

Lead for America GovChallenge Fellowship

An exploration of community engagement and
development in Chatham County, NC

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What is Lead for America?



Process

1. Explored community engagement and development funding processes in other counties and municipalities
2. Gathered data about Chatham County to build a more accurate picture of the area's assets and needs
3. Built case studies around a more specific set of community engagement strategies relevant to Chatham, focusing on programs implemented in regions across the country

Summary: Snapshots of Small Community Engagement and Community Development Projects

1. Rural Community Building
2. Residential Peer Mentoring
3. Arts and Creative Placemaking
4. Participatory Budgeting

Key Definitions

Community Engagement

Community-
Based
Organizations

Community
Folks

VS.

Community Development

Small
Businesses

Economic
Development
Entities

Case Study: Arvada, CO Community Building Grants

- **Know Your Neighbor Grant**
 - Supports block parties and community clean-ups by providing \$50-\$100 gift cards to local grocery and hardware stores
- **Neighborhood Printing Assistance Grant**
 - Provides \$25 printing assistance through the city's print shop for printing flyers and posters to publicize community events
- **\$250 Neighborhood Small Activity Grant**
 - Funds larger neighborhood events/development projects such as festivals, sports tournaments, or t-shirts
 - Ex: Front Yard Happy Hour Starter Kit

Community Building Grants: Impact

- **Accessibility for residents to put on events at multiple scales**
 - Role of in-kind assistance (ex: block party trailer with tables, chairs, etc)
- **Increased sense of community**
 - Support for local businesses; ability to quantify and map impact
- **Feedback loop through post-event evaluation form**
 - Increased interaction between residents and government



Community Building Grants: Relevance to Chatham

- City of Arvada examples help us think through creative ways to allocate resources that help residents put on events
- Role of the county: educate residents and other local municipalities about the process and potentially maintain a collection of reusable event resources
- Instead of neighborhoods, look to social institutions like volunteer fire departments, churches, and rec leagues as community anchors that can host events and bring people together
- If considering allocating money through gift cards, think through grocery store accessibility

Case Study: Brevard, NC Retiree Resource Network

Basic Principles of Brevard/Transylvania Retiree Resource Network:

- Network of retired former business professionals
- Free consulting to young entrepreneurs and local businesses
- Network managed by a Resource Coordinator

Funding:

- Little funding required
- Community Development Block Grant for Resource Coordinator compensation

Impact

- Between 2004 and 2007, more than 25 local businesses benefited from the consultation services
- Received an Outstanding County Program Award by North Carolina Association of County Commissioners in 2007

Retiree Resource Network: Lessons for Chatham

Potential Role of Chatham County:

- Work as the convener of the resource network

Community Development Potential:

- Stimulate economic development
- Provide resources for young entrepreneurs
- Sharing of better business practices

Community Engagement Potential:

- Connect residents of Chatham through meaningful consultations in any context
- Encourage and involve older residents in Chatham's economy and life

Potential Partners

- Small Business Center at the Central Carolina Community College
- Chatham Chamber of Commerce
- Chatham Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
- Chatham County Council on Aging

Creative Placemaking: The Big Picture



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ARTS & CULTURE
AWARDS + SUMMIT 2014

What should be talked about in supporting the arts an essential government service?

- How to view the arts as a service
- Considering Scale

Creative Placemaking: The Big Picture

Citizens' Institute on Rural Design

- Introducing creative placemaking, arts, culture, and design strategies as drivers of economic development in rural America

Arts Education Partnership

- By the year 2020 every student in America, will have equitable access to high quality arts learning opportunities, both during and outside of the school day.

NEA Research Labs

- A national program that permits transdisciplinary research teams, grounded in the social and behavioral sciences, to engage with the NEA's 5-year research agenda.

Creative Placemaking: The Big Picture



Public Art vs. Temporary Public Art

- Public art instills meaning—a greater sense of identity and understandings of where we live, work, and visit—creating memorable experiences for all
- Typically developed and managed by a **municipal agency** such as a local arts agency or private entity
- **Art Interruptions** are artworks that inhabit city sidewalks and parks and offer passers-by a brief interruption in their day, eliciting a moment of surprise, beauty, contemplation or humor.

Case Study: Shoulder to Shoulder (Los Angeles, CA)

Purpose of program

- A community based arts project that brings together a group of diverse youth

When it happened

- Pilot program: Summer 2001
- Program was revamped this summer 2019

Funding

- The program was funded by the Mayor's Office of Youth, the Human Relations Council, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Community Development Fund, and art nonprofits in the city

Shoulder to Shoulder: Impact of Program

- The initial program had a positive result on the youth. They were able to meet people from across the city that had different backgrounds and bond.
- They were able to learn expressive techniques in the arts and receive an arts based education

Currently...

- The City Attorney's Office decided to pick up the program again this year because they saw a need for unity amongst youth in the city.

Shoulder to Shoulder: Examples of the Arts Project



Shoulder to Shoulder: Relevance to Chatham

- Although Chatham's size and demographics **differ greatly** from Los Angeles, the need and value of youth engaging to understand and express their different backgrounds and bond from different parts of the county can be applied
- This can be a way to **leverage arts and community organizations** in Chatham to use art as a platform to inspire civic engagement
- **Community arts promote the following:**
 - Interaction in a public space
 - Increased civic participation
 - Engage youth in the community
 - Promote power and preservation of a space

Case Study: Small Scale Participatory Budgeting (Merced County, CA)

Participatory Budgeting

A way for community members to become engaged in the budgetary process through proposal submissions and voting

Why Merced County? What is the Importance of the scale in this example?

The Process

- Steering Committee
- Proposal Submissions
- Committee fleshes out proposals
- Community votes
- Commissioners vote

Participatory Budgeting: Impact of Program

- **Able to fund three community projects:**
 - Community garden
 - County food bank outreach initiative
 - Concerts in the park program
- **Merced County is in the midst of their second participatory budgeting process**



Participatory Budgeting: Relevance to Chatham

Merced County is an example of participatory budgeting done on a *small, localized level*

- **Participatory budgeting:**
 - Uplifts voices of marginalized communities
 - Allows for increased government transparency
 - Increases civic participation and education

Case Study Takeaways

- **Rural Community Building:** Creatively offsets the costs of putting on a community event, building community and supporting local businesses
- **Retiree Resource Network:** Achieves community engagement and community building through connecting knowledgeable retirees with developing local businesses for the sharing of better business practices
- **Creative Place-Making in Small Towns:** Joining the arts, local government, and youth communities in Chatham through civic participation can contribute to community development
- **Participatory Budgeting:** Creates a way for persons within diverse communities to have a stake in local government

Guiding Principles for Chatham

- Chatham County needs to decide what aspects of their community they want to develop
 - What populations demonstrate the most need?
- A team should be put into place to lead this initiative
 - Is there a team of diverse officials that can come together to lead this? How will they be selected?
- Use the case studies as examples to brainstorm to see what could eventually be implemented and applied in Chatham (with consideration of demographics, population, and resources and capacity)

Final Questions

- What values does Chatham County want to promote with community engagement and development?
- What are the areas of impact that Chatham County officials want to consider?
 - In our research, we focused on different populations: youth, retirees, arts community, etc
- How can Chatham County use our examples to benefit the community?
 - Deepen knowledge and understanding to construct a models inspired from these examples and others across the state, and country.
 - Consider how community members may react based on previous and ongoing input