



Building Community with Time Dollars

A MAKING CONNECTIONS PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATCH BETWEEN
DES MOINES, IOWA; INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA; SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS;
EL PASO, TEXAS; AND WASHINGTON, DC

PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LEADS TO ACTION

*Part of a Series from the
Technical Assistance Resource
Center of the Annie E. Casey
Foundation and the Center
for the Study of Social Policy*

©2004, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The Center for the Study of Social Policy, based in Washington, D.C., was established in 1979 with the goal of providing public policy analysis and technical assistance to states and localities. The Center's work is concentrated in the areas of family and children's services, income supports, neighborhood-based services, education reform, family support, community decision-making, and human resource innovations. The Center manages peer technical assistance as part of the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC).

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	2
SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE MATCH	2
THE CONSULTATION.....	8
LEARNING OBJECTIVES.....	9
LESSONS LEARNED	10
I. Engaging Members and Ensuring Their Continued Involvement.....	10
II. The Role of the Time Dollar Coordinator.....	16
III. Structures, Strategies, and Resources to Support Time Dollar Efforts	18
PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS	21
LEAD CONTACTS	24
WHAT IS <i>MAKING CONNECTIONS</i> ?.....	26
WHAT ARE PEER MATCHES?	27

BACKGROUND

Through the *Making Connections* initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with communities across the country to strengthen neighborhoods and support families. One of the principle aims of *Making Connections* is to connect neighborhood residents to economic opportunities, social networks, and effective services and supports that will improve the lives and well-being of children and families living in tough neighborhoods.

As part of this initiative, the Foundation offers *Making Connections* sites access to technical assistance that can help them achieve their goals for strengthening families and neighborhoods. Peer technical assistance, which allows the sites to capitalize on the practical knowledge that emerges from those undertaking similar work in other places, is a particularly valuable resource that *Making Connections* communities can use to address issues and solve problems they have identified.

On November 10–11, 2003, representatives from three *Making Connections* sites—Des Moines, Iowa; Indianapolis, Indiana; and San Antonio, Texas—and from two other cities—El Paso, Texas, and Washington, D.C.—participated in a peer match to share experiences and lessons about the development and growth of Time Dollar Exchanges, the role of the Time Dollar coordinators, and the structures, resources, and strategies to support and build on Time Dollar efforts. This report summarizes what was learned at that meeting as well as the next steps participants plan to undertake to move forward with their efforts. For more information about *Making Connections* and peer matches, see the last section of this report.

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE MATCH

As part of their efforts to help connect families to social networks in the community, residents in three *Making Connections* sites—Des Moines, Indianapolis, and San Antonio—are using Time Dollars as a means to form networks of support that

build on the strengths, talents, and skills of residents. Time Dollars are a specific kind of tool for community building and system change. Because there is a whole body of knowledge associated with Time Dollars, a brief explanation of the Time Dollars concept and role of the Time Dollar coordinator follows.

Time Dollars

Time Dollars are a form of currency that people earn by helping each other and spend by getting help from others. They are a medium of exchange designed to reward altruism by recognizing, validating, and rewarding the contributions that help to strengthen and rebuild the “core economy” of home, neighborhood, and community. The Time Dollar approach is based on the belief that every member of a community is a valuable resource (not just a “giver” or a “receiver”) and that each community has the capacity to pool these resources for its own social and economic abundance.

There are different models of Time Dollar Exchanges:

- *Neighbor-to-Neighbor Exchange networks*, in which individuals join a Time Bank so they can earn and spend Time Dollars by helping each other. Each hour of service contributed by an individual earns one Time Dollar that can be used in a number of different ways: 1) to receive services from other resident members of the Time Dollar Exchange; 2) to purchase goods such as school supplies, food, and clothing; and 3) to take classes, such as GED training, dance lessons, aerobics, and so on. Depending on how the Time Bank is set up, an individual could also donate any saved Time Dollars to someone else.
- *Targeted or Specialized Exchange networks* have a more focused use of Time Dollars. An example is cross-age peer tutoring, in which older children tutor younger students and accumulate Time Dollars that they can then trade for school materials and equipment such as donated computers.

TIME DOLLARS

A Time Dollar Exchange network in Indianapolis has been in existence for two years. Presently, 193 residents have joined the Exchange, which operates in the Southeast neighborhood. Activities have targeted youth and senior citizens, who have used Time Dollars in a number of different ways. Time Dollars are currently being earned:

- By youth who take part in the Safe Haven/Girls, Inc. after school program;
- By community residents who help senior citizens with home repairs and other necessary tasks;
- By senior citizens who provide tutoring to young children; and
- By individuals who are members of neighborhood organization teams conducting community trash cleanup days.

The emphasis in Indianapolis has also been on the use of Time Dollars to secure items that many low-income residents cannot otherwise afford. These initiatives include purchasing school uniforms for the middle school students who come from low-income families, school supplies for five neighborhood schools, and food from the food pantry at a local church.

There is currently no paid coordinator for the Time Dollar Exchange in Indianapolis. Rachel Cooper, a local community leader who was instrumental in bringing Time Dollars to the city, has temporarily taken on that role. Rachel shared that she has been leaning heavily on the arrangements and initiatives that were set up by the former coordinator, Vicky Lloyd, and she also relies on two youth who have been trained in Time Dollars and are earning credits to keep records of Time Dollar exchanges using TimeKeeper software. Rachel envisions more youth taking leadership roles in the Time Dollar Exchange to help it expand, but she recognized that many of the activities had to be put on hold because of the lack of a coordinator. There is a strongly felt need to find funding for a salaried coordinator, and there is pressure to expand the Time Dollar Exchange to other *Making Connections* neighborhoods beyond Southeast, since this would increase the chances of funding the coordinator position. Consequently, core concerns for the Indianapolis participants were how to be more effective in outreach, how to communicate and articulate the larger Time Dollar framework to different audiences, and how to generate the support and resources that the site needs.

The power of Time Dollars resides in their creative and flexible nature. They are a tool that can be used to support the mission and goals of any community group or organization, limited only by the extent of the user's imagination and energy.

Regardless of their application, Time Dollars have four core values underlying their use (see *No More Throw-Away People: The Co-Production Imperative* (2000) by Edgar Cahn, the creator of Time Dollars):

1. *Assets*. The real wealth of a society is its people. Everyone has something of value that they can, and want, to contribute. Every human being can be a builder and a contributor.
2. *Redefining Work*. Work must be redefined to include whatever it takes to rear healthy children, preserve families, make neighborhoods safe and vibrant, care for the frail and vulnerable, redress injustice, and make democracy work.
3. *Reciprocity*. Giving is more powerful as a two-way street. To avoid creating dependency, acts of helping must trigger reciprocity: giving back by helping others. Whenever possible, we must replace one-way acts of largesse, in whatever form, with two-way transactions. "You need me" becomes "We need each other."
4. *Social Capital*. "No man is an island." Informal support systems, extended families, and social networks are held together by trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement.

Time Dollars are a tool that facilitates community building by rewarding community-building activities and, in the same way, Time Dollars can also facilitate system change. These two aspects of Time Dollars operate very much hand-in-hand. Neighbor-to-Neighbor Exchanges of the kind created in *Making Connections* sites commonly find that over time these programs begin to actively seek out collaboration with organizations and agencies that provide welfare and educational services in the community. When that occurs, residents become co-producers of outcomes by

Time Dollars, like money,
facilitate exchanges and
transactions, but what
separates them from money
is that they are designed
to facilitate community
building in ways that money
often cannot.

“In Indianapolis this year, we did 17 neighborhood cleanups using Time Dollars. And we picked up lots and lots of trash — 3,000 bags of trash, to be exact. There is no trash in the alleys now. People earn eight Time Dollars for helping with the cleanups.”

Rachel Cooper, Resident,
Indianapolis

earning Time Dollars for their engagement and contributions. But the arrow also points in the other direction: when organizations and systems start out using Time Dollars to validate and reward the engagement of their clients, they almost always find that their use of Time Dollars to reward contributions has the effect of catalyzing community engagement.

The Role of the Time Dollar Coordinator

One of the keys to a successful Neighbor-to-Neighbor Time Dollar Exchange is the Time Dollar coordinator, whose responsibilities are threefold:

- To ascertain community residents’ needs, both large and small;
- To help residents uncover and discover their own untapped capacities and abilities to meet those needs; and
- To set up exchanges in which residents earn Time Dollars by contributing to others and spend Time Dollars by securing resources to meet their own needs.

As pointed out by one of the participants in the peer match, the role of a Time Dollar coordinator is most closely related to the work of community building. As in the work of community building, the Time Dollar coordinator’s role entails a combination of building relationships and seizing opportunities to bring people and organizations together in new ways and with new kinds of activities that work for everyone. It calls for a “can-do” person who is known and respected by residents; is alert to the community’s culture, customs, and needs; is willing to push a little so that individuals will try out things they have never tried before; and is excited and enthused by helping residents understand the strengths they can individually and collectively offer to other individuals and to the community.

The Time Dollar coordinator’s role also calls for someone who can identify the existence and flow of resources in the community and can see where opportunities might lie for using Time Dollars to build on and energize untapped resources, thereby creating new community networks of caring, trust, and support. An example

shared by one of the peer match participants provides the kind of imaginative thinking and understanding that Time Dollar coordinators need around the question of resources. It was noted that in one of the *Making Connections* sites, youth are currently paid a stipend for delivering fliers to the community. A creative alternative would be for the youth to be paid in Time Dollars, that they could use for services or rewards that originate from within the community—like tickets to locally produced shows, organized trips, discounts on goods from local stores, or classes given by local residents in which they share their knowledge and skills. The money

TIME DOLLARS in Des Moines

A Time Dollar Exchange has been operating in Des Moines for a year, during which time it has recruited 34 members. An advisory board of seven individuals—including both residents and professionals—has been meeting for almost two years, and after what participants described as a long and sometimes frustrating process, they now have a Time Dollar coordinator who is working hard to find her feet in this new role. Des Moines participants shared that the advisory group initially failed to provide the support needed to the coordinator, but it is now in the process of redressing the situation and revisiting its role.

The Des Moines Time Dollar group has done extraordinarily well, given that the individuals currently involved have not received the technical assistance that the Time Dollar Institute offers new groups to help them get through the challenges of starting up and developing a new Time Dollar Exchange. The advisory board and the new coordinator have developed special materials for presentations (that will also be produced in Spanish) and have been working on a special logo for the program. People in the community are very receptive to the idea, and many sign on right after the presentations. The chief challenge, however, has been to engage the members as active participants. The main concerns in Des Moines, then, include how to support and help the coordinator learn what she needs to know to be effective in her job and how to be effective in engaging members once they have signed up.

currently paid to the youth, which quickly flies out of the community, can yield a multiplier effect if it is instead invested in community-based activities chosen and created locally. The youth themselves could even earn more Time Dollars taking part in the search for and development of appropriate rewards.

THE CONSULTATION

Requesting a Peer-to-Peer Exchange

Because of the uniqueness of the Time Dollar coordinator's role, it is extremely helpful for coordinators to be able to talk with one another about their experiences, to learn what works and what doesn't, and to share creative ideas for building Time Dollar earning opportunities that will help knit the community together. Time Dollar coordinators involved in the peer match expressed how much they love the work they do, but they also expressed a feeling of loneliness arising from the sense that no one in the community quite understands the demands of their role. They expressed the need to build a learning and support network with other coordinators.

In response to a specific request from San Antonio, the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC) worked closely with the Time Dollar Institute to set up a peer match between the coordinators from three *Making Connections* sites—San Antonio, Des Moines, and Indianapolis. For two reasons, the circle of participants was expanded beyond the coordinators from these sites. First, it was understood that Time Dollar coordinators do not operate alone—they are leaders in a community effort involving multiple individuals, and so there should also be other members of that effort present. Therefore, each site chose at least one more person to attend the match. Second, the Time Dollar Exchange in Indianapolis lost its coordinator three months ago due to funding cutbacks. To make sure that the other coordinators felt they had enough colleagues to share and learn from, additional coordinators were invited from two other cities where the Annie E. Casey Foundation has strong connections: El Paso, Texas, and Washington, D.C. Staff from the Time Dollar Institute participated as resource in the peer match.

Through a series of facilitated pre-match conference calls, participants shared their current status and hopes for using Time Dollars in their communities, identified their learning objectives, and agreed on a preliminary agenda for the peer match.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The conference calls with participants showed that while each site had its own unique set of challenges, there was also a great deal of overlap and common questions that they all wanted to address around the following three learning objectives:

- To learn about effective communication and marketing strategies for engaging new members and for encouraging documentation and continued participation of current members.
- To gain a common understanding, based on our collective experience, about the role of the Time Dollar coordinator.
- To learn about structures, resources, and strategies to support, build on, and sustain our Time Dollar efforts.

The peer match took place November 10–11, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland, at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The consultation consisted of focused, facilitated discussions on the learning objectives guided by a preliminary agenda that the group had jointly developed for the consultation. Edgar Cahn, the creator of Time Dollars, joined the group for an informal breakfast discussion during the second day of the match. At the request of participants, the coordinators met separately during lunch, while the rest of the group had a second dialogue with Edgar Cahn. The consultation ended with each team having an opportunity to reflect on key lessons learned and map out next steps for strengthening the use of Time Dollars in its community.

TIME DOLLARS

The San Antonio Time Dollar Community Connections has been in existence for one year, and roughly half of the 200 members are active. It is difficult to judge the levels of activity, however, because members are not turning in their hours on a regular basis. In San Antonio, the Time Dollar program is jointly supported by the House of Neighborly Services, which acts as the fiscal agent, and two satellite centers: the Benitia Family Center and the Guadalupe Community Center. The program is operating in at least four different communities, and while these communities are not very far apart from each other, they each have very different needs and interests. In one community, for example, most of the residents are senior citizens, while in another, they are mostly young mothers with small children.

In San Antonio, as in the other sites, there is great enthusiasm for Time Dollars—but the Time Dollar coordinator and others involved with Time Dollars are challenged to meet the differing goals and needs of the partnering organizations. As a tool for community building, Time Dollars are extremely flexible and responsive to local needs; but this means that the effort can easily be pulled in different directions. As a result, the peer match participants from San Antonio sought to gain greater clarity around the role of the coordinator, while also gaining an understanding of how Time Dollars can operate effectively in a situation characterized by differing agendas.

LESSONS LEARNED

I. Engaging Members and Ensuring their Continued Involvement

In order to recruit new members, Time Dollar coordinators routinely seek and fill speaking engagements and opportunities for presentations on the Time Dollar program as a central part of their job. During the peer match, they were able to share with each other many practical ideas and lessons for marketing Time Dollars and getting people to buy-in on an individual and community level.

“Messaging” the Time Dollars Concept

- *The Time Dollar concept appears simple, yet it can take some work to get people to really understand it.* Because we have been brainwashed into dismissing the value of what seem like mundane tasks, some people may not understand the importance and impact of the activities they can contribute through Time Dollars. People often find it much easier to earn Time Dollars helping others than to spend Time Dollars on themselves. It is important to stress that spending Time Dollars expresses respect for the abilities and contributions of others. Rachel Cooper noted that in Indianapolis they like to emphasize the idea that everyone has valuable resources: “And then we say that everyone’s time is precious—I use the term ‘Time Credits’ instead of Time Dollars—and I ask people how they use their time.” In that same vein, Lydia Kret of San Antonio said she takes the time for residents to feel very comfortable with her and then starts “to explore possibilities with them for earning Time Dollars. I break the ice first—I start saying ‘I know how to do this, I know how to do that,’ and then they get the idea and start getting excited.”
- *In seeking to promote Time Dollars the message strongly depends on the audience.* “You have to really sell the program and sell it differently to every audience,” said Rachel Cooper. In some cases, it works to focus on the money-saving aspect of Time Dollars. Adriana Peña from El Paso explained that for her it works when she tells residents, “If you need a plumber, you can use Time Dollars and save the money for the shoes for your kids and the food on the table.” Indianapolis participants noted that this argument goes right along with their emphasis in *Making Connections* on increasing household income, which families can then spend on other things.
- *It is important to emphasize the real and valuable contribution Time Dollar participants make to the work of building community.* Dawn Narcisse, a resident leader from Des Moines, pointed out that the money-saving aspect of Time Dollars doesn’t work for everyone. “‘Community’ is a big thing when we

talk about it at the PTO in my neighborhood. If I had said, ‘You can save money,’ they wouldn’t have gotten excited,” she pointed out.

- *Being active in your own participation and sharing personal stories is also helpful.*

Dawn Narcisse noted the usefulness of sharing personal stories to get others to understand the concept and get excited about participating. She gave the example of how she told a group at her daughter’s school how she had used Time Dollars to have the zipper in her daughter’s jacket fixed. This was a special jacket that her ailing grandfather had given her as a present. The chair of the PTO, a Time Dollar member, fixed the zipper and earned Time Dollars in return. “Sharing this personal story was very helpful to get people to understand how Time Dollars work,” Dawn explained, “and it contradicted the idea some of them had that Time Dollars were just for the ‘needy’ people in the community. They were impressed to learn the chair of the PTO was a member.”

Getting the Word Out to the Community

A community event is a powerful way to spread the word about Time Dollars. In Washington, D.C., the group sponsored a special community event to advertise the existence of the Time Dollar program and to encourage members to sign up. In El Paso, they held an expo and went one step further by providing participants at the event with a book of simulated Time Dollars when they filled out an application form for the program. In this way, people were introduced to Time Dollars at the same time as they gave contact information, and they were provided a friendly introduction to the idea of Time Dollars as a new kind of money when they used them to purchase drinks, popcorn, and hot dogs from the event booths.

Other techniques that participants shared for advertising and bringing new members to Time Dollars included:

- Organizing weekly meeting or gatherings where members socialize, hear presentations, learn about Time Dollar group activities, and set up individual exchanges;

TIME DOLLARS in El Paso

In El Paso, a Neighbor-to-Neighbor Time Dollar Exchange has been established in conjunction with Clinica La Fe, a medical clinic that serves the residents of the Segundo Barrio, which is a low-income neighborhood close to the Mexican border. Like the *Making Connections* sites, the El Paso Time Dollar Exchange started out as a Neighbor-to-Neighbor Exchange, but with the support of the clinic's chief executive officer, Time Dollars are quickly being engaged in the health work of the clinic.

The Time Dollar Exchange in El Paso kicked off with a Chicano heritage event just over a year ago, and since then, it has enrolled 279 members, of which 200 are active and involved. Alongside the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Exchange that acts as a foundation, it has formed an arts and crafts group as part of its senior companion program and a walking and aerobics group that targets youth and adults with diabetes. Increasingly, residents are able to use Time Dollars they have earned to “purchase” health care services, consultations, and classes from the clinic, and over time, the exchange expects to start more groups related to health services. Time Dollar members currently hold weekly meetings, which are partly social, partly business, and partly informational. The meetings are attended by between 50 and 60 participants every Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. In addition to receiving assistance from the clinic and its management, the Time Dollar coordinator receives support from a member who earns Time Dollars by providing outreach to current and new members for six hours every day.

- Passing out fliers at weekly meetings or posting them where people gather;
- Visiting individuals in their homes;
- Making presentations to small groups of residents, at local schools, and at WIC meetings and other community gatherings—and being sure to follow up with telephone calls;

TIME DOLLARS

In Washington, D.C., a new Neighbor-to-Neighbor Time Dollar Exchange was recently formed in the low-income community of Congress Heights, located in the southeastern quadrant of the city. The program started in May and presently has 27 members, 10 of whom are engaged as part of a senior citizen program. Funded by the property management company that manages the 350-unit, privately owned, low-income housing complex of Congress Park, the D.C. program started in a way that is different from most. The Time Dollar coordinator is now working to introduce Time Dollars into activities and services that have long been offered to residents in the community without charge. The challenge here is to shift from an expectation that goods and services will be received for free to the idea that by purchasing goods and services with Time Dollars they have earned, the residents and the community as a whole will be happier and healthier. At present, residents are keen to earn Time Dollars helping out in the offices of the organization housing the Time Dollar program, but they are far less keen to offer services to one another. The D.C. program was interested in learning what might be done to encourage neighbor-to-neighbor exchanges of services.

- Finding incentives that people can purchase with Time Dollars, like school supplies, school uniforms, etc.;
- Setting up activities that people will spend their Time Dollars on, like popular aerobics and dance classes or Spanish/English classes;
- Setting up activities where people will earn Time Dollars because the activity helps to promote the goals of the sponsoring organization, like walking and nutrition classes; and
- Thinking up community events that residents can organize—like a teen night in Indianapolis organized by parents who earned Time Dollars for their work.

Keeping It Going

The Time Dollar coordinators felt that a critical step in recruiting new members involved earning the trust of the residents. The coordinators have to show people that if they say they will do something, they will keep their word and do it. They also have to be open and available to members of the community and listen for what the residents really want. In San Antonio, for example, an aerobics class was started by four women who were interested in this type of exercise as a Time Dollar activity, and the group has grown to include 24 women and more classes. “This was a niche that was there, and we are finding the needs of the residents through that,” said Lydia Kret.

Participants also discussed some of the challenges they face in keeping the program going. One of the challenges is having people consistently report the hours earned and spent. “You have to reinforce it and reinforce it,” said Adriana Peña, “because this is something new that residents are not used to doing, and they have to learn a new habit.” She uses her weekly meetings to encourage members to keep track of hours earned and spent. Lydia Kret joked that she gives members a hard time when they don’t turn in their hours—then added that she has found that getting the right language on this is important. She now tells the members, “You are not providing your friend with the opportunity to spend Time Dollars” when the exchanges don’t get recorded. This has been the most effective way of getting people to turn in their hours.

A practical “take away” for several of the participants was using Time Dollars to keep up with various operational tasks, including collecting time sheets. In Indianapolis, for example, a senior citizen and member of the network is paid in Time Dollars for collecting the time sheets of other members and bringing them to the office.

It is important to stress
that spending Time Dollars
expresses respect for the
abilities and contributions of
others.

II. The Role of the Time Dollar Coordinator

The role of the Time Dollar coordinator was a topic that generated an intense, passionate discussion of multiple issues. Main lessons included the following:

- *Step One—Core Supporters with a Common Vision.* All agreed that a successful Neighbor-to-Neighbor Time Dollar program needs the support of a core group of individuals from the community that includes residents and professionals—or, alternatively, from the host organization if the Time Dollar group has been established as part of a nonprofit or agency. They also agreed that those initial supporters need to be excited about Time Dollars and share a common vision. If they have different goals or different visions for the Time Dollar Exchange, then that will lead to struggles down the road and confusion for the coordinator. Consequently, it is important to take the time to get clear on the shared vision at the beginning and periodically as you go.
- *Step Two—A Time Dollar Coordinator.* The group also agreed that a paid Time Dollar coordinator is critical, and that once the core supporting group has a vision for the Time Dollar program, the most efficient way to get started is to fund, find, and train a paid Time Dollar coordinator as quickly as possible. The coordinator is the one person who sets ideas and actions in motion, but everyone agreed that the residents, as members, should continue to determine the shape of the Time Dollar Exchange.
- *Being Clear about the Time Dollar Coordinator Job Description.* Time Dollar coordinators agreed that while they all love the work, they find themselves putting in many, many more hours than they are paid for, and that most people don't understand how challenging the job is. Adriana Peña shared that while she is supposed to be part-time, in fact she usually works more than 40 hours a week and sometimes even works 50 to 60 hours a week. Like the other coordinators, Adriana said she loves the work, but it is harder than people realize. Lydia Kret, the Time Dollar coordinator for San

Time Dollar supporters need to be excited about Time Dollars and share a common vision. If they have different goals or different visions for the Time Dollar Exchange, then that will lead to struggles down the road and confusion for the coordinator. Consequently, it is important to take the time to get clear on the shared vision at the beginning and periodically as you go.

Antonio, stressed the need for a very clear job description. She said that when she was initially alerted about the opening for a Time Dollar coordinator, it was advertised as a part-time position that could be easily executed from home and completed in two or hours a day. However, when she accepted the job and received the actual job description, she saw the job would obviously be full time. Lydia shared with the other participants a revised job description that she produced for San Antonio based on her own experience to date.

- *Securing Training for the Time Dollar Coordinator.* The need for training for the coordinator as well as for those playing a supporting role for the coordinator was a theme that appeared again and again during the course of the peer consultation. Everyone agreed that the role of the Time Dollar coordinator is so important that a key step in developing a Time Dollar initiative is to make sure the person hired as the coordinator receives training.

Participants' experiences getting the training they needed was mixed. Some coordinators had received the two-day training provided by the Time Dollar Institute, as well as extensive on-site coaching after that. Others had received no training from the Institute and were attempting to learn what to do from people who were extremely supportive, but also lacked training. In other instances, the Time Dollar program had assigned people to help the coordinator, but they were left to work out for themselves what needed to be done and how. In some cases, there was also a feeling that going through the appropriate channels to call for more help was a difficult and uncertain process. While there was a great deal of frustration around this, everyone present was excited that they were finally having the opportunity to get together and share with one another.

Participants noted that the lack of training generates confusion, creates more work for the coordinator, and makes much more difficult the task of developing a common vision for Time Dollars. Those who had not received

the training were unsure about how much training would be needed. Adriana Peña from El Paso explained that she had attended the two-day training provided by the Time Dollar Institute and also received coaching regularly from the Institute's Ana Miyares, who had helped her to understand the larger picture as well as the techniques needed by a coordinator. Others concurred about the need for in-depth training at the beginning and ongoing assistance and coaching after that.

- *Building a Support Network.* Participants agreed with Rachel Cooper from Indianapolis that those who are involved in Time Dollars want to be able to talk with the other Time Dollar people. "We want to be able to meet with other Time Dollar folks," Rachel said, and added that she said she would love to go to San Antonio and to Des Moines and see what they are doing there. All supported the idea of having peer site visits so they could learn from one another and share ideas. Adriana Peña shared that when she took a vacation in San Antonio, she made sure she visited the Time Dollar group there. Asked what she learned from her visit, Adriana said that she and Lydia Kret had shared a lot together and that she came home with some new ideas.

III. Structures, Strategies, and Resources to Support Time Dollar Efforts

All agreed that the coordinator alone cannot fulfill the potential of a Time Dollar Exchange. "You need a Time Dollar coordinator, but one person cannot do it alone," said Adriana Peña. Critical issues highlighted by participants included:

- *Time Dollar Coordinators Need Active and Supportive Involvement by Others.* That support may come from the initial advisory board that sets up the Time Dollar group; it may come from a resident advisory council recruited by the coordinator for day-to-day operations; it may come from the management of a sponsoring nonprofit organization; or it may come from a combination of all of these. Wherever it comes from, the coordinators

agreed that for the support to be truly helpful, it must meet several conditions. To help in an effective way, those who provide the support must:

- Have a shared vision for Time Dollars;
- Understand what the responsibilities are that they have committed to, like attending meetings with the coordinator, or helping the coordinator brainstorm new ideas; and
- Be willing to jump in and take action alongside the coordinator.

- *Finding a Structure That Works.* This has been a challenge for all three *Making Connections* sites, in large part because of the question of funding for the Time Dollar coordinator. The funding inevitably brings with it questions of control and performance that can sit uneasily with the idea that residents should be the ones to determine what the Time Dollar Exchange should look like, what members can do to earn and spend Time Dollars, and what goals and outcomes the Exchange should pursue. Some of the coordinators have found themselves caught between different sets of expectations: one set of expectations from the organizations providing fiscal and other kinds of support to the Time Dollar group and another set from the residents. In some cases, too, those expectations were felt as a series of demands, which made the job harder, and not as a means of support, which in some cases they were clearly intended to be.

- *Importance of Resident Members as the Driving Force.* The participants voiced their wish for understanding from the agencies providing support to the Time Dollar Exchanges that the resident members and not the agencies should be the driving force for the programs. Ana Miyares, from the Time Dollar Institute, shared with the participants that one approach used by many Time Dollar Exchanges to ensure that residents determine how the Exchange operates is to form a resident advisory board for the day-to-day running of the Exchange after it has been going for a while so that the board can be formed by individuals who are active in the Exchange and have shown themselves to be supportive and willing to pitch in to get things done.

Another important lesson involved a recognition of the importance of bringing members together in social gatherings where they can be asked what they need and given assignments right then.

“Our hope is for Time Dollar to have autonomy and its own identity. My agency, where Time Dollar is housed, is just supposed to be temporary. We want Time Dollar to be owned by the community, as opposed to being seen as one more program of an organization.”

Andria Castillo, Des Moines
Time Dollar Advisory Board

- *Conducting Orientation for the Core Advisory Group.* The participants saw the core advisory group’s role as providing initial and ongoing support to the Time Dollar coordinator and the residents. It was felt that the advisory group needs to receive an initial orientation about Time Dollars that provides it with the information and knowledge to take the following steps:
 - Become clear on a shared vision for the Exchange;
 - Find funding to support the salary of a Time Dollar coordinator;
 - Hire a person with the appropriate skills, talents, capacities, knowledge, and outlook to be the Time Dollar coordinator; and
 - Provide the Time Dollar coordinator with moral support, help, resources, and helpful feedback in getting the Time Dollar Exchange up and running.
- *Accessing Resources Available.* Some participants advised their peers not to reinvent the wheel and to make use of the resources that are readily available for building their programs. During the second day of the peer match, staff from the Time Dollar Institute took some time to share with participants some of the existing materials and technical assistance that the Institute provides to assist local Time Dollars efforts.

Among the resources highlighted were:

- A video that coordinators can use for presentations with short clips and examples of how communities are using Time Dollars.
- A game designed to be used with participants during presentations to get them to understand the Time Dollars concept in a fun and interactive way.
- Sample handouts, brochures, and sign-up forms for Time Dollar Exchanges.

- The Institute’s latest publication about Time Dollars, *No More Throw-Away People: The Co-Production Imperative* (2000) by Edgar Cahn, which uses many real-life stories to illustrate specific lessons and principles of “co-production.”
- Free computer software that the Institute offers for running a Time Dollar Exchange that enables users to match members based on the kinds of services they would like to give and receive, and to keep track of hours and Time Dollars earned and spent. Lydia Kret noted that San Antonio’s Time Dollar Community Connections has developed a simplified software program that is very user-friendly.
- The existence of a growing number of communities in the United Kingdom, Japan, and the United States that have registered programs and participate in two active chat groups, one European and one American (visit www.timedollar.org).

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

At the end of the peer match, participants expressed their appreciation for the exchange and shared how much they had learned from the opportunity to talk and share with one another. Based on their written evaluations, which were very positive, the match went extremely well. Responses to “the most important thing you got from this peer match” included:

- Meeting with different cities and working together to resolve problems.
- Great connections were built between sites for sharing concerns and solutions.
- That we cannot afford to ignore the responsibility of supporting the coordinator and that the board also needs support.

- The importance of communication and the option of tailoring to the needs of community.
- Communication ideas and support from other coordinators.
- Time to plan next steps in our local project.
- New ways of looking at Time Dollar.
- A larger perspective of Time Dollar.
- How important training is.

As they prepared to wrap up the work, each site had an opportunity to spend some time identifying key lessons and insights and exploring some ways in which it might use these ideas to help move its efforts forward.

The most important lessons learned and next steps from each site included:

At the end of the peer match, participants expressed their appreciation for the exchange and shared how much they had learned from the opportunity to talk and share with one another.

- **Des Moines** learned about acquiring a broader perspective on how to support the new Time Dollar coordinator and the importance of providing training both for the advisory group and the coordinator. For its next steps, it will seek to engage in the trainings that Time Dollar Institute offers. It will also work to increase communication between its advisory board members and the coordinator, in part by holding a retreat to achieve more clarity about their common vision, to determine how they can work together better, and to clarify responsibilities and expectations of all involved.
- **Indianapolis** learned about the importance of “keeping it local” and allowing the space for new visions. The separation of Southeast from the other *Making Connections* neighborhoods by a highway creates a physical barrier that is difficult to surmount, but the larger group brainstormed together on a possible structure where one Time Dollar coordinator will act as “the mother ship” with other satellites and “Time Dollar neighborhood leaders” responsible for growing the program at the local level. The next steps for Indianapolis involve surveying the needs, leads, and options in adjacent

neighborhoods and using the videos from the Time Dollar Institute to demonstrate to others the many different possibilities for using Time Dollars. Another next step involves exploring options, such as creating a thrift store, for making existing Time Dollar projects self-sufficient. Indianapolis would also like to receive further consultation from the Time Dollar Institute about this and other options.

- **San Antonio** learned that they are not alone, and about the importance of good communication between the different parties involved in running a Time Dollar group. A key next step for San Antonio is to work at improving communication at all levels, beginning with setting up time to share and communicate with the resident advisory board. San Antonio is hoping that the Time Dollar Institute will help with the further training that is needed for the advisory board and others so they can become clear on a shared vision for the Time Dollar Exchange and how to operate it. San Antonio resonated with the “mother ship” and satellites structure brainstormed by the group. Staff from the Time Dollar Institute are scheduled to visit San Antonio sometime in December or January to help the site with an orientation for current and potential partners.
- **El Paso** learned again how valuable the support they have received has been and was even more able to appreciate the free reign, ample trust, and learning opportunities that the executive director of the organization has given the coordinator. For next steps, they will continue seeking effective ways to motivate members to become more involved.
- **Washington, D.C.**, learned of the need to motivate members to be more conscious about what they can do for one another. Another important lesson involved a recognition of the importance of bringing members together in social gatherings where they can be asked what they need and given assignments right then. Next steps will involve holding gatherings on a monthly basis, doing more “matchmaking on the spot” at member gatherings, and writing a guide for members.

LEAD CONTACTS

Des Moines

Rocio Ramirez
Time Dollar Coordinator
Hispanic Education Resources
828 Scott Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309
Ph: (515) 243-3930
E-mail: roramirez@herdm.com

El Paso

Adriana Peña
Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe
608 South St. Vrain Street
El Paso, TX 79901
Ph: (915) 545-7063
E-mail: adriana_pena_79936@yahoo.com

Indianapolis

Rachel Cooper
1925 Fletcher
Indianapolis, IN 46203
Ph: (317) 236-9245
E-mail: secorachel@yahoo.com

San Antonio

Lydia Kret

Time Dollar Coordinator

House of Neighborly Service

407 North Calaveras

San Antonio, TX 78207

Ph: (210) 434-2301

E-mail: lydiakret@sbcglobal.net

Washington, DC

Romaine Harrell

Time Dollar Coordinator

Our Community Time Dollar Exchange

3408 13th Place, S.E., Suite 103

Washington, DC 20032

Ph: (202) 574-7709

E-mail: ourcommunity@juno.com

Peer Match Facilitator

Rosa Briceno

Center for the Study of Social Policy

1575 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 500

Washington, DC 20005

Ph: (202) 371-1565

E-mail: rosa.briceno@cssp.org

WHAT IS *MAKING CONNECTIONS*?

Making Connections is the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s initiative to improve outcomes for some of the nation’s most vulnerable children and families. The initiative is conducted through deep and durable partnerships with selected cities and neighborhoods across the United States (for more information, visit www.aecf.org/mc). Several core ideas underlie *Making Connections*:

- *Making Connections* is based on the recognition that the greatest number of American children who suffer from “rotten outcomes” live in city neighborhoods that are in many ways cut off—disconnected—from the mainstream opportunities of American life. Thus, *Making Connections* is “place-based”—it focuses on specific neighborhoods in specific cities.
- *Making Connections* has a simple theory: that children do better when they grow up in strong families, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Thus, *Making Connections* strategies are aimed at helping families obtain what they need to be strong, and helping neighborhoods gain the resources they need in order to support families well.
- *Making Connections* focuses on three major types of “connections” that help families grow stronger and achieve what they want for their children. The first of these is helping families connect to **economic opportunities** and to jobs that provide income, assets, and an economic future. Research and experience suggest that this type of connection is unlikely without two others: strong connections to the **social networks** of kin, neighborhood groups, and other informal ties that sustain families when times get tough, and to high-quality, **effective services and supports** that help families reach their goals.

Making Connections focuses on improving results for children and families in tough neighborhoods. Core results that *Making Connections* communities are mobilizing around include:

- Families have increased earnings and income;
- Families have increased levels of assets;
- Families, youth, and neighborhoods increase their participation in civic life;
- Families and neighborhoods have strong informal supports and networks;
- Families have access to quality services and supports; and
- Children are healthy and ready to succeed in school.

A key task in ensuring the success of *Making Connections* is making available the learning and technical assistance that the participating sites need to move forward with their work. One of the ways that the Foundation provides this kind of support is by making peer matches available.

WHAT ARE PEER MATCHES?

Since 1995, as part of a broader effort to rely more intentionally on the experience of people working in the field, the Center for the Study of Social Policy began working with several partners and funders to develop and offer a rather intensive form of peer technical assistance known as peer matches. Peer matches are structured opportunities for teams of people from two or more jurisdictions who are working on a similar issue to exchange experiences and practical knowledge toward resolving a particular challenge that has been identified in advance.

The rationale behind peer matches is straightforward. Often, the people best able to provide hands-on help are the “doers” themselves—people from states and communities who have successfully addressed a problem or created an effective new policy or strategy. These are the people who have an acute sense of what has and hasn’t worked, and why and why not. They have developed good tools and strategies they can share. And they are usually eager to help others because of a strong sense of shared mission. But while good peer matches are informal, they are never

casual, using a carefully designed process and structure to focus the common interests, roles, and goodwill that exist between peers on producing meaningful change for a community.

Peer matches are a resource and time intensive strategy. Careful consideration of when, where, and how to use this approach is therefore always warranted. Experience has shown that careful preparation and execution of the matches are critical factors for their success. This approach tends to work best when the following conditions are in place:

- A specific problem or issue has been identified, and the people looking for help are at a key decision point with respect to the design or implementation of a state or community strategy;
- Stakeholders are invested in and have a high degree of ownership in solving a problem;
- The timing is right—e.g., a decision or action that will affect the community’s family strengthening agenda is going to be taken and/or someone needs to be convinced to take action; and
- A reasonably small number of people have the authority and ability to act on what they learn in the match.

To date, the Center has brokered over 60 peer matches on topics ranging from creating resident-led community development corporations and governance structures, to establishing multilingual homeownership assistance centers, to building integrated services models. As illustrated in the case summaries that are part of this series, peer matches help spread good policies and practice, build relationships among different stakeholders who may not always have a chance to work together, and enable people to put changes in place that improve results for children, families, and neighborhoods.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
410.547.6600
410.547.6624 fax
www.aecf.org

Center
for the
Study
of
Social
Policy

1575 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202.371.1565
202.371.1472 fax
www.cssp.org