

STRETCHING WHAT'S POSSIBLE

A Case Study of Seven Youth Development
Programs in Chicago

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“Many of the circumstances that seem to block us in our daily lives may only appear to do so based on a framework of assumptions we carry with us. Draw a different frame around the same set of circumstances and new pathways come into view. Find the right framework and extraordinary accomplishment becomes an everyday experience.”

Rosamund and Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility*, 2000

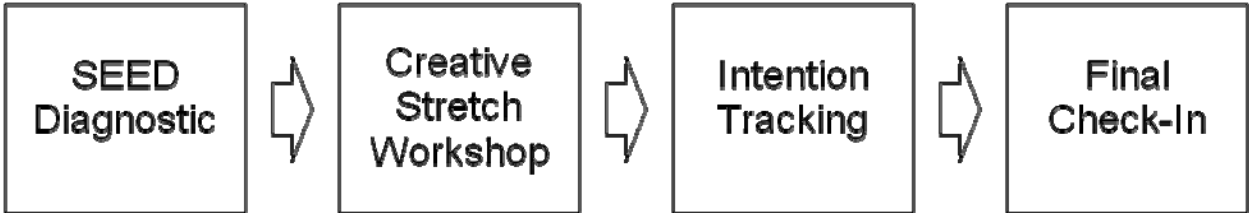
Introduction

This case study illustrates how modest investments in systematic assessment, planning, and coaching can lead a range of different programs, quickly and organically, to fresh and highly desired results.

Beginning in the summer 2008 and continuing through January 2009, seven youth development programs in Chicago were guided by SEED to stretch their perspectives and increase their impact. The programs are housed in these community-based organizations:

- Alternatives, Inc.
- Chicago Youth Programs
- Center For Family Services
- Erie Neighborhood House
- Patriots' Gateway Center
- Ray of Hope Center of the Arts
- United Neighborhood Organization

Each program was engaged in a **four-step process**:



1. The SEED Diagnostic pinpointed program strengths, external impacts and internal capacities. It also identified promising new areas for growth.
2. The Creative Stretch workshop explored one or two of these promising growth areas in depth. Exercises were offered to shift perspectives and uncover generative ideas.
3. Monthly one-hour Intention Tracking sessions then commenced with a SEED coach. The purpose was to re-ignite excitement, summarize progress, explore new opportunities, and update action plans.
4. At the end of six months, a final check-in session was held to celebrate achievements and consider future steps.

The work SEED did with these programs is somewhat analogous with yoga training. Imagine it is your first day in a beginner's yoga class. You are asked to sit on the floor, bend forward and touch your fingers to your toes and place your head on your knees. You think, "The instructor must be kidding!" You can barely get your fingers to reach your knees, much less your toes. At this point, the instructor offers hopeful feedback, "This is not a competition. You may only be able to reach your knees today. But keep it up, and in a short time you will surprise yourself." And, as it turns out, the instructor is right. With practice and persistence, a month later your fingers reach your toes and your head comfortably rests on your knees. You are now ready for the next challenge, the next stretch.

In this case study, the Diagnostic provided the first program stretch. This three-hour experience delivered clarity about what is working in each program and where attention could be focused for enhanced performance and greater impact. Teams reported that the Diagnostic opened them to latent possibilities, and rekindled their excitement and confidence in what their program might accomplish. Next, the Creative Stretch workshop triggered eye-opening awareness of new options and approaches to get these results. Participants left this half-day workshop with fresh perspective and readiness for change.

What program staff say they most appreciated was the way the monthly sessions with a SEED coach grounded their new perspectives in concerted actions, held them accountable, and prevented slippage from occurring. At each Intention Tracking session, progress was captured and expanded thinking encouraged. At the end of six months, a recap and celebration afforded a chance to take stock of how much stretching occurred. Teams gained confidence that stretching is not only feasible, but cost-effective, impactful and essential for growth.

"I have enjoyed the phone time spent with SEED stepping back and seeing the big picture. Each time it renewed my excitement about the work we are doing. "

United Neighborhood Organization

"Reflective listening is new to me. It felt good to know that someone was really listening and repeating to show that there is no confusion. It was good that we had this opportunity. If we can continue it, we will listen and understand each other a lot more."

Chicago Youth Programs

"We're a small program with big ideas. This process makes it real. It puts our ideas in motion. It puts me in a structure of productivity, as opposed to just being an artist."

Ray of Hope Center of the Arts

Result Highlights

In just six short months:

- 🏠 The teen participants at Alternatives Inc. not only assumed more direct responsibility for the design and implementation of their program, but developed and were implementing a business plan for the program's sustainability and growth.
- 🏠 The staff at Chicago Youth Programs embraced a co-leadership framework, moved forward with a series of action items to create a more productive and supportive work environment, and acquired funds for their first leadership retreat in more than eight years.
- 🏠 The afterschool program for children with special needs operated by the Center for Family Services completely revamped its approach to marketing and recruitment. Kids in the program became spokespersons and recruiters and made successful pitches to principals at expansion schools and to a state senator. As the idea spread, parents began recruiting parents, and board members were invited to take a more active role as ambassadors to other community members. Enrollment increased from the low 20s to the mid 30s as a result.
- 🏠 Erie Neighborhood House launched an expanded mentoring program, with a focus on math-science tutoring. A company was targeted and more than a dozen new mentors were successfully recruited. Overall, the number of mentors increased from 74 to 110 (33%) and the number of students increased from 86 to 110 (22%).
- 🏠 As a strategy for attracting more teens to its facility, Patriots' Gateway Center created two paid junior leadership positions. It also expanded its volunteer pool of teens who work with the younger children attending the center. Plans are in place to establish a Youth Advisory Board.
- 🏠 Ray of Hope established an Inter-Generational Ensemble comprised of 11 adults and 10 youth as a platform by which artists can use their gifts and skills to share important stories based on world history, social and societal issues. Teens have begun appearing at conferences, youth gatherings, and other venues to promote youth violence prevention through the arts.
- 🏠 The participants in United Neighborhood Organizations' afterschool soccer club are applying their skills and learning from the playing field in a new direction. They have formed teams and are competing to see how they can help each other get accepted to four-year colleges.

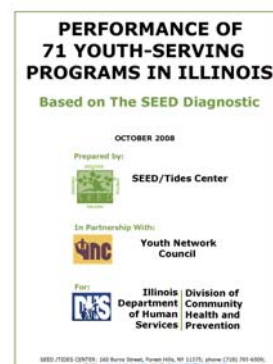
In the pages that follow, we describe the stretching process that led to these and related accomplishments.¹

SEED Diagnostic

The SEED Diagnostic is designed to make visible program strengths and pinpoint areas ripe for growth. The comprehensive self assessment takes roughly three hours to complete. It is conducted by phone, with a trained SEED facilitator walking a program team of 2-6 individuals through a series of six exercises. Video conferencing allows the team to view the worksheets and see how their responses and ratings take shape.

- During the first hour, the team engages in a mapping process. They graph how many individuals and groups are being reached at what levels of impact. Next they determine opportunities for moving strategically to achieve greater reach and depth of impact in one year.
- During the second hour, participants self-rate their program against 44 practices associated with high performance, sustainability, and growth. Based on these ratings, the team identifies additional opportunities that can lead to more desired performance.
- After a short break, results are reviewed and two promising growth areas are selected for exploration. Participants are guided through a brief action-planning process to define goals and immediate next steps.
- Within a few days of the workshop, SEED delivers an easy-to-read and visually interesting Diagnostic report that captures what has taken place.

The seven programs in our case study completed the SEED Diagnostic in June and July 2008. These were among 71 programs with funding from the Division of Community Health and Prevention of the Illinois Department of Human Services who engaged in the SEED Diagnostic during the summer months.²



¹ For brevity, we focused this report on only one of the two “seed ideas” that each program developed.

² A copy of the five-page Executive Summary is available from SEED. Immediate feedback was positive and enthusiastic, as expected. However, frequently, short-term interventions do not have lasting effects. SEED was delighted by the findings of a six-month, follow-up phone survey: a large and representative sample of the 71 programs reported that they had followed-through on their action plans. Over 80 percent expressed interest in repeating the SEED Diagnostic annually.

They offered this feedback immediately after their Diagnostic:

Alternatives: "It was good to place measures on our work and look at things we could do to start uplifting our performance. It was definitely helpful to see an overview. The challenge will be to take the analysis you send us and keep it alive. We need to start doing follow-up on the suggested action items and not lose momentum."

Center for Family Services: "The diagnostic was helpful. It helped us filter out what we can't do...and focus on what we can. It was helpful to work on two focus areas and see what we can do right away to effect some change. We liked the scores. It provides a meaningful way to track improvements, moving from medium to higher scores. The format for the session was good. We liked having the web to view along with the voice over the phone."

Chicago Youth Programs: "This was incredibly valuable. It covered a lot of things we already know, but it was nice to see these mapped out in bites that could be attacked one by one. It is a tool we can implement again on our own. It will make the task of doing reviews happen. It opened our eyes to different areas of program and organizational performance. It has become obvious that we need to pay immediate attention to staff development and other human resource issues. The scorecard was helpful. We scored lower than we would have guessed. The scores shed light on areas that we really need to improve. Now we are clearer about what to focus on first."

Erie Neighborhood House: "The diagnostic process was a lot better than we expected. Having the results on the screen worked really well...very effective. It was a very productive session. Something was really accomplished. It was an accurate reflection of our program. It was interesting to see where we fell short in co-leadership, quite unexpected but correct. The results in general were detailed enough to show us some things we did not know. It is good to have scores as reference against which to gauge progress. It is hard to quantify and qualify what we do. You have given us a way to do this."

Patriots' Gateway Center: The session definitely provided a new perspective. We discovered some opportunities that we definitely plan to act on. We scored high on most of the items; however, a few times, it really made us stop and think. It definitely captured the program. If you had given us time beforehand to examine the questions, we might not have been as spontaneous in our responses. It was good not to have this preparation time."

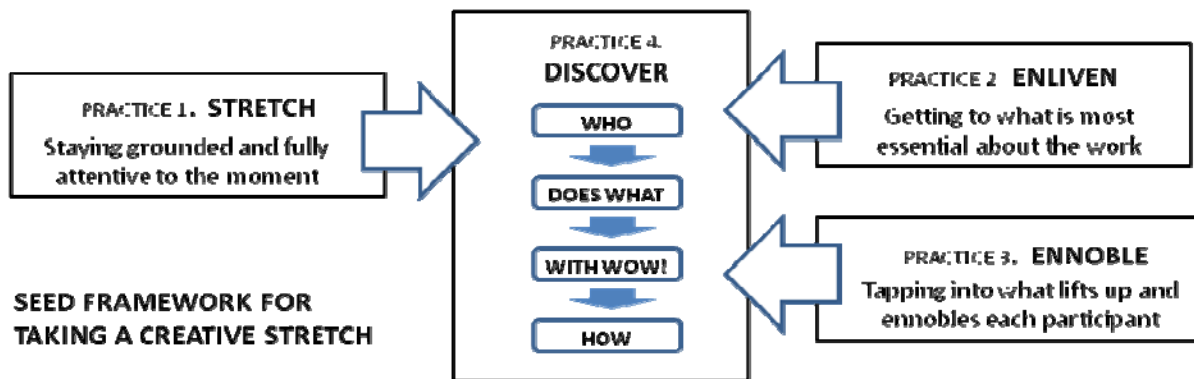
Ray of Hope: "This was extremely valuable. We have some background in quality assurance/quality improvement, so we know the value of honest assessment to get a true picture of our strengths and weakness so we can improve on both. This diagnostic provided some solid results to share with our Board at our upcoming meeting. We can use these data to show the solid work we are doing and also where we need to focus our attention for improvement. We recently completed a strategic planning process and this complements it nicely. We appreciated the live meeting with you (as opposed to a survey) to help us think through a range of things. We are a small group, and value the input from outside expertise."

United Neighborhood Organization: "The process helped place some things that we had in the back of our mind more in focus. The scoring was interesting to see. It highlighted most aspects of our work and helped us see where we stand, where our strengths and weakness are, and where we need to focus more energy. It was good to step back and see the program from afar. We would absolutely recommend it to others."

Creative Stretch Workshop

The seven programs were invited to continue with SEED for an additional six months. Selection was based on their Diagnostic results and expressed interest to stretch their performance.

To start, each program was asked to bring a small team and one or two ripe program challenges to a half-day workshop in July 2008. SEED's intent was to catalyze new thinking, clarity of purpose, shared commitment, and excitement to approach these challenges with fresh eyes. SEED employs a unique, fast-thinking, highly creative framework for achieving these aims.



Here is a sample of what was generated during these sessions:

- Connect Force, a successful program within Alternatives, Inc., was at a crossroads. Having started as an arts center (Hip Hop, Visual Arts) for youth with a “drop in” culture, Connect Force’s early success had motivated both staff and youth participants to grow the program and reach more youth, while maintaining a culture of openness and inclusivity. This goal translated to an ever increasing need for resources. Their “discovery” was to create a culture where youth actively take leadership in devising and delivering programs and providing peer support. Youth would also become the primary agents to develop sustainability. The program staff would formalize opportunities for this to happen.
- The Center for Family Services runs an afterschool program for special needs children at a school where the Center is housed. It was challenged to raise program enrollment, particularly to recruit from schools where transportation would be required and where teachers did not have the same awareness of the program as those at the base school. The program had not been able to motivate off-site teachers to recruit students, in spite of considerable efforts. Their “discovery” involved stretching their perception of who could be involved as partners in recruitment and how to go about it. They aimed to enliven their presentations by re-configuring them as a participatory celebration of the rich variety of program opportunities. Children currently enrolled would be enlisted as co-leaders in recruitment and marketing.

- Chicago Youth Programs is an award-winning, innovative organization founded 25 years ago and sustained by volunteers. Its mission is to improve the life opportunities and health of at-risk youth using a comprehensive approach aimed at developing their capabilities over multiple years. The program felt challenged by a lack of consistency across its three program sites. Some staff were feeling burnt out and undervalued. They felt like they were constantly operating in “crisis mode.” The workshop sharpened the organization’s commitment to create a culture of consistency, openness, respect and support across departments. The program would aim to replicate the same values and standards it applies with children and youth programming to its internal communications and staff development initiatives.
- The teen program at Erie Neighborhood House was looking for ways to take that program and its parent organization to the next level. It was seeking to develop a more integrated youth leadership program and raise its mentoring capacities, especially in math. Through the workshop, they deepened their commitment to develop a culture of mentoring, starting with the teen program, and expanding out in stages to the entire organization. Alumni, staff and youth would be encouraged to attract resources and become champions for recruitment of mentors.
- Patriots’ Gateway Center wanted to attract and retain more participants from the high school population (14-17). The hope was that more teens would come regularly to the Center and bring their friends with them. Their “discovery” was to first build a leadership infrastructure and then draw teens through it. A Teen Board would be created with an operating budget and the charge to create activities that engage and interest peers. A Junior Leadership program would also be established to provide job and community service opportunities for teens to mentor the younger populations that are already attending the center on a regular basis and in large numbers.
- Ray of Hope feared it was at risk of not being recognized as anything but traditional, in spite of working at the lead edge and successfully engaging youth in creative ways that give their lives meaning and purpose. (For example, 46 youth were currently co-writing and rehearsing to perform their first Hip Hopera that fall, at the Regal Theater, in Chicago.) To expand its base of community and philanthropic supports, Ray of Hope decided to stretch its perceptions. To start, it would aim to forge a partnership with its primary funding source, the Illinois Department of Human Services. The type of partnership they had in mind would regularly enliven the message of hope and peace that is Ray of Hope’s reason for being. Ray of Hope youth participants would be ennobled as a traveling performing ensemble, appearing at conferences, youth gatherings, and other venues.
- United Neighborhood Organization has a successful youth program based around an after-school soccer club. Several of its graduates have gone on to college with sports scholarships and two have professional careers. The problem is that most of the participants have aspirations to be soccer stars that cannot be met. Its intention at the outset of the workshop was to develop a how-to manual with a step-by-step procedure for what is required to meet success in gaining college admission. Its “discovery” during the workshop was to empower students to apply their energies, learned skills, teamwork, and attitudes that they take away from the soccer field to their collective pursuit of college placement. They would be assigned to teams, with each team challenged to support and be responsible for all of its members as they take steps to achieve college admission. A scoring system would be created to add a friendly competitive dimension.

Monthly Intention Tracking

Following the workshop, each program formed one or two teams to develop the discoveries that emerged. SEED convened and facilitated a monthly conference call for each team to report progress they had made, renew excitement for their ventures, tackle inevitable obstacles, explore emerging opportunities, set or revise action items, and gauge results against customized success markers. Where appropriate, the coaches also used these monthly events to introduce and promote new practices for team building and effective group communications. Following each session, the SEED coach produced a 1-2 page summary report, provided in part as an organizing tool to help keep teams on track with their commitments and action items.

These sessions were held in August, September, and October 2008. The teams were then challenged to continue meeting on their own, replicating the inquiry and reporting practices SEED had introduced. In January 2009, the coaches checked-back with each of the teams to determine progress, celebrate accomplishments, and consider additional ways to step out in new directions.

"Now that we know how to keep teams on track, we're rolling it out. We're doing weekly meetings with youth and volunteers; we formed a youth advisory board, and a parents' board. SEED helped us formulate and structure all that."

Ray of Hope Center of the Arts

"It was helpful for us to step back and look at the big goals. We needed someone to schedule the calls and make us sit down and do this. Without the outside influence we would not have sat down—the check up made us focus."

Erie Neighborhood House

Impacts

All seven programs made noteworthy gains during the six-month period:

Alternatives Inc.

- ☛ Youth leaders and staff began meeting together regularly to assume co-responsibility for the program's success. The youth planned and executed "the most successful community event in our history" and built on this experience by starting work on "a business model" to promote and display art produced by youth.
- ☛ A business plan was subsequently developed by the youth to sell t-shirts and artwork, as well as market music production assistance, video production, and video editing. Performances and community events would be used to promote program services.

- 📌 The program is creating an instructional video to teach youth the basics for learning Hip-Hop. The video also will help youth get an idea of what the program offers, and it will strengthen the reputation of Alternatives Inc. as a leader in the field of Hip-Hop Youth Arts.
- 📌 The youth and staff now recognize the advantage of “plan-full” and “leader-full” action as an alternative to their previous tendency to do things “haphazardly.” As an example, one of the youth leaders decided to get involved in fundraising. He and a staffer wrote a proposal in response to anti-violence grant opportunity, which was subsequently funded for \$5K. These funds will support a youth team to develop an anti-violence hip hop workshop to be delivered in the community.

Center for Family Services

- 📌 Over the summer, the Center experimented with different formats for introducing its afterschool program firsthand, including having kids in the program lead school principals from target schools through core life skills. The kids also went to open houses for the first time. Staff report that they will never go back to their old, boring marketing using PowerPoint. The kids enrolled will now always have a lead role in showing what the program is, rather than having staff tell about it.
- 📌 Realizing the impact that children made in communicating the value of the program, staff recognized that parents would be the best ambassadors in outreach to expand parent involvement. Further, Community Advisory Council members could be enlisted to attract community supports. “The ‘seed idea’ has momentum all its own. It’s bringing everything to life, and we’re seeing ideas more quickly to do more.”
- 📌 There was a significant increase in enrollment at the beginning of the school year (10), and an additional ten students enrolling after that. The latter was attributed to kids marketing the program. Word-of-mouth among students seems to have surpassed teacher recruitment. The readiness of kids to recruit their peers demonstrated that they are truly engaged in the program and really benefiting.
- 📌 As a part of plans to celebrate all those who make the program what it is, the kids helped plan and execute a successful meeting with a state senator. Three kids sat down at his conference table. As reported by a lead staff member: “The Senator invited them to introduce themselves and talk about why the program was important to them. The Senator was very attentive, asked questions and promised to let his fellow senators know about the kids and the program. He was extremely genuine. Having the Senator hear the kids was just amazing.”

Chicago Youth Programs

- 📌 Since the workshop, participants have been reinventing their entire staff meeting structure. Previously, staff had met weekly following a fixed agenda. Attendance was erratic. A new meeting structure was conceived and tested. Meetings are now held every other week with a rotating leadership in charge of creating and guiding the agenda. This new format has allowed departments to learn more about and from each other. It is enabling staff to coordinate and share resources, and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer guidance and support.

- ✿ In addition, plans were developed to create uniform protocols across the three program sites. An agency-wide manual is being rewritten and a curriculum of best practices to share across programs is under development.
- ✿ Funds were secured from a local foundation for a major agency-wide teambuilding/planning retreat that took place off-site in January. (SEED was contracted by the agency to design and facilitate.) It was their first retreat in anybody's memory.

Erie Neighborhood House

- ✿ Since the workshop, the program has greatly deepened its commitment to mentoring. This has included reviewing and updating its entire mentoring orientation approach, establishing an evaluation plan to determine the impact of this shift in emphasis, and introducing this concept department-wide to establish an agency-wide commitment to mentoring.
- ✿ Thirteen additional mentors were recruited from one company (there had only been two the previous year) by encouraging the current mentors to recruit from their workplace. They were encouraged to handpick those they thought would be interested, valuing their special skills as engineers in tutoring youth in math and science. As an added bonus, the sponsoring company has now agreed to buy a table at an upcoming fundraiser for Erie House.
- ✿ Overall, 36 new mentors were added.
- ✿ Recent Alumni and Erie House staff were encouraged to talk-up mentoring with their friends. A "Recruitment Team" was formed from the current mentoring pool to champion this effort.

Patriots' Gateway Center

- ✿ Two junior leader positions were created and added to the paid staff. The junior staff leaders work five hours per day, five days per week. They perform exactly like other staff, organizing activities, setting examples for the kids, monitoring behavior of younger kids, etc. It was decided that the entire staff would group-coach them. The first two junior staff selected have been attending the center since age six, so they know the rules and expectations. The intention is to select replacements in the summer, so that the positions will rotate and more teens will benefit from this experience.
- ✿ The program also recruited eight regular high school volunteers from the local Lutheran private school. One of them volunteered last year, and brought friends with him this year. They get community service credit for this work. The program also has Master's Commission students coming into the center as volunteers, with a different group each trimester.
- ✿ Teen participation levels have jumped tremendously since October. One staff person has been assigned to work specifically with youth 13 and over. The teens come to the center to help out the junior staff leaders, to play basketball, or to play with the little kids. Patriots launched its first Recreation Night in February. The aim is to offer these twice monthly, on Saturdays, 6-9 PM. There will be a DJ, an open gym, and food. The Saturday events will give teens a chance to see the facility and learn about activities going on during the week.

Ray of Hope Center of the Arts

- During the SEED process, Ray of Hope increased its networking and generated significantly more performance inquiries and requests. Its curriculum was expanded and new opportunities and exposure resulted from applying key insights throughout the SEED process.
- Ray of Hope was invited by the Teen REACH Administrator to perform at the 4MOST Youth Symposium in Jan 2009. As a direct result of this performance, the program was asked to perform at a high school one week later and received an additional ten inquiries from participants at the conference.
- The youth were selected to receive the "Peace Leader" award from the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention, because of their positive impact as activists in the arts, spreading a message of peace in community.
- The Friends of Ray Advisory Board was established. It is comprised of prominent, respected community and business leaders, with good successes in fund development and community development. A corporate breakfast was scheduled, to include not only business leaders but also representatives from the arts and the state's Secretary for Health. It will feature performances by youth. "Now that we know how to keep teams on track, we're rolling it out. We're doing weekly meetings with volunteers; we formed a youth advisory board and a parents' board. SEED helped us formulate and structure all this."
- A documentary film, collage of photos on DVD, public service announcement, web site and other promotional items were developed as an outgrowth of this idea, largely produced by youth who are receiving extensive professional training in audio, video and theater production. Youth apprentices are being called upon to assist other organizations, establishing a new revenue-generating youth program to help sustain Ray of Hope, and providing stipends for on-the-job youth apprentices.
- The Ray of Hope Inter-Generational ensemble was established, consisting of eleven (11) adults and ten (10) youth. This multi-generational, multi-cultural ensemble provides a platform for artists to use their gifts and skills, helping transform lives by telling important stories based on world history, social and societal issues. This group is a key part of Ray of Hope's mission, using the arts to make a positive difference in the world.

United Neighborhood Organization

- Shortly after the workshop, eight program participants attended a leadership program sponsored by the State. Their level of participation with other teens was very impressive and it was decided, and they agreed, for these eight individuals to assume growing leadership for the college admissions initiative.
- The program director met with the soccer coaches to discuss the initiative and got their buy-in and willingness to participate. He emphasized that the goal of the program, Nuestro Deporte, was not to win a championship, but to get the youth into college. They discussed simple mechanics to move this forward. If a student was not doing well in school, if he was red carded, or if he had issues with discipline, then he would not be permitted to play.
- The teens in the program were assigned to groups. Each group picked a name after a university (e.g., Notre Dame). They get points for research, for sharing information about a college, for planning field trips, etc. They did a video together on the program that really brought out their abilities as well as their appreciation for the program. The video was shown

to staff, parents, and others from the community; a local university soccer coach attended together with his players and offered advice to the kids.

- Plans were in place to bring in Hispanic professionals to speak with the kids. In next year's program design, a female component (directed at young Hispanic women interested in soccer) will be added. A new state funding requirement, calling for the program to find employment for some of the youth participants, was welcomed. Staff members were excited about the possibility of seeing their kids working in offices and other professional settings, and seeing this type of work space as a future option.

Summation and Implications

Inertia, rather than the absence of resources, is the primary factor limiting the performance and extraordinary results of community-serving programs.

SEED builds capacity in community-serving programs to live into their highest possibilities. Our work is rooted in the ever-available facility in people to shift perspective and direction. Central to our approach are tools that guide social program leaders to see and make choices for action beyond what they already know.

It only takes a moment to catch a glimpse of new possibilities. What proves harder is for programs to hold on to heightened visions long enough to gain confidence, and avoid slippage back to familiar but less rewarding ways of working.

Each of the seven programs was encouraged to stretch at its own pace and set doable benchmarks. Through the monthly Intention Tracking sessions, SEED coaches guided and supported the teams to confront obstacles, forge new relationships, design new program features, and continually find fresh and creative ways to engage participants. SEED walked alongside each team, encouraging forward momentum and effective collaborations to achieve maximum stretch.

The catalytic influence of SEED in the framing, execution, tracking and achievement of all seven program discoveries is clear. Will the programs continue with these practices to stretch their perception and ground innovation? Will they carry on the structured meetings that assure ongoing creative collaboration and accountability? Time will tell. Program feedback suggests that they have integrated at least some of these practices, sufficient to sustain their work at higher levels of performance.

"This has taught us to aim for what we want. Now we know what's possible when we do that. We definitely want to do this again." --Center for Family Services

In general, stretching is not an automatic or common collaborative practice. Programs that are struggling or under-achieving usually are fearful of trying something new. Their tendency is to think they merely need to work harder, doing more of the same things better. Programs that are thriving typically think about expanding what works, but they tend to focus on replication rather than trying new approaches that stretch their imagination.

Whether or not we like the results we are getting, it is human nature to repeat what is familiar. We work harder with higher hopes that the well worn path will somehow lead to a better destination. In ordinary times, the adage "if it aint' broke, don't fix it" holds social programs in check. There is too little incentive to try new approaches and stretch what's possible.

However these are not ordinary times. The social sector is being drastically triggered by the financial downturn and experiencing some of the deepest funding cuts in decades. More individuals, families and communities than ever are in need of services.

Even when financial resources are in short supply, widespread injections of social innovation are feasible. Programs of all shapes and sizes can be guided to do more with less, to see possibilities rather than doom and gloom.

Once inertia is overcome and the creative spirit is unleashed, programs will discover, as the seven in the case study have, that they can thrive and benefit substantially from the opportunity to stretch.

"The biggest insight has been that, by stretching and sticking to the plan, we can achieve progress. We've been talking about some of these ideas for a while, but now we have a structure which is supporting fulfillment of the ideas. "

Alternatives Inc.

"The 'seed idea' has momentum all its own. When we saw what happened having kids tell our story, we realized our parents will also be the best ambassadors to engage other parents, and Community Advisory Council members can best inspire more community supports. It's bringing everything to life, and we're seeing ideas more quickly to do more."

Center for Family Services

"I enjoy this type of activity and seeing the results. It inspires me to keep doing this type of program and expanding it. Six months ago, I had seen this as a daunting task and too much as an academic exercise. I would have done workshops on the specifics: how to complete an application, what you need to do in high school to prepare for college, etc. Now, the shift is less about requirements and more toward the attitude and excitement of going to college. Getting the coaches, parents, staff, and the kids to all help cultivate this attitude change. This is a holistic approach that can be applied to other areas of my work. "

United Neighborhood Organization

Appendix A: Role of SEED Coach

In General

- Gives orientation to each activity
- Takes notes and provides a report of the session
- Models reflective listening and inquiry practices
- Draws attention to possibilities
- Witnesses, acknowledges and encourages effective participation in creative dialogue
- Introduces tools with coaching and supports to integrate new team practices
- Lends outsider perspective combined with insider field experience
- Invites participants to see a larger context for their work
- Elicits the wisdom, talents, ideas and capacity in the program.

During the SEED Diagnostic

- Draws out what is unique about the program
- Guides participants to accurately graph their results
- Walks participants through self-assessment items, offering examples or clarification as needed
- Summarizes program strengths
- Invites participants to identify promising growth areas
- Facilitates values-based action planning and benchmarking

During Creative Stretch Workshop

- Synthesizes pre-workshop materials completed by participants
- Introduces the SEED model: stretch...enliven...ennoble...discover
- Leads participants through interactive stretch exercises
- Encourages participants to build on each other's input and reach consensus
- Reviews next steps for moving forward with "seed ideas"

During the Intention Tracking Sessions and Final Check-In

- Rekindles excitement around the "seed ideas"
- Invites participants to share accomplishments and explore new opportunities
- Checks progress against customized success markers
- Encourages further stretching

Appendix B: Time Commitment

The following chart summarizes the complementary roles played by SEED and each of the seven programs, and the benefits accrued at each step:

SEED ROLE	PROGRAM ROLE	BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for Diagnostic (1 hr) ➤ Facilitate process (3 hrs) ➤ Prepare Report (1 hr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Complete pre-diagnostic (30 min) ➤ Engage in process (3 hrs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity regarding strengths • Ratings of program impacts • Growth areas to explore • Action plans for two growth areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for Creative Stretch Workshop (4 hrs) ➤ Travel (as required) ➤ Facilitate process (4 hrs) ➤ Materials and next steps (2 hrs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Complete pre-workshop items (15 min per participant) ➤ Engage in process (4 hrs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two “seed ideas” with great generative potential • Teambuilding • Exposure to group creative problem-solving tools • Clarity regarding next steps to stretch work and grow impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for 3 monthly calls with two teams per program (90 min X 3 calls X 2 teams) ➤ Facilitate Intention Tracking (1 hr X 3 calls X 2 teams) ➤ Prepare Session Summaries (1 hr X 6 reports) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for 3 monthly calls (30 min X 3 calls X 2 teams) ➤ Participation in calls (1 hr X 3 calls X 2 teams) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Reflective practices • Updated action plans • Forward motion on “seed ideas” toward benchmarks • Opportunity to recognize new possibilities • Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for final check-in (90 min x 2 teams) ➤ Facilitate process (2 hrs x 2 teams) ➤ Prepare 6-Month Reports (1 hr x 2 reports) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation for final check-in (1 hr) ➤ Participation in call (2 hrs X 2 teams) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to take stock of accomplishments • Opportunity to look ahead and consider next phase of work • Documented achievements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time spent between sessions implementing action plans (varied by program/ “idea”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of program and organizational impacts related to the “seed ideas”

SEED invested roughly 45 hours per program, excluding staff travel to Chicago for the half-day Creative Stretch workshops.

The staff hour commitment of each program to working directly with SEED totaled about two working days (roughly 17 hours), spread out over the six-month period. Additional time focused on their two “seed ideas” was integrated within their regular work, enhancing or replacing existing tasks.