

CAMConnect Retreat
Thursday, May 17, 2007

Present: Derek Ziegler, Bill Whitlow, Carol Dann, Israel Lopez, Hilary Colbert, Joye Rozier, Tom Jones, Joyce Kurzweil, Sean Brown, John Hart, Jean Mouch, Shakir Ali, Joe Myers, Anthony Lingo, Jeff Brenner, Lauren Hill

Jean led the discussion of CAMConnect's history using a timeline chart; the following depicts who became involved and the organization's outcomes for the specified period:

- Before 1999: John Hart, Greg Allen, Jean Mouch, Carol Dann, Tom Jones, Hilary Colbert, City of Camden; missing members: Camden Empowerment Zone
- 1999: Lynn Brown, Carol Wolff, Rich Harris, Bill Whitlow; AECF and Camden; hosted a Data Roundtable in October, Data Warehouse Committee and Camden Master Plan
- 2000: In March held our first Stakeholders meeting for a Data Warehouse; second Stakeholders meeting was held in June, and third in September; CAMConnect: Linking Communities with Information; October AECF grant awarded; fourth Stakeholders meeting was held in November; December "staff" – consultant and intern
- 2001: January Bylaws were adopted; March Executive Director (D.L. Gronseth) was hired, May CAMConnect & AECF process began; pre-release of McKinsey study of Camden; June Board Retreat (really a group of Stakeholders, everyone), Transition to Board and Standing Committees, Committees for Data, Community Outreach in specific neighborhoods (Centerville, Parkside, Cramer Hill, Whitman Park, and North Camden), Fund Development, Executive Committee, Governance, Piloted Neighborhood Reports and Camden Facts (First Editions)
- 2002 – July 2003: Josue, Jeff Brenner, Kevin Hickey, Jenny Greenberg; Camden Strategic Revitalization Plan, moved to Cooper Family Medicine Dept.; conducted Indicators Project for Economic Recovery, Joined the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership; end of AECF Grant; beginning of New Staff (from Executive Director & Data Manager to Program Manager) October 2002 first Strategic Development Document 10/2002-12/2003; July 2003 Board Retreat
- September 2003 – December 2004: Reviews July 2004 Retreat and accepted strategic directions – Organization development, Staff, hired Program Manager, revenue generation, Products – Voter Participation Report, hosted Roundtable on City Budgeting Process, established Committees of one, evaluations including cancer data continued; New Products, Camden City Kids Count; Active Website, Data Fair, documents of public interest; revised Bylaws, moved from a stakeholder model to a membership model
- 2005: Chris DiCarlo, Joye Rozier, Sean Brown, Lauren Hill, ARCC; July 2005 Derek became Executive Director; Renewed and revised strategic directions; Reports – Employment, Camden City Budget, Most Dangerous City; Second Data Fair; Evaluations – Weed & Seed

- 2006: in June presented Emergency Room Data/Study; Membership increased to 55-plus; Reports – Quick Facts; Planning Grant NJHI, Camden Coalition of Health Care Providers; Third Data Fair; membership-defined model
- 2007: Derek presented CAMConnect’s Current Status as follows: projects with Education Law Center, Camden Center for Youth Development/Camden City Youth Services Commission, Cramer Hill, AHEC, Cooper as fee for service, technical assistance and data management; developed Quick Facts of Most Dangerous City classification information, and data regarding various audits. Increasing our membership remains a concern; we should be recruiting more Businesses and Residents. CAMConnect continues to provide data management, mapping, and survey services; periodic responses/data product to hot issues; research/reports under contract; post public documents; provide neighborhood data and facts, growing our membership. What CAMConnect is NOT doing: actively injecting itself into policy debates; building capacity for resident engagement; aggressively marketing its products/services; producing as many data products; aggressively building relationships with the City, Camden Board of Education, or Police Department; Academic-quality original research; rebuilding the website, providing a venue for civic engagement; providing data on the county/region

Derek continued the presentation with where CAMConnect is:

- CAMConnect is at capacity in terms of staff time; respected by members; not as well known as could be/should be
- Organizations with overlapping functions as CAMConnect:
 - Walter Rand Institute provides many of the same services with more capacity, but not necessarily a Camden focus
 - Hopeworks provides data collection and is focused on youth development
 - Camden Matters platform for community engagement and education, community calendar, and local news service
 - State and national organizations – Bloustein School, MDRC, TRF, Poverty Research Institute, NJ Institute of Social Justice, ACNJ, etc.
 - CPAC performs some data analysis and collection
 - Private consulting firms

Foundations haven’t seen capacity in Camden instead they view the Bloustein School as more suitable.

Previous Strategic Directions:

1. Development of CAMConnect as an Organization
2. Necessary Staff for CAMConnect Program Development
3. CAMConnect Projects in 2005
4. Revenue Generation

Challenges: (largely taken from 2005 retreat)

- We are dependent on Cooper Hospital Family Medicine department
- We are dependent of a few individuals, Jeff as fiscal agent; functions of the organization are linked to Derek as Executive Director
- We need to focus on our mission, with clarity

- Data analysis can be very dense for time and requires several opinions/reads
- Potential competitiveness with the membership (in regards to pursuing grant opportunities)
- Conflicts of interest w/i the Executive Board (members pursue grant proposals that impede/restrict CAMConnect's access with major institutions)
- Differing degrees of involvement of Executive Board

Derek indicated that we have funding that should last until the end of 2008 with current staff level and a couple of interns.

A goal of today's discussion is to focus on how to grow the organization, maximize its potential, and the potential of membership and our existing network. The anticipated outcome of today's conversation is to develop proposals to pitch to foundations. We are planning for the next 18 months, until the end of 2008. In an effort to move forward members will hear four (4) models for moving forward during this period.

- **Model 1 Slow Growth** – presented by Derek is a status quo, slow growth plan. Continue current focus on producing reports under contract, providing data management, mapping, and survey analysis services, and providing occasional releases of data in response to current events. Some changes to current operations include expanding the use of interns and more aggressive marketing and membership recruitment. **Pros-** CAMConnect has been fairly successful with the core of operations; new interns would allow for additional product development **Cons-** less likely to get additional foundation support; little capacity for additional work; gaps would remain in terms of policy influence and resident engagement; lacks vision for the future
- **Model 2 Policy Influence/Product Development** – presented by Jeff, CAMConnect has assembled a significant quantity of data, but this data is not used to the fullest extent possible to influence policy. There is a dearth of knowledge among policymakers about relevant information and community-based organizations in Camden make very poor use of best practices and data to influence policy discussions. CAMConnect would work to build coalitions on specific topics where they don't exist or work with existing coalition where they do exist. CAMConnect would take specific stands on particular issues that are backed by data and best practices, but avoid highly controversial topics. Requires that we hire a new staff member with Master's in Public Policy with strong quantitative analysis/data management skills, identify three issues where we have or could have significant data and expertise, assemble data, information, and best practices, hold roundtable discussions with experts, write report with recommendations, build coalitions with local and state organizations as partners, issue press releases, publish commentary items; provide data/policy briefs for lawmakers and actively work to educate City Council members. Ex. City Budget, City Contracting, Recovery Bill Rewrite, etc. **Pros-** CAMConnect has more meaningful impact on policy improvements, build additional partnerships/relationships, other NNIP partners have had success in doing this

- work and could prove a good model of how to proceed. **Cons-** some data that is needed may not be available, potential to lose “neutral” status, difficult to determine which debates to participate in, loss of cooperation or buy-in from members, why would lawmakers and council listen to CAMConnect, other organizations are already doing some of these activities who have more experience and capacity
- **Model 3 Platform for Civic Engagement/Alternative Media** presented by Sean, there is no solid platform to inform, discuss, and engage residents about issues which they are affected by or care about. CAMConnect’s activist could expand public document resources, building a platform for online community message board, Camden blog, periodic community forums, ongoing monitoring of the Recover legislation and its progress; more data products geared toward residents. Pros- provide an unmet area, address gaps in CAMConnect’s current activities as identified by members survey, there is a potential funding. Cons-CAMConnect has not focused on this previously, requires new skills and infrastructure, attempt to reach a population that feels disenfranchised and may lack access to technology, require a continual effort to promote effective and meaningful engagement. Sean indicated that 3 potential issues may be public safety, education & youth, and economic development; capacity can be built to develop and sustain this strategy
 - **Model 4 Expand Service/Technical Assistance Provision** presented by John, the research services of the WRI began with minimal beginnings, 1 staff, 2 coordinators, and 6 interns. This model allows the Executive Director to focus on agency development. By focusing on capacity building among other organizations in Camden, CAMConnect could help improve efficiency and save money, allowing organizations to focus their resources on their core missions. CAMConnect could market its products and services outside of Camden City. Potential projects GIS mapping and training for CDC and others, Training on Excel and Access, Development of data management systems for organizations. Pros- work is more likely to be funded and does not deviate from current operations, staff that could be hired for this task could assist with ongoing project development, building the infrastructure to provide additional technical assistance could be more sustainable in the longer-term, market exists for similar types of products outside of Camden City. Cons – doing work outside of Camden may distract from CAMConnect’s core mission and also bring CAMConnect in direct competition with some partners, focusing on technical assistance may hinder additional efforts at engaging residents. Model 4 helps to drive models 2 and 3, we must design model that fits our team/staff. Our membership will push the scope of Models 2 & 3. Model 4 makes CAMConnect more of a competitor for opportunities with Hopeworks, WRI, Rutgers, there will need to be a case by case assessment; build capacity of CAMConnect to expand opportunities beyond Camden City.

Derek indicated that preliminary research suggests that each of the models could receive funding support. Some recent requests for service have been outside CAMConnect’s normal scope, ex. GIS for Community plans.

Carol indicated that the models are not mutually exclusive; the development of policy research and development could be a connection of data and information to more residents, regarding Model 4, this could be starting place, concerned about movement outside of Camden City.

Tony stated that he was unaware of the CAMConnect budget, but knows there's a need to get help for Derek, we need interns, they can solicit/market CAMConnect, including to outside towns, we need a grant that supports the organization. When looking to connect with governments, must bring services and benefits to government, neutrality does not get you a seat at the table, we must create our niche and bring the plan to government. WRI could provide interns to support marketing activities, always put proposals in writing. Supports models 2 & 4

Joye stated that perhaps a Model 5 that extrapolated elements of others would be useful, does not support a distraction from Camden City in terms of the focus of the organization

Hilary thought we'd add services and staff, engage people and the community and data would drive civic engagement which would direct policy development

Joyce all models have strong point, Model 4 is most favorable with strong interest in Model 2, perhaps there's an opportunity to develop a Model 5 at an additional meeting

Joe believes that from a Cooper's Ferry perspective, a policy research/development strategy would be useful, but favors Model 4, reminded that we are a one man operation and we must support Derek's strengths

Tom indicated that Model 4 appeared an essential strategy, concerned about policy influence position, although members could promote CAMConnect as a place to obtain data and they (other organizations) make policy recommendations.

Shakir stated that he was unsure if developing a Model 5 with parts of each is useful, favors Model 4 with an emphasis on 2, building a niche

Lauren indicated that community engagement means many things and requires a lot of work, how to advance a goal for community engagement would require much discussion, issue-specific policy research would be useful, however we are a team of one, as members we must embrace and support Derek's capacity and recognize the limitations of one individual.

Jeff indicated that developing and delivery of contractual scope of work requires a lot of work, Model 4 gets us another staff person, perhaps in 18 months we will have two (2) full-time staff which would put organization in a better place to pursue other strategies.

Hilary stated that we will continue to use VISTAs and other volunteers

Bill – shares Tom’s concerns about policy development functions; there are two kinds of policy issues 1) CAMConnect has addressed, ex. Report to the State concerning Camden’s problems 2) CAMConnect would be ill-advised to take on ex. Municipal contracts. We must play to our strengths. Community engagement is an enormous investment of time and energy, Model 4 strengthens CAMConnect’s relationships with institutions like WRI, Rutgers

Jeff – I need to be excused, I vote in favor of Model 4

John – Model 4 must be the reason to do Models 2 & 3, use Model 4 to grow 2 & 3. Our members will be important to directing us to focus on Models 2 & 3 and maintain a focus on Camden City

Carol – Model 4 will drive the process, we must ensure that all members understand what occurred her, the discussion points

Jean – City has a role to play in the County and Region, so we will maintain a focus on Camden City

Sean – members must step up to connect information/data to community, residents, Model 3 still needs to be a goal of organization’s focus

Carol – we may need to revisit the mission/vision after we obtain a vote from members

Derek will provide additional detail for Model 4; Model 2 is likely to be more commentary, media outreach and communication, not policy development functions; Model 3 urges that we provide more public documents and data to residents/community; marketing strategy for Model 4 need further discussion. The Executive Committee meets in two weeks, we will expand the detail of Model 4 and present to the full Board in a month.

There is consensus that Model 4 with elements of Models 2 & 3 is most favorable to those present today.

Sean raised concerns/items unrelated to today’s agenda: When a member leaves his/her agency of employment, how do we maintain their membership/participation??? Sean will be graduating from the Leadership Institute on May 18! Sean will be supporting Derek with community outreach as a volunteer.

Derek indicated that David Gonzalez will be working as an intern, updating the Neighborhood Facts over the summer.