the management of this organization, the creation and maintenance of prevention programs and attempting to solve the problems of long-term survival after project funding was scheduled to end:

     > "(I've learned) how complex it is to try to manage a large project with so many government and research expectations and keep it sensitive and relevant to the people who live in the community … I have also learned how political everything is - especially in terms of integration …"(Manager, Site 1)

     > … four years is a brief period in relation to the … objectives … the vastness of the vision on which the project is based … we believe that having attained a respectable growing rate, the local project has

now arrived at a crucial step … the reinforcement of the program's performance and the gradual transfer of the programs to the community. (Site 7)

2. The original mandate for Better Beginnings, Better Futures charged the demonstration sites with three large and complicated undertakings: (1) "The Integrated Model of Primary Prevention means that services to children must blend and unite. This goes beyond what is usually meant by coordination"; (2) Create "high quality programs … characterized by careful attention to staff recruitment, training and development, staff participation … child-staff ratios … adequate staff compensation … curriculum development and relating program activities to goals and objectives… provide time for all staff to develop close relations with the families and communities in which they work … program components must be of highest quality, carefully matched to community needs and thoroughly integrated with each other component"; (3) The empowerment and involvement of residents in important aspects of project creation and management. (Request for Proposals: Research Sites, March 1, 1990).

3. At many sites, the projects added to the age-cohort focus originally suggested for Better Beginnings by creating programs and activities for older or younger children, families and adults and many sites have successfully solicited grants for programming beyond that funded by Better Beginnings.

This demanding level of activity has been added to by having many people at the demonstration sites learning for the first time how to do these things and/or by their determination to try to do things in new ways. One consequence of having a great deal to do may have been a need to make choices about the relative emphasis to be placed on different areas of activity. Another consequence may have been quite heavy burdens on the central figures in the demonstration projects, particularly Project Coordinators, most notably in the first few years of the demonstration project.

12.4   Participatory Processes as the Defining Characteristic

A central element of almost every demonstration site is the importance given to participatory and empowering processes of working with people or how people are to be involved in and cared for in the development of Better Beginnings, Better Futures. This process emphasis has had two major consequences. First, a substantial amount of time, resources and energy has

been invested at many sites in the processes of engaging residents, service providers and project staff in project creation and governance. Second, at most sites, there has been a substantial investment in personal development and nurturing for residents involved in project governance as well as for project staff. At some sites, the distinction between supporting program participants, resident volunteers and staff, particularly staff who are residents, seems to have been blurred intentionally to fit with how people believed that things should be done. These participatory and nurturing approaches have substantially influenced project organization and management at most sites and, in a few instances, form the core of an alternative vision of project organization and management. Finally, participation, empowerment and nurturing support in project organization and management, along with prevention programs, are presented as being essential to understanding prevention at these Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites.:

> "… I find it amazing that even (with) the difficulties… the numbers of people involved.. how well the program works… (you) hear a lot of bitching… but when you look at what this program has achieved in three years and all the people involved, it is amazing!" (Site 4)

> … Learning and sharing that the process of expanding integrated prevention services through community development is a primary course of change, not the services themselves. (Site 2)

> … A process orientation means that a value-based process of achieving a decision is, in many ways, more significant to managers than the actual decision or end itself. (Site 3)

> Internally, Management from Beside is process-driven and process-oriented. It promotes a caring, patient approach to supervision which is respectful of life circumstances and individual ability. The overall focus remains on people and the needs of people, rather than the administrative or bureaucratic needs of the organization. (Site 3)

Community development and project development processes at most sites are not seen solely as means of creating high-quality prevention programming, but as important prevention processes in their own right. In order to understand Better Beginnings, Better Futures prevention, these community/project development processes need to be seen as central. Once again, there appear to be important differences across sites in the relative emphasis given to these development

processes and how they are being put into effect. This points once more to the importance in our research of understanding the nature of each site before looking for patterns which characterize the overall Better Beginnings, Better Futures Demonstration Project.

A very high priority at most demonstration sites has been the involvement and empowerment of residents both as volunteer leaders and as project employees. These resident involvement and empowerment processes are areas where much has been learned at the demonstration sites and Better Beginnings, Better Futures has much to teach about what to expect and how to proceed with these participatory approaches. In particular, the Better Beginnings experience has shown the importance of time and patience, group processes, nurturing and personal development, training and education, developing personal relationships and trust, as well as clarity and simplicity in involving and empowering residents. Better Beginnings not only provides evidence of the benefits of resident involvement/empowerment, but clearly illustrates the complex challenges these processes represent. Participation and empowerment have costs as well as benefits.

One site (2) consistently stressed the process of resident involvement and resident/staff empowerment as the corner stone of a coherent alternative approach to project organization and management. This site also decided to eliminate the formal involvement of service provider organizations in the governance of the project. Most sites seemed to be seeking a balance, often with difficulty, between new, empowering, participatory approaches to volunteer resident and staff involvement and management and the need for more formal structures, policies and procedures.

12.5   Varied Patterns of Project Staffing

Between 15 and 26 people were employed at each site. Overall, 75 residents and 77 non-residents were employed by Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites at the time of the site reports. Compared to most social service organizations, this represents a very high level of resident employment in these projects. Most (59%) of the front-line positions were held by residents. Many of these positions were part-time positions. Also, the proportion of front-line positions held by residents varied between a high of 75% and a low of 32% across sites. Most (85%) of the managerial positions were occupied by non-residents. These typically were full-time positions.

Only two sites had many different ethnic and linguistic groupings within their staffing complement.

Five sites appeared to be allocating most of their program staff resources to one or two program approaches and two seemed to have many different kinds of program workers engaged in a variety of program activities. Most sites seemed to have supplemented their Better Beginnings, Better Futures budgets with external funding for programming outside of the original Better Beginnings mandate.

We draw two conclusions for our research from this information. First, once again, the data point to the need to understand each demonstration site on its own terms before looking for patterns which may hold true for all of Better Beginnings, Better Futures. Second, considering the differences across sites in program staffing profiles, the central importance of participatory processes at many sites, and the expanded prevention mandate at some sites, we need to look closely at each site in order to understand how they are approaching prevention and to situate their efforts in relation to the original terms of reference for Better Beginnings, Better Futures and the prevention literature.

12.6 "Inbetween" Organizations

The project organizations at the demonstration sites are evolving. What stable organizational forms eventually will be created at the various sites is unclear. It appears that most sites are gradually adopting more formal policies and procedures and some sites (2, 7) have moved towards clarifying and simplifying their governance and decision-making procedures.

Two sites (2, 7) had described a definite long-term organizational status that they wish for themselves. In both cases, the desire was to become an autonomous, incorporated community agency focussing on prevention. However, only one site (2) was operating its prevention initiatives as a separate corporation. The rest of the sites appeared to exist in a state in between seeing themselves as a project under the auspices of a host organization and wanting to have autonomous control over their policies and programs. Indeed, at most of these sites, there appeared to be little clarity about what a desirable long-term organizational status for the demonstration project would

be. This 'inbetweenness' seemed to colour much of project governance and management at all but one site (2).

With the assurance of ongoing funding for the demonstration projects, decisions about stable, long-term organizational mandates and structures are likely to become more necessary. Even though there was active involvement of community and service organizations in Better Beginnings at most sites, the earlier service provider involvement report, *Building Bridges* (Cameron, Vanderwoerd & Peters, 1995) provided little evidence that Better Beginnings, Better Futures will serve as a vehicle for the organizational and legal integration of multiple existing services and agencies. From our perspective, at present, there seem to be two long-term organizational options for the demonstration sites. They can incorporate as autonomous, non-profit organizations or function as projects under the legal, financial and administrative auspices of a host organization. Current 'inbetweenness' (having ambiguous project autonomy without final administrative, financial or legal responsibilities) may not be satisfying or sustainable in the years ahead. It now becomes possible at each demonstration site to decide what organizational arrangement will make sense in the long run and to begin to move in that direction.

12.7 Concluding Remarks by Authors

It is clear to us that Better Beginnings, Better Futures is an extraordinarily complex undertaking. It is also a project to which active participants have shown very high levels of commitment and about which they have presented strong beliefs about how project organization and management should be. A great deal of pride was shown in what has been accomplished as well as a clear sense of community ownership of the projects. Participatory and empowering project creation and management processes were identified as fundamental to site organization and management as well as to good prevention at most sites. We are of the opinion that Better Beginnings, Better Futures has a great deal to teach others about these participatory and empowering processes. It was also evident that a tremendous amount of effort and persistence was required to create these demonstration projects. We would like to highlight what for us became two major implications for the future project research emanating from this particular study:

- Better Beginnings, Better Futures is an original undertaking. It has evolved over time to take its specific form of project organization and management as well as prevention programming. At this point in time, it would be hard for the two of us as researchers to describe what reasonable expectations for project outcomes would be for the demonstration sites. We see a need to engage each site in explaining to us their overall approach to prevention as a guide to our understanding as researchers of the nature of Better Beginnings, Better Futures.

- For us, this report highlights the need to consider each site separately before assuming there are standard approaches to project organization, management or programming for Better Beginnings, Better Futures. This is not meant as a criticism. It is simply a recognition of the evolutionary character of Better Beginnings, Better Futures and the different community settings in which the projects have been created.

Better Beginnings, Better Futures has been an extraordinary learning oppotunity for many active participants. In our experience, it is unlike any other prevention project or community development initiative. There is much that Better Beginnings, Better Futures has to teach others and we feel privileged as researchers to have the opportunity to try to understand this prevention project. It is in that spirit that this report is presented and we hope that it will be useful.

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