

INTERRELIGIOUS COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS

PRIORITY CRITERIA TO GUIDE FUNDING OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION ENTERPRISE

The Churches and Synagogues stand in a long tradition of concern for social justice for all. Moral imperative with deep Biblical roots compel the religious community to mobilize its resources to side with the exploited minorities of the community. Ethical responsibility requires both a word of judgment to be directed against every entrenched evil and the forging of coalition of forces of reconciliation to right wrongs and create new means by which the exploited and aggrieved can effect a restoration to their full human dignity and the exercise of equal rights to participation and involvement. Toward this end, the churches and synagogues support community organization process as a valid and effective means toward fulfilling their obligation to God and mankind.

Community Organization process is a means by which citizens in a democratic social order participate in political, economic, social, and cultural decision making. Many appropriate goals and objectives may be described as a ground for supporting a particular C. O. or in initiating an organizing process. These include: concern for creative, comprehensive planning in both physical and social categories; effective and efficient provision of health and welfare services which are available to all who are in need; enhancing citizen participation in public policy debate and the provision of political mechanisms capable of implementing the goals of broadly based policy; providing organizational instruments to segments of the population victimized by the majority, assisting them to effect a redress of grievances (for example: civil rights causes, deprived communities; oppressed minority groups; those suffering economic exploitation, etc.).

In the Chicago Metropolitan Area, the churches and synagogues are represented in metropolitan planning and coordinating organizations. Examples of these would be the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, etc. Areas requiring priority attention are in the other categories of concern: enhancing broadly-based citizen participation in public policy debate; and helping residents of relatively deprived communities (geographically, ethnically, and economically described) achieve a more adequate balance of influence for more equal distribution of public services and private economic goods.

Priority Criteria

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The Churches and Synagogues desire the good of the unjustly treated, and hence are not interested in good tries, or well intentioned efforts. Rather, we must invest our funds in those community organization efforts which have a high potential for success.

Criteria for judging particular proposals fall in three general categories:

A. EXTENT OF NEED

1. The area to be organized is characterized by a high degree of physical deterioration and human demoralization.
2. The community has or is experiencing rapid social change, ethnic, economic, or cultural.
3. The residents presently have little influence in the determination of their community affairs.

B. FEASIBILITY AND POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

1. The community or group possesses (or potentially possesses) a degree of unity or cohesiveness in identification with a common problem, so that with organizing effort, leverage for political or economic adjustment can be substantially anticipated.
2. Within the community, or poised to move into a community, is a core of leadership talent which is united in determination, knowledge, and skill to effect community organization objectives which are valid and enhance local community interests and participation. Where the goal is broad citizen participation, the leadership group must be open to broad expansion of leadership roles.
3. Skillful and knowledgeable consultation or supervision in the organizing process is both desired and available.
4. The leadership is committed to goals for community life which enhance democratic process, racial heterogeneity, and cultural and religious pluralism.
5. The leadership of the organizing process is open to providing staff training opportunities in community organization.

C. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

1. Financial and leadership support is available from other groups and organizations to assure organizational support. On the other hand, if a community or group has high potential organizing capacity which meets the above criteria toward which all other segments of the social order take umbrage, we might well view it as a priority community for funding.
2. A community or group is being organized which has the potential for financial independence following the organizing period.

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