Everyday Democracy
NM Strong Starts for Children
Final Evaluation Report FY11

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### APPENDIX
INTRODUCTION

New Mexico Strong Starts for Children (Strong Starts), is a project of the Paul J. Aicher Foundation and Everyday Democracy, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in January 2010, and is part of the Our Voices, Our Children initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Our Voices, Our Children was aimed at engaging citizens and policymakers in talks about the future of early childhood development in New Mexico. Strong Starts was designed to use the Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change model in community dialogues to reveal perceptions, priorities and policy preferences, and ultimately help improve practices and programs. i2i Institute was contracted in May 2010 to serve as the evaluation team for the Strong Starts for Children project.

Five Strong Starts sites were funded in March of 2010, shortly before the i2i Institute began the evaluation: 1) Decade of the Child/UNM Family Development Program (DOC/FDP); 2) Cuidando los Niños/Campaign to End Child Homelessness (CLN); 3) Native American Professional Parenting Resources (NAPPR); 4) Youth Development Inc./Pajarito Mesa (PM); and 5) All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC). All were based in Albuquerque, and four of the five had a primary focus in Albuquerque—AIPC was focused on pueblos across the state. The RFP that the sites responded to set out the following expectations:

Communities (coalitions) selected to participate in Strong Starts for Children will be expected to:

1 AIPC is not included in the evaluation analysis for this report. While they implemented valuable work, focusing on policies related to Native language revitalization, their work did not follow the Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change model. They didn’t continue the project after the dialogue phase. Additionally, it was very difficult to get data from that site, so we don’t have enough to represent that site appropriately.
• Form an established and committed coalition (or steering group) of organizations and people to plan and guide the effort. The group should be diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, socioeconomics, age, and background.
• Designate a lead 501(c) (3) organizational partner to receive grant funds of up to $50,000.
• Develop a clear detailed plan for creating large-scale, public dialogue about achieving success for all children in the community, and especially for involving people who are traditionally marginalized.
• Identify facilitators for the dialogue processes (who will be trained on site by Everyday Democracy trainers).
• Commit to connect public dialogue to collaborative action and measurable community change by linking the dialogue to concrete action steps.
• Commit to address racial/ethnic equity as part of public problem solving at all levels, from leaders to the grass roots.
• Commit to work on long-term, systemic change.
• Commit to share experiences, stories, and lessons with Everyday Democracy and other communities in the initiative.
• Document and evaluate their progress.
• Participate in trainings in the use of logic models to track progress, document successes/challenges and keep focused on outcomes (to be offered by Everyday Democracy with participation by the evaluation team or evaluators).

i2i Institute was contracted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Strong Starts project in using the dialogue-to-change model to gain traction on improving Early Childhood practices and outcomes in New Mexico. Broadly, the Strong Starts evaluation responds to the following evaluation questions posed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation:

1. To what extent did you achieve anticipated outcomes for Phase 2, specifically around:
   a. Increasing awareness and understanding of what it means to have a community where all children thrive, and of the effects of poverty and structural racism on vulnerable children;
   b. Developing diverse leaders with influence around these issues; and
   c. Increasing community capacity to implement dialogue-to-change efforts? What insights were gained and how will they be incorporated into the next phase of the project?

2. To the extent that communities have begun to implement public dialogue processes, what has been the impact so far on issues affecting vulnerable children, ages 0-8, and their families?
While implementing the evaluation, i2i Institute found it necessary to work with Everyday Democracy staff to clarify certain aspects of the dialogue-to-change model in order to understand the ways the model was being implemented with fidelity, and how adaptations were being made by individual sites. This led to an evaluative process that provided ongoing formative input to Everyday Democracy, and thus has played a role in shaping the way they are thinking about Everyday Democracy’s overall theory of change. This collaboration has been important in framing the evaluation of the Strong Starts project, and will be discussed before the findings from the New Mexico Strong Starts project are presented.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework (figure 1, below) is based on the dialogue-to-change framework. There are three implementation components: 1) comprehensive community organizing (which is discussed in this report as the coalition); 2) the dialogues; and 3) action. These then lead to community change. However, change at multiple levels (organizational, individual, and/or community) can come out of any step of the dialogue-to-change process and these changes are also addressed by the evaluation. The entire process is shaped by the theory of change that undergirds Everyday Democracy’s work.

Figure 1. Evaluation Framework
Organization of the Report
The report is organized around this evaluation framework. Following this introduction, the evaluation process and methods are presented. Then, using the evaluation framework, the report considers the Everyday Democracy theory of change, and the role that the evaluation played in helping to clarify this. It then moves to discussing Strong Starts implementation. The section on implementation describes implementation of each component—the coalition, dialogues, and action—at each project site. The implementation section closes by discussing challenges to and lessons learned about implementation. Following the implementation section is a section on Strong Starts outcomes. Outcomes are discussed at the individual, organizational, and community levels. Following the outcomes section is a section that explores the ways that the Everyday Democracy core principles/outcomes were embedded in, or supported by, the Strong Starts project. The report closes with a summary and recommendations.
EVALUATION METHODS AND PROCESS

The Strong Starts evaluation was focused on cross-site implementation and results—it did not take on the role of monitoring or evaluating the work of individual project grantees. Although the evaluation uses data from the individual projects, the unit of analysis is limited to the overarching Strong Starts project.

The evaluation team understood from the beginning that the complexity and evolving nature of the Strong Starts project pointed to the need for a developmental approach to the evaluation.

*Developmental evaluations are designed to support the ongoing development of an intervention, the adaptation of an intervention to new dynamic environments . . . and the evaluation of comprehensive multi-level, multi-sector interventions. Typically, such evaluations involve a close, collaborative relationship in which the evaluator is part of the intervention team, providing rapid real-time feedback on what is unfolding in and around the intervention (Patton, 2010).*

In keeping with a developmental approach, the evaluation of the New Mexico Strong Starts project was highly integrated into the implementation at the sites, and was adapted as the project progressed. A more traditional static model would have run the risk of losing the learning about not only what changes are occurring, but what is happening over time and what the change dynamics are. In practice, this included a high level of interaction between evaluators, coalitions, and Everyday Democracy, both face-to-face and virtually, with a short feedback loop. In other words, evaluative feedback was provided to the project in an ongoing manner. Much of this was accomplished through informal mechanisms—interactions during site visits, meetings, and regular “check in” phone calls. The evaluation team was available on an ad hoc basis, providing feedback and consultation as needed.

**Data Collection**

This developmental approach meant that data collection was most effective using a participant observer role rather than through typical survey methods. Grantees didn’t have the resources to collect data themselves, nor was there adequate time to do training on data collection. For
example, evaluators had developed a series of survey tools to be used during the dialogues, but the short time frame for start-up made it too difficult to adequately train the dialogue facilitators, and data collection was too limited to be useful. In fact, a number of the original data collection tools and methods we had planned to implement were not as useful as we had originally hoped they would be. Another example included the use the Community Coalition Scorecard to measure changes in the coalitions; however, the coalitions were more fluid and changing than originally expected, and the coalition goal for most Strong Starts projects was not to build Strong, on-going coalitions, so a pre-post use of the scorecard wasn’t appropriate.

Evaluation methods that provided continued interaction between Everyday Democracy’s expectations and site implementation was important for resolving issues related to data collection. Given this, we found it most effective to provide evaluative support through assisting with planning, checking in regularly with the sites, and “translating” between the sites and Everyday Democracy. In the end, we spent much more face-to-face time with the sites than we had originally anticipated, and we found that our value in the project was related as much to the on-going and often informal feedback we were able to give as to the larger data collection and analysis that is represented in this report.

The following evaluation tools and methods were implemented that did provide informative data for the New Mexico Strong Starts evaluation:

- The Everyday Democracy theory of change framework, described below.
- Interviews with site staff and community partners at each stage of the project. This amounted to approximately four formal interview periods with key informants at each site. More informal feedback was also collected throughout the project as evaluators observed project implementation of all project phases.
- A review of documentation compiled by each coalition. This included reports, data, minutes of meetings, actions plans, etc.
- Surveys of participants after the policy forum (n=97).
- Pre/post Community Readiness interviews. This used a tool developed by the Tri-ethnic Center on Substance Abuse in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It involves in-depth structured interviews with key informants about a community’s readiness to address a specific issue. The interviews are then scored according to a 9-point rubric, across six dimensions. Four to seven interviews were conducted pre and post in each community site.
- Interviews with a random selection of dialogue participants and facilitators. These were telephone interviews. Approximately ten interviews were conducted for each project site.
- Check-ins with action teams every two to four weeks, both by telephone and face-to-face. These check-ins included observation at key action team events at each site.
- Photovoice projects during the action phase in three sites (NAPPR, at the Native American Community Academy; DOC/FDP, at New Futures school; and Pajarito Mesa). The
Photovoice process informed the evaluation, and the final products of the Photovoice projects are still being compiled;

- A focus group with youth from the University of New Mexico Youth Radio project—these youth were involved with making the Strong Starts videos at each site.

Additional informative data was collected when i2i Institute trained coalition representatives in the design and use of the logic model to guide the action projects. Two action implementation trainings were held, attended by representatives from each grantee site. Follow-up conversations were had with each site about their logic models and action plans. Conversations with coalition and action team members helped i2i Institute to understand how coalitions were thinking about the dialogue-to-change process.

We love our children. They experience much joy, love and happiness. If you give them all, they don’t become self-sufficient. But they should not have barriers, like lack of opportunity.
EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY THEORY OF CHANGE

As the evaluation team worked at the grantee site level, we strove to understand what “fidelity” to the dialogue-to-change model would look like. This was important because, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of model for use in New Mexico to address issues related to early childhood, we needed to understand the extent to which the model was being implemented. In this process we had a series of four meetings with Everyday Democracy staff at their offices in Harford Connecticut, and met with them during each of their visits to New Mexico. Our work with Everyday Democracy involved:

- A staff survey on the core principles of the dialogue-to-change model
- Follow-up discussion of survey results and observation in New Mexico
- Review of evaluation reports from other Everyday Democracy initiatives
- Input into a theory of change development process
- Input into Everyday Democracy’s strategic planning process
- And, finally, a meeting to develop an “analysis framework”

This work resulted in a set of principles/outcomes that must be considered and included in the analysis framework (presented below), a revised theory of change (figure 2, below), and an analysis framework (table 1, below).

Core Principles/Outcomes for Everyday Democracy’s work:

- **Inclusion/Equity**: National democracy-building must include local voice; democracy (and representation) requires the representative voice of all those in communities, including the diverse groups and perspective of those most affected in communities: racial equity explicitly but not exclusively; vertical and horizontal inclusion; on-going analysis of who needs to be at the table (taking into consideration and adapting for shifting power analysis and structural inequities); include those who are not traditionally included.

- **Individual and Collective Agency**: People can work with each other and with the institutions across the power structure to make change.

- **Structural Analysis**: There is shared understanding and insight to key issues facing all members of a community; including an analysis of power structures and structural causes of inequity, with a particular focus on racial equity; analysis includes the current system and is also applied to all proposed actions and solutions

- **Leadership**: Collective leadership; shared and reciprocal accountability; shared responsibility.

- **Governance Process and Structure**: The way we listen to others in the community; collective voices shaped decision-making, and decision-making processes, always informed by structural analysis; somebody (or many) in power must be listening and willing to act—distinguish “I hear you” from “I am changing my behavior”; institutionalized commitment to shifting structural causes of inequity/supporting structural equity.

- **Results—how does the structure impact individuals/community?** Efforts open a pathway to collective decision-making by affected populations; creating, influencing “governance structure” and supportive policy is a requirement to be effective across systems, institutions, communities.
These are described as core principles and outcomes because they both drive the process during the dialogue-to-action process and they identify key areas of systems change that are of interest to Everyday Democracy—that is, they represent the core elements of the “strengthened community and national democracy” that Everyday Democracy if focused on building through the dialogue-to-change work. One of the interesting results that is articulated through the revised theory of change is the distinction between outcomes of specific dialogue-to-action efforts—(Movement towards) institutionalized improvements in the lives of those most marginalized by the issue—and the interim outcomes that Everyday Democracy has a primary interest in—Communities apply practices of democracy to other community issues & goals they set for themselves, using an explicit racial equity lens that helps to focus all their equity work, and all their goals & practices. In other words, while progress on specific community issues is important to the work, Everyday Democracy’s ultimate goal is to embed democratic principles into the way a community functions at every level, and to leverage this to contribute to a stronger and more equitable democracy across the nation.
Communities apply practices of democracy to other community issues & goals they set for themselves, using an explicit racial equity lens that helps to focus all their equity work, and all their goals & practices.

Knowledge will flow back & forth between local & national levels.

Diverse communities will be networked, regionally & nationally, so that local efforts can see themselves as part of something larger & expand their learning & influence.

(Movement towards) institutionalized improvements in the lives of those most marginalized by the issue.

There is a network of potential partners working on all aspects of civic engagement, collective action, and democracy reform to whom we can refer communities. And from whom we get referrals.

National strategies: work with partners in democracy reform to integrate: (racial) equity; community voice, and dialogue-to-change

Increased number & diversity of individuals & groups across the country who work effectively at the intersection of democracy & racial equity, who apply a racialized lens – addressing power sharing, inclusivity, the effects of structural racism, & wealth disparities – to their work in problem solving, reducing disparities, and democratic governance.

They see themselves as part of a national democracy reform movement that enables more collaborative governance, transparency & openness, civic education, service, community organizing, universal voter participation without barriers, and elected officials that are representative of our full racial/ethnic/class/gender diversity.

Strengthened community/national democracy:

- **INCLUSION/EQUITY**: National democracy-building must include local voice; democracy (and representation) requires the representative voice of all those in communities, including the diverse groups and perspective of those most affected in communities; vertical and horizontal inclusion; ongoing analysis of who needs to be at the table (taking into consideration and adapting for shifting power analysis and structural inequities)

- **INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY AGENCY**: People can work with each other and with the institutions across the power structure to make change.

- **STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**: There is shared understanding and insight to key issues facing all members of a community; including an analysis of power structures and structural causes of inequity, with a particular focus on racial equity; analysis includes the current system and is also applied to all proposed actions and solutions

- **LEADERSHIP**: Collective leadership; shared and reciprocal accountability

- **GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND STRUCTURE**: The way we listen to others in the community; collective voices shaped decision-making, and decision-making processes, always informed by structural analysis; somebody (or many) in power must be listening. Distinguish “I hear you” from “I am changing my behavior”. Efforts open a pathway to collective decision-making by affected populations; creating, influencing “governance structure” and supportive policy is a requirement to be effective across systems, institutions, communities; institutionalized commitment to shifting structural causes of inequity/supporting structural equity

Structures that support changes in the issues at multiple levels—Awareness → inclusive process → unified strategic vision → collective action →

(issue-specific) inclusive organizing to dialogue-to-change processes aided by Everyday Democracy’s people & tools. Includes (racial) equity lens and EvDem principles of democracy

Figure 2: Everyday Democracy Revised Theory of Change
The Analysis Framework takes the core principles/outcomes and asks questions about how they inform the internal work, how they inform strategies in community, and they are present in the outcomes that result from the work.

**Table 1. Everyday Democracy Analysis Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How do we model this internally?</th>
<th>What strategies do we implement to support this?</th>
<th>What changes happen—what do we leave behind?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion/Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual and/or Community Agency</td>
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<td>Structural Analysis</td>
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<td>Governance Process and Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This analysis framework was created for Everyday Democracy to use more broadly than the Strong Starts project, and does not directly frame the evaluation process and report. However, the evaluation report has a section after the Project Outcomes section that explore how these core principles/outcomes were addressed the implementation of and how they show up in the results of the Strong Starts project.
STRONG STARTS IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the report looks at Strong Starts implementation. It evaluates each coalition’s implementation of the dialogue-to-change process. The implementation discussion is followed by a discussion of lessons learned about the implementation process. Finally, this section closes by exploring the ways that the Everyday Democracy core principles/outcomes were embedded in, or supported by, the Strong Starts project. The basic model for the dialogue-to-change process is presented below in figure 3.

**Figure 3. Dialogue-to-Change model**

![Diagram of the Dialogue-to-Change model](image)

Based on this, implementation of the Strong Starts projects required grantees to pull together a coalition or steering committee with a focus on improving early childhood development challenges who would then organize a number of dialogue circles. This required learning the dialogue protocol. Coalitions also had the responsibility to organize an Action Forum where action ideas would be identified. These action ideas would then be carried out by Action Teams. Each coalition was expected to implement all of the components of the dialogue-to-change process.

Everyday Democracy had several roles in ensuring successful implementation. A key role was to train and support coalitions to implement the community dialogues, for which they had developed a well-researched and proven tool. Part of this role included training for coalitions and dialogue facilitators. They introduced coalitions to the dialogue process, and trained dialogue facilitators in the protocol and facilitation process. Everyday Democracy also had a role in supporting the coalitions in the transition from the dialogues to action through developing a theory of change that would map the action strategies toward long-term change to improve the lives of vulnerable young children.
There were significant successes and challenges in these roles. The greatest success was the universal appreciation of the dialogue process as a way to bring diverse community voices to the table. The dialogues were a new and powerful tool for each of the coalitions. The protocol developed by Everyday Democracy helped to build trust among participants, creating a safe place to express ideas, while guiding the discussion toward action. The challenges included the tight time frame to move from coalition to dialogue to action, the lack of iterative feedback on the dialogue facilitation and process, and the need for development and support of community leaders. Leadership was important issue for the Strong Starts project, and is discussed in more depth the outcomes section, in the section that explores the alignment between the Everyday Democracy core principles/outcomes and the Strong Starts project.
Implementation by Grantee Site

Strong Starts project implementation in each of the grantee sites is described below, within the following areas: the coalition, the dialogues, and the actions.

**Pajarito Mesa**

**The Coalition**
The Strong Starts project for Pajarito Mesa was proposed as a collaborative effort between two organizations: Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) and the office of Bernalillo County Commissioner Art De La Cruz. As the project began, the two organizations recognized the work entailed in facilitating a coalition, so they hired a coordinator to facilitate the Coalition meetings. The coordinator worked with the fledgling Pajarito Mesa Neighborhood Association as well as YDI and the county to recruit representatives for the Pajarito Mesa Strong Starts Coalition. The members of the coalition that formed included: 5 community members, a Health Department professional, three professionals from YDI, a representative from Bernalillo County, and the coordinator. For the first few months, coalition meetings were held in the parent center at a High School within three miles of Pajarito Mesa.

**The Dialogues**

At the Kickoff event on Pajarito Mesa, 70 people signed up for the dialogues. The Pajarito Mesa Coalition originally organized for up to eight dialogue groups to meet for the five dialogue sessions to be held at community centers near Pajarito Mesa. For the first round of dialogues at the community centers, there were enough participants to form three dialogue groups. Over time, the participation dwindled, and only one of the groups completed all five dialogues. The Coalition re-assessed the design, and, listening to input from the community coalition membership, they determined that Pajarito Mesa residents were put off by the unfamiliar location of the community centers and the distance required to attend. So another round of dialogues was initiated, this time to be held on the Mesa. A local church provided the venue, for the nominal compensation of payment of the electric bill.

The new venue drew enough participants for three dialogue groups. All dialogue sessions included dinner and educational child care. Educational Childcare activities were provided for the Tuesday group by Pajarito Mesa community members. Educational childcare for Wednesday and Thursday sessions was provided by YDI HeadStart staff.

*Dialogue Facilitators.* For the original community center-based dialogues, facilitators were all affiliated with YDI. For the second round of dialogues, held in the community, the majority of facilitators were YDI employees, with the exception of community resident, Luz Maldonado and the coordinator, Steve Lucero. All dialogue facilitators were trained by Everyday Democracy.
Dialogue Participants. Accounting for the two rounds of dialogues, there were 50 total participants, with a range of six to 13 in each dialogue group. Three of the four dialogue groups were facilitated in Spanish, as a majority of the participants were Spanish speaking. This was true for both the community center dialogues, and those held on the Mesa. Two of the groups required a translator, which slowed the discussion down, and created a bit of a barrier to communication.

The dialogue groups in the first round, at community centers, included a number of professionals with interest in the Pajarito Mesa Community: a school principal; the county zoning officer whose jurisdiction includes Pajarito Mesa; and three health professionals. Six community members participated in the full five sessions of that group. The dialogue groups in the second round, on the Mesa, included mostly community members. A county employee and YDI representatives also attended.

Action
Action Planning. The Pajarito Mesa Action Forum was held in the community at the church where the second round of dialogues were held. About 50 people attended, including the facilitators. The Action Forum was facilitated by consultant/project coordinator, Steve Lucero, with translation by Luz Maldonado. The group came up with four targeted action areas:
• provide opportunities for community members to create a green community using renewable energy sources;
• create a safer community for children and families;
• implement healthy, productive activities for children and families in Pajarito Mesa; and
• maintain a healthy, local environment for Pajarito Mesa children and families.

Participants then signed up to work on one of these action committees. Between 10 and 20 people signed up for each action. Each action team appointed a designated spokesperson. Each team made a list of action steps that they hoped to carry out over time. Although each action team identified a lead spokesperson, teams continue to rely on Luz Maldonado to facilitate the actions, including making arrangements for meetings with officials, securing space, contacting presenters.

**Action to Change.** Each action team developed a plan to address the specific concern. The resulting activities include:

- The purchase and construction of six 3 X 6 foot community gardens, located near the central water facility. These gardens were tended by community members. They are reusable and will be continued next year. A challenge will be to encourage more residents to participate in the care and use of the gardens.
- A community meeting, with over 50 residents in attendance, with presentations by and discussion with two major safety providers – the county sheriff’s department and the fire department. This resulted in the creation of a numbered grid system used to locate families in emergencies. The challenge is that there are no street addresses. New zoning laws will be required to create public use roads.
- Secure county funding for the placement and hook-up of a donated portable building in the community, to be used as a community center and after-school program site. With community pressure, the county agreed to pay $60,000 for placement and hook-ups. The grand opening is scheduled for sometime in January 2012. The committee continues in conversations with YDI about funding for after school programs for the children, and Adult Basic Education classes for the community.
- Collaboration with the Law Clinic to create a 501(c)3 (The Pajarito Mesa Community Initiative) to seek grants for the creation of a community development plan, and future community improvement activities. All paperwork should be submitted before the end of 2011.
- A new grant from Kellogg, through Everyday Democracy, to initiate a new round of dialogues in order to develop a community development plan.

While many of the actions undertaken in the Pajarito Mesa community were short term, they have embodied two major ideas from the Strong Starts project. First, there is a sense that when it is time, they have a voice in determining the change they want to see in their
community. Second, there is now an understanding that the best way to hear the different voices of individuals in the community is through the dialogues. Therefore, they plan to work with Everyday Democracy to implement a new round of dialogues that will give voice to a long-term plan for the community, including infrastructure and access. Also, it has become clear through this dialogue-to-change project that they will need resources to proceed with their plans. This has led to the formation of a Pajarito Mesa Community Initiative, to gain status as a 501(c)3. This will allow them to apply for grants.

Pajarito Mesa continues to struggle to grow new leadership. Currently, Luz Maldonado is looked to for leadership, and she has built strong relationships with the county and other government agencies, as well as with granting agencies. While the community seems to be moving forward under this structure, it also poses new problems. There is a tendency to exhaust the leader when leadership is not shared. There is also the likelihood that some community members will become critical of one leader, and blame for discontent will focus there.

Decade of the Child/Family Development Program (DOC/FDP)

The Coalition

The 12 member Decade of the Child/Family Development Program steering committee, led by FDP staff, was made up of a diverse group of professionals with strong ties to the early childhood community. The steering committee/coalition included early childhood leaders, health professionals, a school principal, and grassroots leaders. This coalition helped to facilitate the dialogues and to recruit participants.
**Dialogues**
The DOC/FDP Coalition organized dialogues to be held at eight different sites around Albuquerque:

- La Mesa Elementary School
- South Broadway Cultural Center
- South Valley Library
- Helen Cordero Elementary
- East Central Ministries
- Alameda
- New Futures
- Virtual site

The sites were carefully selected to draw participation from many neighborhoods in the city. While most of the venues were public libraries, which had agreed to provide space and story time for participants’ children, this was flexible. For example, one dialogue group was originally scheduled to meet at a public library, but decided it was easier for the participants to meet at the school that most of their children attend (Helen Cordero), so arrangements were made. Two other sites were community specific from the beginning. La Mesa Elementary School parents formed one of the groups. New Futures students (pregnant girls or young mothers in High School) formed another site-specific dialogue group.

**Dialogue Facilitators.** The initial mobilization effort included finding a Spanish and English speaking facilitator for each dialogue group, to provide flexibility and translation. Two of the dialogue circles were in Spanish, five were in English, and one was presented bilingually at the request of the participants. There was an intentional design to get one facilitator from a group or agency involved with working with children, and one facilitator from the specific community where the dialogues were to take place. For example, at Helen Cordero, one facilitator was the APS Community Schools director. The other facilitator was the parent liaison at the school. Five of the facilitator were FDP/DOC professionals.

**Dialogue Participants.** Across the eight dialogue circles, there were a total of 71 participants ranging between 6 and 12 per circle. Although the Coalition attempted to recruit participants from very diverse backgrounds, many of the circles included people from similar backgrounds. The Coalition felt that this was due the simultaneous efforts of the four other coalitions.

**Action**
**Action Planning.** The FDP/DOC coalition held their Action Forum at the South Broadway cultural center. Dinner was served. Approximately 45 people attended, with representatives from each of the dialogue groups. The outcome was the identification of five action ideas:
• Access to early childhood information, resources and training opportunities through a community-based website
• Advocacy for healthy foods and nutrition for children and families.
• Improving relationships with schools and within neighborhoods
• Adding child development and family finance planning to middle and high school curricula.
• Developing a city-wide focus on high quality early childhood experiences, including supporting families.

Action to Change. The five action ideas evolved into the following four action projects:
• The Community Action Resource Team had a citywide focus, with a goal to develop two public information websites: the early childhood community resource website and the family resource website. This Action Project received the Action Grant funding. Two professionals from Teaching Solutions conducted focus groups in the community and worked with providers to design the content of the website.
• The Helen Cordero Elementary School action project was formed in response to the idea to advocate for healthy foods and nutrition. The plan developed to create a community garden. Action team members included parents, teachers and community members. The community garden is up and running, and the team has expanded its focus to include the provision of FDP’s Seven Essential Skills classes.
• The action idea to improve relationships with schools and community was specific to La Mesa Elementary School. The action team, made up primarily of La Mesa parents, was facilitated by an FDP professional. The team formed to help give parents at the school a voice, and to provide parenting classes. The Seven Essential Skills training was offered to parents at the school.
• A fourth action team focused on the challenges of teen parenting. Initially, the team was facilitated by FDP professionals, and due to school requirements and daily schedules, teen parents were not included. It was determined that the energy for this action project had really come from the New Futures teen parents, and that they needed to be included. This action team faced several challenges, including a change in demographics from spring to fall, so the initial energy of the dialogues and the action was not sustained. The focus turned to Photovoice as a way for teen mothers to create a message about the challenges of teen parenting, and this was incorporated into a film class at the school.

All of the action teams have continued to meet and work toward some targeted change in their community. What follows is a brief description of the leadership and the trajectory of each project:
• There are now two websites up and running, one facilitated by Teaching Solutions and the other by NMAECC. The website addresses are;  http://www.mycommunitynm.org
and [http://www.nmecc.org](http://www.nmecc.org). They continue to solicit information on child and family resources for their website. One challenge they face is that other organizations do not have the resources to keep their own information updated. Another challenge is continuing the labor-intensive job of keeping the website current.

- The La Mesa parent group has completed the entire *Seven Essential Skills* training, and are interested in more parenting information and training.
- The Helen Cordero community gardens project continues to move forward. They have had a fall harvest, and plan to continue the garden next year. They have requested the *Seven Essential Skills* training, as well.
- The New Futures site has been the most challenging. After an encouraging start in the spring of 2011 working with a group of teen parents who had been involved in the dialogues, the group and the energy disbanded. In the fall, with facilitation from outside, the principal and a teacher agreed to implement Photovoice in the film class. Because it was a new group of girls, and the project had not originated with them, there was not the same motivation to pursue a project. The class lasted only 9 weeks, but the film teacher has agreed to continue the Photovoice project with a new group. There is talk of including their product in the Cuidando film festival next spring.

Although the FDP/DOC Coalition has felt some frustration with the multiple Strong Starts coalitions in Albuquerque, they have also developed some strong partnerships. They have a
continuing relationship with NAPPR, to explore home visiting programs. The project coordinator of the Cuidando los Niños Coalition has joined the core DOC committee.

The personal and collective actions that resulted from the dialogue-to-change process supported their Strong Starts goal that the decade 2010-2020 will be a transformative era for social change that centers public will and civic investment on the rights of all children and their families to have a just, healthy and economically secure life. The dialogue to change process helped the Coalition to examine the underlying issues and inequities that prevent every child from having a strong start.

**Cuidando Los Niños/Campaign to End Child Homelessness**

**The Coalition**
The original Cuidando Los Niños/Campaign to End Child Homelessness (CLN) coalition was the same as the broad Campaign coalition, and includes 35 individuals, according to a 2010 list. The Coalition that moved forward with the Strong Starts project was called the Strong Starts Core Team, and included 8 members of the that Committee. Members included the CLN Strong Starts Project director, a representative of the National Campaign to end Child Homelessness, a representative from CYFD, two members of the Coalition to End Child Homelessness, a representative of Healthcare for the Homeless, and a representative of A New Day Youth and Family Services. As plans for the dialogues proceeded, the coalition steering committee reached out to local organizations that represent a broad spectrum of the Albuquerque community to help find hosts and facilitators for the dialogues.

**Dialogues**
The Cuidando Coalition used an adaptation of the *Strong Starts for Children* discussion guide developed by Everyday Democracy. Throughout the fall of 2010, four dialogue groups engaged 50 participants in exploring the causes, consequences, and action strategies to end child and family homelessness. The dialogue sessions were hosted at sites in four distinct communities that account for a high percentage of children and families experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless: South Valley (Host: South Valley Academy); two in Downtown/South Broadway (Hosts: Cuidando los Niños and South Broadway Development Corp., Inc.); and the International District (Host: International District Community Health Coalition). Although the Coalition had planned for 5-7 dialogues, engaging 8-10 people in each dialogue, time pressures altered the plan to hosting four dialogues engaging 12-15 participants per session. Each group met four times over a period of 6-8 weeks.

**Dialogue Facilitators.** Six facilitators were trained for the Cuidando Coalition’s dialogues. The Coalition intentionally recruited facilitators to represent the Native American community, the Spanish speaking community, and the youth community.
Dialogue Participants. Approximately 80 people participated in the dialogue circles across the four sites. Participants included a mix of community members, including:

- Adult community members: 26 (32%)
- Students: 20 (25%)
- Community agency service-providers: 15 (19%)
- Public agency service-providers: 10 (12%)
- Public school teachers: 7 (8%)
- Elected officials: 2 (2%)
- Funder: 1 (1%)

The Coalition faced a challenge early on, in finding a coordinator to facilitate the Strong Starts project. Once Wendy Wintemute came on board, the Core Team began to roll with the dialogues. However, there was a time crunch that shortened the period in which they could conduct the dialogues.

Action

Action Planning. The CLN Action Forum, held on November 23, 2010, drew 68 adults and 7 children, who presented and/or responded to a dozen action items generated by the dialogue participants. Participants presented a dozen action items that emerged from their dialogue sessions. Four actions emerged as priorities:

- Increase public awareness about child homelessness, or PSA publicity to “shock the general public into action”;
- Housing assessment and referral;
- Build the network of services to ensure access to a broad range of high quality services to support children and families who are homeless and to prevent others from becoming homeless; and
- Inform local, state and federal policies that could address both the immediate situation of homeless children and families as well as the underlying factors that contribute to homelessness.

In their Action Grant proposal, these four actions were worded differently, and did not include the policy piece described in the fourth bullet. The fourth action was listed in that proposal as creating the “American Dream Fellowship - a small business incubator and entrepreneurial support for home-support enterprises.”

Action to Change. There was not much sign-up for the action projects. The process was challenged by the lack of discussion of all the ideas and trying to prioritize them. Only one project was carried forward out of the action planning – the one to increase public awareness
about child homelessness through a Youth Creating Change Film Festival. This became the focus of their action implementation grant.

The Youth Creating Change Film Festival involved middle- and high-school youth in creating PSAs or short films to educate and motivate the community to act to end child and family homelessness. The films were aired at a public showing on June 25th. They also created a website https://sites.google.com/site/youthfilmcreatingchange. Fifty high-school students were involved in making short, 25-second PSAs. One of the challenges they discovered was that students were not able to really address the message in such short presentations. There are plans to hold a second annual Youth Creating Change Film Festival in the spring of 2012. The Coalition has reached out to New Futures Photovoice students, asking them to participate in the 2012 Film Festival. They have also had initial meetings with the Santa Fe Homeless Youth Network and the Adelante Homeless Student Program in the Santa Fe Public Schools to support a Youth Creating Change Film and Art Festival in the Spring Semester, in partnership with the Santa Fe College of Art.

The biggest success has been in the area of drawing in the youth perspective and youth voice through the film festival. The Coalition now has connections with the City of Albuquerque Film Office, with local film instructors and members of the film industry.

The CLN Coalition faced some challenges in carrying out their plans for the films. First, the short time frame for the action projects to be completed meant that the films were not as high quality as they would have liked. Second, because their action started in the middle of the spring semester of school, it was difficult to engage many schools. Only the charter schools participated. They are starting earlier with this next round of films, giving students more time and training.

There are concerns about carrying forth the work required to do the Film Festival, as funding has run out to support the Ameri-Corps volunteer. However, there is evidence that the dialogues led to raising awareness of the issue of child homelessness among a number of high school students. Five students requested
to work at CLN as their community service project, and CLN was able to accommodate three of them. They are supporting the work of preparing for another film festival.

Challenges for the Coalition include funding, time, and building a broader cadre of leadership in the Coalition. Ultimately the action project was facilitated primarily by the Coalition coordinator and the Ameri-Corps volunteer. They would have liked to organize another round of dialogues, having seen the power of the dialogues to create awareness and bring out community voice.

**Native American Professional Parenting Resources (NAPPR)**

**The Coalition**

NAPPR built up a diverse coalition that included both formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders on the Coalition were NAPPR staff and board of directors members; the Native American Community Academy principal; Zia Pueblo Health Task Force members; Zia Pueblo appointed officials; staff from collaborating agencies (Education for Parents of Indian Children with Special needs (EPICS); staff of the All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC); OptumHealth NM (New Mexico’s state wide behavioral health entity) Native American liaison; and NM Children, Youth and Families Native American Liaison. Grass-roots leaders included parents, grandparents, Native American Community Academy (NACA) teachers, and various community members.

**The Dialogues**

The NAPPR Strong Starts Coalition held dialogue circles at two sites. The first was a charter middle school, the Native American Community Academy. For that site, dialogues were held in September. The other site was at the Pueblo of Zia, where there were three dialogue circles. Due to the Pueblo cultural calendar, and in order to accommodate the schedules of the governing council and cultural values of the people, their dialogues were not held until April of 2011. This was a challenge in terms of fulfilling the grant timeline, but worked better for the community.

The NAPPR Coalition found recruitment for the dialogues a challenge due to the “leg work” required to organize the Albuquerque urban Native community. The coordinator had to really “sell” the Strong Starts dialogues to the Native community, as they felt a lot of skepticism about a new idea. This mobilization effort also led to one of their successes - the inclusion of youth participants in the dialogues.

**Dialogue Facilitators.** There were three facilitators for the urban dialogues held at NACA. They were all professionals, recruited by the NAPPR Coalition. For the Zia dialogue circles, there were also three facilitators.
Dialogue Participants. For the dialogues held at NACA, there were 56 participants. Twenty-five of them were 10th graders at the school. Two of the dialogue groups were mostly professionals and interested community members, with two or three Native participants. The Coalition found recruiting urban Native Americans to be a challenge due to transportation, childcare, and awareness. One of the dialogue circles had a number of Spanish speakers, which made communication difficult, as there was no translation.

The dialogues at Zia Pueblo drew 52 participants from the community, including service providers. One of the dialogue circles was primarily made up of Zia youth. The Coalition accommodated the cultural schedule of the pueblo, changing the dialogues to the spring. This brought in more Zia residents and tribal government members.

Action

Action planning. Two specific actions resulted from the dialogues. First, the parent and student participants at NACA identified a specific purpose for their action. The school will add elementary grades within the next couple of years, and planning is needed for the curriculum and design of the elementary program. Dialogue participants determined that their action would be to solicit and act on parent input for that program design. The second action involved different activities such as a community garden and a youth theater group. In the end these two actions were combined into one action proposal through NACA, with the second action item to be spearheaded through forming a parent group at NACA. This would then meet two needs: bringing NACA parents together and implementing the activities prioritized by the parent group.

Action to Change. For the NACA elementary planning project, the actions included: meeting with school personnel through listening sessions and focus groups to give parents a voice in the decisions about the elementary program; and completion of a Photovoice project to determine the highest priorities for the new program.
The NAPPR Coalition was able to implement the dialogue-to-action process for the NACA elementary school planning. “Listening sessions” were held at the school to solicit community input into the new NACA Elementary School.

The Photovoice project was an activity of the NACA action that gave families a voice in decisions made about culture and language foci at the school. While the number of families who committed to being involved was lower than expected for the Photovoice project, in the end that was a positive. Four families participated, each representing different tribes, and the entire family participated, including three generations for one family. Had the number of families been greater, there would have been too many people to work with effectively. Another unexpected outcome of the way that group came together was that often more than one tribe was represented in a family unit, which provided input representing different tribal needs, and demonstrated the concept of building a “family” across tribes—something that is important for the success of NACA. The school administration now has a much better idea about what the hopes, dreams, and concerns are for the elementary school expansion. An additional benefit is that a group of parents are energized about the process. The final write-up for the Photovoice project will be completed during this next grant period.

The second action item never materialized. The person who had wanted to head those activities was unable to make time in her schedule to coordinate the group. This had been anticipated, which is why it had been folded into, and funded alongside, the NACA action proposal.

Another aspect of the action that didn’t come to pass was related to evaluation. Funding was included in the action grant to train a member of the Native community in evaluation skills. Evaluation is a field that is under-represented by Native peoples, and this would have provided an opportunity to increase evaluation skills within the NACA community. An individual who had interest in this area was identified, and came to an initial meeting, but she, also, was unable to make time in her schedule for the project.

Zia Pueblo dialogues led to a number of action ideas. Five big action ideas came out of the action planning process.

- Youth (including culture and language programs, summer activities and animal control).
- Cultural and language
- Governance and community engagement
- Parenting support
- Community wellness education
The Zia Strong Starts Action Training had lower than expected attendance due to the harvest. Many families were out in the fields. Work at Zia continued beyond the scope of this report, and will be reported on for the next grant.

In spite of low turnout, the Zia Pueblo dialogues led to new partnerships with early childhood support services. The action ideas that resulted from the dialogues provided some guidance in the strategic planning of the Zia Health Task Force. A particular success of this site’s dialogue to dialogue-to-change process was the recognition of the power of the youth voice. Native youth were very impassioned by the issues in their community that affect all children.

**Challenges to and Lessons Learned about Implementation**

Lessons learned about implementation of the Strong Starts project are discussed below. While specific to the Strong Starts project, the learning can inform both other community engagement efforts in New Mexico and Everyday Democracy’s work in other places. Overarching lessons are presented, followed by lessons related to three specific project components—the coalition, the dialogues, and the action teams. This section concludes with
lessons learned about aligning Strong Starts project implementation with Everyday Democracy core principles.

Across all project components there were lessons that fell into two general themes: 1) the deviation of the Strong Starts from the usual Everyday Democracy approach, and 2) the connection between the parts of the Everyday Democracy model and the Strong Starts project. These two themes are discussed below.

**Deviation of Strong Starts from the Everyday Democracy Approach**

Many of the key lessons are related to the fact that the New Mexico Strong Starts projects represented a deviation from the way that Everyday Democracy typically enters, and then supports, communities. The Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change model is usually initiated by a community in response to a community-defined issue—communities solicit support from Everyday Democracy to help them address an issue they are struggling with.
Inherent in this is the assumption that the community is soliciting help from Everyday Democracy because they understand and believe in the dialogue-to-change model, and that they ascribe to the fundamental principles that underlie Everyday Democracy’s approach. In contrast, for the Strong Starts project, the issue of early childhood had been identified outside of the project communities, and Everyday Democracy was charged with soliciting communities to participate. In other words, Everyday Democracy moved from being the solicited to the solicitor—a change which had implications for the project outcomes. These implications clustered around two main issues: the time frame of the project and the role of Everyday Democracy. These issues are discussed below.

**Issue 1: Project Time Frame**

Due to delays in start-up, the Strong Starts project had about 15 months from their initial funding until the community projects were to be completed. This included identifying communities to participate through an RFP process, training the communities, and implementing the dialogues and action planning. An extension of about five months was later granted, which created time to implement action in the communities. Even with this extension, the timeline was considered much too short at every phase. First, communities reported that the way grantee recruitment happened did not foster the type of relationship building that would have facilitated this project. The result of this was that Everyday Democracy came into the project somewhat “cold,” and it took time to build trust and a mutual understanding between Everyday Democracy and the grantee sites. The learning curve for these projects was steep, and building these relationships while trying to train the projects on the model and tools created an unfortunate barrier to both the relationship (which was strained by the short turn-around required) and the learning curve (which was more difficult without a relationship based in trust and mutual understanding).

It became clear over the course of the project that a more iterative process would have benefited the Strong Starts projects. The first round of dialogues was effective for building relationships, learning the basics about the model, and catalyzing interest. Had there been time in the project for iterative dialogue-to-change cycles, not only would the grantee sites have been able to deepen their knowledge of and skills in the process, but the dialogue-to-change model would have been more likely to spread beyond the project sites. This was an issue that was brought up repeatedly across all project sites and all participant roles, for example, all coalitions reported the need and desire for at least one additional round of dialogues to increase the community impact and learning.

**Issue 2: Everyday Democracy’s Role**

As discussed above, this issue is related to the time frame issue, in that Everyday Democracy’s role as a support partner was challenged by the lack of time to forge relationships. In addition, Everyday Democracy’s role was defined by, and challenged by, the structure of the funding
that was provided to communities to participate in the project. For the NM Strong Starts project, Everyday Democracy was firmly in the role of funder. This is in contrast to their more familiar role of “invited partner”. In addition, as funder, Everyday Democracy was in a position to hold the coalitions accountable to the dialogue-to-change process, a role that requires strong relationships to be successful, particularly in the culture of New Mexico.

New Mexico frequently has a distrust of “outsiders,” and a belief that only New Mexicans can understand how to work in New Mexico. While there is a strong and valid argument to be made for place-based work that is driven by local knowledge and experience, local knowledge can only take communities as far as they know how to get themselves. In addition, local dynamics often include competition for scarce resources and internal power struggles. When approached as a partnership and driven by local interests, expertise from outside can seed new and deeper skills, feed innovation, and diffuse local power imbalances. One of the greatest challenges to this dynamic is in power imbalances between the “outsider” and the locals, which often become a lightning rod for dismissing anything that comes in from outside.

With Everyday Democracy coming into New Mexico as a funder, the relationship began with a clear power imbalance. In addition, the way that organizations typically work with grant funding is to find ways to leverage it to continue or expand the work they are already doing. While the dialogue-to-change model does, in fact, have the potential to leverage existing efforts, it is a different approach than what organizations are currently using, and requires a shift in perspective. Most communities applied for the Strong Starts grant not because they saw the value in the model—most didn't really understand the model when they applied for the grant—but because they felt that the overall approach was aligned well-enough with their work. In other words, most communities applied for the funding, and the model was simply a requirement of the grant—with the exception of one coalition (NAPPR), the specific model wasn't the driver for participation in the project. NAPPR, on the other hand, saw the value of the dialogue-to-change model for the communities from the beginning.

Over time, this enthusiasm spread to the other coalitions. As the coalitions experienced the power of the dialogue-to-change process for engaging communities and supporting deep and honest exchange, they began to value the model for its own sake—as one coalition coordinator said, “These actions wouldn't have happened without this specific dialogue model. There is something about this model that's different—it really works to motivate people at a grassroots level.” This was mirrored by participants across all coalitions.

While the early frustrations took their toll, by the end of the project the coalitions were beginning to see Everyday Democracy more as a partner than a heavy-handed funder, and were reporting that additional on-going support from Everyday Democracy (not just funding) would be welcome and very helpful. Coalitions discussed their desire for on-going support until
the capacity for implementing the dialogue-to-change model was firmly embedded in the state. Even those who felt confident to continue to support dialogue-to-change efforts themselves did not feel like they could train others, and expanding the use of the process to other communities and with other issues was something that many coalition members and dialogue participants felt would be beneficial to supporting real change in New Mexico. This being said, coalition coordinators were clear that the ultimate goal was to build the capacity within the state, and that New Mexico facilitators and community organizers should take the lead on the next steps, supported by Everyday Democracy staff. What is interesting about this is that, in spite of the challenges, the dialogue-to-change process was powerful enough to bring the New Mexico teams around to the type of partnership that Everyday Democracy usually engages in—a partnership of mutual respect and shared purpose.

**Connecting the Parts**

This theme came up in two different ways: connecting the parts of the dialogue-to-change model and connecting the parts of the Strong Starts project. These are addressed below.

**Connecting the Parts of the Dialogue-to-Change Model**

Many project participants discussed issues that were related to the connections between the implementation components—the community organizing (i.e. the coalitions), the dialogues, and the actions. Looking back at the evaluation framework, this is represented by the arrows between the boxes. The coalitions each embraced the dialogue-to-change model, and were committed to implementing each component of the model. And at every stage participants within each component felt as though the work was successful, catalyzing changes that would not have happened otherwise. However, in many instances and in numerous ways, participants (and the evaluation team) observed that the connections between these components were not as strong as they might have been.

Coalitions → Dialogues. First, the connection between the coalitions and the dialogues did not grow out of a deep community organizing process. In effect, the coalition took on somewhat of a managerial role to the project. They guided the overall project, and provided oversight to the logistical work. For the most part the role of the coalition in actual community organizing, per se, was minimal. Thus the movement from the coalition work to the dialogues was grounded in the logistics for planning, recruitment, training, and implementation; it did not grow out of an impassioned community mobilization effort. Pajarito Mesa was somewhat of an exception to this, where the coalition was more grounded in the community than the other coalitions.

This was not due to a lack of desire, skill, or even passion, on the part of the coalitions. The factors that contributed to this were: limited community presence on most of the coalitions; a lack of understanding about the purpose of the coalition in the dialogue-to-change model; and a project focus that was imposed from outside of the community. The first two of these factors...
were a direct function of the short time frame of the project. With a more protracted time to build the coalition, more community members could have been recruited to participate, and Everyday Democracy could have spent more time working with the coalitions on the theoretical foundations of the dialogue-to-change model. Even the third factor—the imposition of the focus from outside—might have been mitigated by a longer time frame—with more time to engage in community organizing around the issue, it is likely that it would have evolved into a more nuanced focus that spoke to a more diverse coalition. In fact, this was seen in each of the coalitions over time—as they worked through the process, the issue began to transform in ways that were more meaningful for the community. For example, in Pajarito Mesa the focus moved to safety and services, and for CLN the issue moved to community awareness about child homelessness. In the DOC/FDP and NAPPR coalitions, the issues became more focused at the action team level. With more time, and a more iterative process, this might have moved back into the coalition and informed a next stage of community organizing led by the coalitions.

*Dialogues → Action.* The second connection, between the dialogues and action, was challenged in different ways. While the time frame was a factor here as well, challenges to moving from dialogue to action were also related to a need for more training and support in three areas: connecting action to the dialogues; planning and implementing action; and sustaining the effort. In terms of connecting the action to the dialogues, there was wide variation in the extent to which this happened across the coalitions. For some, the actions rose directly out of the dialogue process, and the action teams were composed in large part of dialogue participants. For others, however, the action ideas that were prioritized appeared to be driven by the interests of a few individuals, and some action teams had almost nobody who had attended one of the dialogues. In interviews with dialogue participants, this was a concern for some participants—they felt as though their voice hadn’t been heard, and that the action items that took place didn’t really reflect the work they had experienced in the dialogues. The time frame played into this issue in a different way from above—the dialogues ended in October or November, but the action planning didn’t take place until January. The time lag over the holiday had the effect of
losing momentum for action, and resulted in a disconnect from dialogue participants. Perhaps more support for how to do continued outreach would have made a difference?

In terms of the action planning and implementation, as well as sustainability, a number of the action teams were composed primarily of community members, many of whom didn’t have the experience or skills to plan and implement an action project, or to sustain the effort over time. Everyday Democracy provided some training on action planning, but the action teams could have used more on-going support. The evaluation team provided training on theory of change/logic modeling, and their on-going evaluation check-ins with the action teams provided support as the actions were implemented, but the action teams could have used more. This is where an on-the-ground project coordinator, overseeing the project across all coalitions, could have made a difference.

**Connecting the Parts of the Strong Starts Project**

The Strong Starts project had many moving parts: four (originally five) coalitions, each with multiple action teams; a communications components that included a video project through UNM Youth Radio and communications work with iRoots, a local, Native-run communications organization; and the Policy Forum (planned and implemented in collaboration with Viewpoint Learning). There were important successes in how these components came together, as well as a number of challenges. The coalitions and action teams have already been discussed above, and will be discussed further in the next section. The connection with the other components is discussed immediately below.

**Communications: UNM Youth Radio Videos and iRoots.** The video project implemented by UNM Youth Radio was a great success—all coalitions pointed to how beautiful, powerful, and useful the videos were. Coalitions continue to use the videos for outreach, for both the Strong Starts work as well as for their organizations more generally. In addition to the products produced by this project component, the youth who were involved all reported that the work was very meaningful for them in many ways. It heightened their awareness of issues impacting young children—one young person is actually pursuing a career in early childhood now because of the project. This is one component that served as a thread across components.

In contrast, the work with iRoots was less successful, with both successes and challenges. Like the videos, the materials produced by iRoots were described as beautiful and powerful. However, the materials weren’t timely, were often not quite on point, and communication with the staff at iRoots was difficult, so the usefulness of the materials was limited. The coalition coordinators often found that it was more expeditious to create their own materials, and this was a task they hadn’t been prepared to take on. Ironically, in trying to work with a local group for communications, the communications aspect of the project was challenged. Again, had a
local project coordinator been on board, they might have been better able to create a bridge to the work with iRoots.

The Policy Forum. The Strong Starts project was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as part of a larger initiative, the Our Voices, Our Children initiative, that also included the community dialogue work of Viewpoint Learning. The expectation was that Everyday Democracy and Viewpoint Learning would coordinate the work in some way. In practice this happened in the design and implementation of the Policy Forum. The Policy Forum used a design adapted from the Viewpoint Learning model that had been implemented in five communities across the state to garner public opinion about early childhood policy. Approximately 150 people participated in the forum—more than half of these (55%) were Everyday Democracy dialogue participants. Everyday Democracy submitted a final report for the Policy Forum that the evaluation team contributed data to. This final evaluation report will only discuss the Policy Forum as it connected to the overall Strong Starts project.

Participants discussed the Policy Forum as a meaningful experience for the community members who participated—it helped them understand the policy implications of their work and the policy issues that decision-makers were facing related to early childhood. Community members reported coming away feeling more empowered to have a voice in decision-making at the state level. Beyond the effect of the Policy Forum on Strong Starts participants, dialogue participants had a unique voice in the discussions that happened at the forum. Compared with those who hadn’t participated in a Strong Starts dialogue, dialogue participants felt more strongly that early childhood funding should be used to provide for poor children rather than be used to benefit all children equally (46% vs 15%). They believed more strongly that quality preschool programs were the best way to keep poor children of color from falling behind in school (83% vs 69%). And they had different ideas about how to fund early childhood programs: they were more inclined to tax the wealthiest 5% (98% vs 82%), raise gross receipts tax (50% vs 30%), expand the Land Grant Permanent Fund (100% vs 76%) and cut other state funding (81% vs 61%).

While the Policy Form was considered successful overall, there was some disappointment that it hadn’t connected more directly to the work, and the action ideas, that came out of the dialogues. The work of the Strong Starts coalitions and the resulting action ideas were presented at the forum. However, the direct connection between specific action ideas and policy was not explored. Some people felt that this was a missed opportunity to make real connections between policy and the concerns and efforts of “everyday people” working in local communities.
Geographic Distribution of the Strong Starts Coalitions. A final issue related to the connections among the parts in the Strong Starts project was the geographic connection across coalitions. The original idea for Strong Starts had been that it would be a statewide effort; however, the strongest proposals all came from Albuquerque. After some debate, Everyday Democracy, with W.K. Kellogg’s blessing, chose to fund five coalitions all based in Albuquerque. This decision created some challenges for the project, but also contributed to some positive outcomes. All coalitions struggled a bit with stepping on each other’s toes, especially in the initial start-up and recruitment phases: planning and getting media coverage for the kickoff events was complicated by the multiple Albuquerque sites and there was overlap in dialogue recruitment. Once the projects moved into the action phase, the coordination related to overlapping geographic areas was minimized, as the projects became much more localized.

This issue was especially pointed for the DOC/FDP coalition—the original proposal for that project had been for a city-wide effort, which would ultimately feed into the Decade of the Child campaign. While their dialogues were based in distinct communities, these communities were spread across the metropolitan area, and the outreach and public relations for the project was envisioned as citywide. In addition, a number of their intended coalition members had been expected to include organizations which were funded in their own right.

Another somewhat serious issue that was caused by geographic overlap was not related to the Albuquerque focus, but, rather, resulted in the funding of the two Native American projects—NAPPR and AIPC. NAPPR had been working with Cochiti Pueblo, north of Albuquerque, to implement community dialogues. However, AIPC had written Cochiti into its outreach plan,
and NAPPR was asked to discontinue their work with Cochiti. In the end this was unfortunate, as AIPC didn’t end up working with Cochiti at all, and thus the community was not involved with the project. By the time that it became apparent that AIPC had changed their plans, it was too late for NAPPR to reengage.

On the other side, because of the negotiating that was necessary to work together in a single metropolitan area, and the time that was spent together in Albuquerque-based trainings for the Strong Starts project, the four coalitions that fully implemented the Strong Starts dialogue-to-change process developed strong and important connections among themselves. NAPPR and DOC/FDP ended up holding their kick-off event together; the CLN coordinator joined the Decade of Child campaign coalition core team; one of the key facilitators in the DOC/FDP also facilitated dialogues for Pajarito Mesa; and information was shared across coalitions at every stage of the project. All coalitions discussed that fact that they know much more about the other organizations than they had prior to the project, and that they expect to continue to work together; strengthening connections across the early childhood community was reported as an important outcome for all coalitions, with the connections with other Strong Starts sites particularly important.

The challenges discussed above based in geography might have been addressed more effectively, and even leveraged to enhance the positive benefits, had the project had more time to unfold.

**Lessons Related to Specific Dialogue-to-Change Components**

Implementation of the Strong Starts project included three components: building a coalition/steering committee; implementing the dialogues to identify action themes, and then forming action teams to work toward community change. A number of lessons were learned related to each component.

**Coalition Lessons Learned**

The coalitions for the Strong Starts projects were required to come together quickly and to begin the work of organizing dialogues on a very short time frame. Each of the coalitions did a commendable job accomplishing the work put before it for the project, with limited funding on a tight time frame.

The Decade of the Child and Cuidando/Coalition to End Child Homelessness each had an existing coalition with a much broader purpose, the Strong Starts project was somewhat peripheral to the work of that coalition, and the SS projects was overseen by a steering group which included primarily the lead organization—this group didn’t continue after the grant had completed (or even after the dialogue portion has finished. In addition, these larger coalitions
were inclusive at the profession level, but did not include much direct community voice. While all coalition members were long-time community organizers, and included stakeholders with an interest in early childhood programs, they did not have community voice directly at the table. This contributed to the coalitions functioning more as a coordinating body rather than a community organizing vehicle. This has been discussed above.

Another issue was that none of the coalitions participated in a full dialogue process prior to supporting the community dialogues. As was seen in the process, once they had experienced the full process, they had a much deeper understanding of the dialogue-to-change process, and the nature of the coalition itself seemed to shift—the coalition moved more into a role of supporting community members to own the process. This manifested in different, ways, from backing of and handing the reins to the action teams in DOC/FDP and NAPPR, to bringing a community members in as the primary project coordinator in Pajarito Mesa.

Dialogue Lessons Learned
While the overall satisfaction with the impact and power of the dialogue circles to build community and give voice to community members, there were some important lessons learned about the importance of each dialogue component: the facilitation, the participants, and the time frame.

Facilitation. Facilitators reported that they enjoyed the role, but also reported wanting more direction. The initial facilitator training provided guidance, but there was a need for follow-up de-briefing and additional training. None of the facilitators went through a full dialogue cycle prior to facilitating, so they did not know quite what to expect from the sessions. Facilitator diversity, finding people who represented the community, was also an issue. Often facilitators were professionals from the coalition. Given time frame to complete project, it was too hard to bring community people up to speed and provide proper support. At some of the sites, facilitators had to do a lot of their own recruiting to build a dialogue group. But, in general, participants and coalition leaders felt facilitators did a good job—except for one who was perceived as not neutral and pushed her own agenda too much.

Dialogues. For the most part, participants reported satisfaction with feeling heard, respected, and productive in their dialogue groups. Many of the coalitions found that there were challenges related to recruitment of participants and sustaining attendance through all five dialogues. Again, the coalitions felt that these issues arose because there was not enough time for the process. Dialogue groups tended to be small, with high attrition.
Action Team Lessons Learned
The most significant finding was that the connection between the dialogues and the actions were tenuous. There was something of a hiccup between the action items agreed upon at the Action Forum and the organization of action teams. Again, the time frames made it very difficult from two angles: 1) there was not enough time overall for the dialogue–to-action process, and with most dialogues completed in November of 2010, the holidays got in the way and momentum was lost. All of the coalitions had to find ways to “re-charge” the teams, and often that meant that coalition members had responsibility for leading the teams.

Coalitions also found it a challenge to honor all the different action ideas—they needed support beyond what was offered by either Everyday Democracy or the evaluation team. In some cases, coalitions took on actions that were too big for the time frame, such as the Cuidando action items like building a network of services for homeless families and children, and the DOC/FDP action item to include child development and family finance in the mid and high school curricula. This left participants and coalition members somewhat frustrated. The most successful actions were those that were more circumscribed, had community leadership, and a clear end-point.
PROJECT OUTCOMES

The outcomes section addresses the two evaluation questions posed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the Strong Starts project:

1. To what extent did you achieve anticipated outcomes for Phase 2, specifically around:
   a. Increasing awareness and understanding of what it means to have a community where all children thrive, and of the effects of poverty and structural racism on vulnerable children;
   b. Developing diverse leaders with influence around these issues; and
   c. Increasing community capacity to implement dialogue-to-change efforts? What insights were gained and how will they be incorporated into the next phase of the project?

2. To the extent that communities have begun to implement public dialogue processes, what has been the impact so far on issues affecting vulnerable children, ages 0-8, and their families?

The responses to these questions are integrated through the narrative in this section.

Concrete results of the actions in the communities are addressed above in the discussion about the action phase for each community. These are important, and demonstrate that the dialogue-to-change model is can be effective in helping communities make changes in the lives of those who engage in the process. These concrete community changes are summarized again below. Following the summary of concrete community changes is a discussion of changes in the systems that embed the potential for on-going community change.

Concrete Community Change

Pajarito Mesa

Results of the action teams at Pajarito Mesa include:
- Six garden plots tended by community members. These set the stage for community gardening as a way to increase food security and build community. A challenge will be to encourage more residents to participate in the care and use of the gardens.
- The creation of a numbered grid system used to locate families in emergencies. The challenge is that there are no street addresses. New zoning laws will be required to create public use roads.
• County funding of $60,000 for placement and hook-ups of a portable building that will be used for as a community center and after-school program site. The grand opening is scheduled for sometime in January 2012.
• Near completion of the paperwork for a 501(c)3 (The Pajarito Mesa Community Initiative) to seek grants for the creation of a community development plan, and future community improvement activities. All paperwork should be submitted before the end of 2011.
Decade of the Child/Family Development Program

All of the action teams have continued to meet and work toward some targeted change in their community. Results of the action teams to date include:

- There are now two early childhood websites up and running, one facilitated by Teaching Solutions and the other by NMAECC. The website addresses are; http://www.mycommunitynm.org and http://www.nmecc.org. One challenge they face is that other organizations do not have the resources to keep their own information updated. Another challenge is continuing the labor-intense job of keeping the website current.
- The La Mesa parent group has completed the entire Seven Essential Skills training, and are interested in more parenting information and training.
- The Helen Cordero community gardens project continues to move forward. They have had a fall harvest, and plan to continue the garden next year. They have requested the Seven Essential Skills training, as well.
- Incorporation of Photovoice into the film class at New Futures, giving students more of a voice in outreach to the community related to teen parenting.
- The personal and collective actions that resulted from the dialogue-to-change process helped the Coalition to examine the underlying issues and inequities that prevent every child from having a strong start—this has fed the on-going work of the Decade of the Child.

Cuidando los Niños/Campaign to End Child Homelessness

Results of the CLN action team includes:

- Creating the Youth Creating Change Film Festival, which involved middle- and high-school youth in creating PSAs or short films to educate and motivate the community to act to end child and family homelessness. The films were aired at a public showing on June 25th. They also created a website: https://sites.google.com/site/youthfilmcreatingchange/.
- There are plans to hold a second annual Youth Creating Change Film Festival in the spring of 2012. The Coalition has reached out to New Futures Photovoice students, asking them to participate in the 2012 Film Festival. They have also had initial meetings with the Santa Fe Homeless Youth Network and the Adelante Homeless Student Program in the Santa Fe Public Schools to support a Youth Creating Change Film and Art Festival in the Spring Semester, in partnership with the Santa Fe College of Art.
- The biggest success has been in the area of drawing in the youth perspective and youth voice through the film festival. The Coalition now has connections with the City of Albuquerque Film Office, with local film instructors and members of the film industry. Five students requested to work at CLN as their community service project, and CLN
was able to accommodate three of them. They are supporting the work of preparing for another film festival.

**Native American Professional Parenting Resources**

NAPPR's action phase was coordinated by the Native American Community Academy (NACA), and focused on planning for an elementary school expansion. Results include:

- Through the “listening sessions,” focus groups, and Photovoice process, the Native American Community Academy (NACA) now has a much deeper understanding of what the urban Native population wants to see in the expansion into elementary school.
- Families are also more aware of the plans and issues with the NACA expansion, and are more likely to engage with the process, providing support and input as the elementary school program is developed.
- Zia Pueblo is poised to move forward with expansion and enhancement of their language revitalization program.

**Systems Change Outcomes**

The remainder of this section will address the outcomes that are at the core of the dialogue-to-change model—changes in systems that promote and empower community members to address the issues that affect them. This is the work that is ultimately aimed at building a stronger and more equitable democracy. Not only is this what Everyday Democracy is focused on doing in the dialogue-to-change work, but it is what is at the core of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s evaluation questions for this project. These questions focus on increased awareness, new leadership, increased capacity, and the changes in community infrastructure that grows out of these.

The Strong Starts project was an ambitious project for its short 18-month timeline. It is much too soon to look for evidence of long-term outcomes, but there are indicators that point to the potential for longer-term change. These are discussed in the section of the report.

Immediate and intermediate outcomes of the Strong Starts project were seen in three different domains: organizational, individual, and community. For the purposes of this report, the organizational domain will address changes in the grantee organizations and the coalitions as a group; the individual domain will address changes for grantee staff, coalition members, dialogue participants and facilitators, and action team members; Changes will be discussed in these two domains within the broad areas of awareness, leadership, and dialogue-to-change capacity. Changes in the community domain will be presented using the results of the Community Readiness Assessment.
Organizational Level Outcomes

Across the four grantees that implemented the Dialogue-to-Change model, the initial expectation for “organizational change” based on participation in Strong Starts varied quite a bit. For example, one grantee perceived the Strong Starts project as well aligned with their existing experience and skill set, and felt that Strong Starts would provide additional resources—funding and perhaps a new tool—but were not expecting substantive changes in their approach. Another was eager for the opportunity to learn a new way of entering community, and a new set of tools to work with communities more effectively. Another very different response was that Strong Starts would provide capacity building for the community, but that the grantee organization was simply there to facilitate the process. While the initial expectations for how the project would impact the grantee organizations affected the ways in which grantees engaged in the Strong Starts project, all grantees experienced changes at an organizational level, some of which were unexpected and even surprising.

The evaluation team had originally planned to use the Community Mobilization Scorecard to collect changes in the coalitions over time related to sense of community, mobilization capacity, and readiness for focused action. This tool assumes that the coalition has a commitment to work together over time to effect changes in the community. We collected pre-test data from the coalitions in the summer of 2010; however, it became clear by the spring of 2011 that three of the Strong Starts coalitions had not come together for the long term with the intention of mobilizing for community change. As discussed above, these coalitions were more focused on supporting the Strong Starts projects through the end of the grant period. While two of these coalitions were committed to a long-term effort (Decade of the Child and the Campaign to End Child Homelessness), they were much larger coalitions of which Strong Starts was a just a small component. NAPPR had a Strong Starts-specific coalition, but it dissolved when the funding ended. Given this, the Community Coalition Scorecard was not an appropriate
measure for the Strong Starts project in the way it unfolded—*sense of community, mobilization capacity, and readiness for focused action* specifically in relationship to the Strong Starts project were not goals for these coalitions. The scorecard was discontinued as an evaluation measure, and coalition data was collected through key informant interviews and observation.

**Awareness**

Every organization reported an increase in awareness that was directly linked to their capacity to address early childhood needs. All grantees expressed some increase in awareness of the “real” needs and circumstances of the communities they were working in. Examples of this include:

- **Pajarito Mesa** was brought into the Strong Starts project through a proposal by Youth Development Incorporated (YDI). In the proposal, Pajarito Mesa was described in somewhat dire terms, highlighting the problems in the community. Over time, the community voice found its way to the table, and the story was somewhat different: Pajarito Mesa residents love their community, and want to be seen and heard for the vibrant community they are. Residents reported their belief that the simpler lifestyle they live, partially because of limited resources and limited infrastructure, is, in many ways, a much healthier environment for their children; they don’t want to move into the consumer-oriented culture that they see all around them. What they do want, however, is to receive the services that are provided to other communities—in particular, services related to community safety. In other words, the residents in this community don’t want to be *fixed*—they wanted to be *served* by the structures that are in place to serve everybody. They want equity. The relationship between YDI, Bernalillo County, and Pajarito Mesa has grown; the residents feel more respected and the organizations have a deeper understanding of how the community functions, and what their needs are. They understand more deeply that what it means for children to thrive is contextually specific, and that their original ideas of “success” might not fit everywhere.

- **The Decade of the Child/Family Development Program project** deepened their awareness of the specific communities they were working with. Dialogue facilitators (many of whom were staff of the UNM Family Development Program) reported that the dialogues were very powerful, and expanded their thinking about working in community: “It has changed the way I think about my community. I think about it as larger and more complicated. Issues are more complicated, immigration is complex—I see more of the importance of that group to our whole community.” Another said that “I need to change a lot. I need to examine the realities of these groups more closely. I was ignorant about how bad it was—how immediate the needs. Financially and economically. Low income families don’t have enough to eat. They have more immediate needs and problems.” The project coordinator spoke about her awareness
of the need to continue to give space to discuss the deeper issues that create barriers for in the early childhood community.

- The Strong Starts coordinator for the Native American Professional Parenting Resources project pointed to an awareness of the importance of equity for their work: “they brought us to a way of doing things that included equity. I really liked the equity part of the project.” She discussed the value of the equity workshop that was facilitated for Strong Starts project staff, but also expressed the wish that they could have included the entire coalition, and the dialogue participants, in a similar workshop—she felt that it would be valuable for community to participate in something like this as a community.

- For the Campaign to End Child Homelessness project that was housed at and coordinated by Cuidando Los Niños, there was a growing awareness of the lack of community knowledge related to child homelessness.

**Leadership**

As the project moved forward, and the dialogue-to-change work became more visible in the larger community, the organizations took on a leadership role in relationship process the dialogue-to-change process. Other organizations and community organizers came to the lead organizations and the coalitions for guidance and information about starting a similar process.

Another way that leadership grew at the organizational level was in the shift from a more siloed leadership model to more shared leadership. The early childhood movement in New Mexico has always been fairly siloed. Periodic tensions and lack of trust have been woven into the tapestry of hard work and focused effort that has defined the early childhood movement for the past decade or so. The Strong Starts project helped to bridge between aspects of this system; coalitions and organizations described a deepening of relationships with the other sites, which in turn has helped to create more of a shred message across organizations. There is increased trust, understanding, and shared commitment—all factors that feed into the development of shared leadership in the early childhood movement.

Finally, another positive result at the organizational level related to leadership is the way that organizations have integrated community voice more deeply into their leadership for early childhood. These organizations have always held families in a place of respect; the Strong Starts project has reinforced this, and brought provided more tools to these organizations with which to harness community voice.

**Dialogue-to-Change Capacity**

Organizational level changes related to implementing Dialogue-to-Change efforts happened in two distinct ways: 1) most directly, organizations added the dialogue-to-change model to their toolbox, and are using it beyond the scope of this project; and 2) organizations have
internalized the core principles of the model into the way they do business, for example, prioritizing dialogue more generally and embracing community voice more intentionally in the work they are doing.

Examples of organizational level change in dialogue-to-change capacity are presented below:

**Using the Dialogue-to-Change Model.** Many Strong Starts participants, including the coalition and organizations, discussed the power of the model for building authentic relationships with communities. These participants believed that continuing to use the dialogue-to-change model as a method for mobilizing communities would result in more sustainable change. Following are indicators that the stage is set for this to happen.

- **Cuidando los Niños/Campaign to End Child Homelessness** has committed to supporting additional dialogues around the state. In October they supported an effort in Santa Fe that used a modified version of the Strong Starts dialogue process. Other communities around the state have approached Cuidando los Niños for assistance, including Farmington, Gallup, Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Roswell, Silver City, Taos, and Truth or Consequences.

- **Through the Strong Starts work of Decade of the Child/Family Development Program**, the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) has become interested in integrating a similar dialogue process to increase family and community engagement with the schools. Other “spin-offs” of dialogue efforts through the DOC/FDP project include those with the Kirtland Neighborhood and the dialogues at the Alamosa Child Development Center and Head Start, both of which happened in the spring 2011.

- **The Pajarito Mesa Strong Starts project** is gearing up for a new round of dialogues related to the development of a long-range community infrastructure plan. The community sees the dialogues as a powerful way to give voice to the community in planning the infrastructure changes they want to see, without imposition by outside authorities. Through the original dialogue-to-action process, they have made significant connections to community agencies that can support them in their efforts, including the county, the emergency services, and even HUD. The newly forming 501(c)3 Pajarito Community Organization has the support of the Center for Law and Poverty, as well as continuing support from the project coordinator.

- **NAPPR was able to extend their work into the spring of 2011 to implement dialogues at Zia Pueblo.** NAPPR coalition members facilitated dialogue sessions for the APS Indian Education program, as part of the dialogue work that DOC/FDP coordinated with APS. In addition, NAPPR continues to promote dialogue as an effective means process for engaging community members in change, for example through county and school district poster sessions and presentations.
It should be noted that a recurring theme in relationship to continued implementation of the dialogue-to-change model was the wish that there had been time for a more iterative process. This was brought up by people from every grantee site. People felt that the process had been very powerful, but that just as participants were “getting it,” it was over. They reported that, as the first round of dialogues began to gain traction, there was a growing interest by individuals, communities, and other organizations in participating in the Strong Starts project or in implementing a similar process. Likewise, as discussed above in the implementation section, it was felt that an iterative process would have helped to build skill and understanding for those who participated in the project as coalition members, dialogue facilitators, or in support of community action. People talked about this round of dialogue-to-change efforts almost like a “pilot,” where participants and onlookers became convinced of the value, but that there wasn’t yet enough experience and skill to take it on without outside support. Beyond the lost
opportunity to capitalize on the energy that had been generated, there was concern that this project would go the way of so many: a funder from the outside would come in, and then leave before the project had had the chance to become sustainable.

*Implementing Core Dialogue-to-Change Principles.* The dialogue-to-change process recognizes the value of providing a structure which gives voice to those who are traditionally marginalized, and builds equitable relationships across diverse groups. Fundamentally, the goal of the dialogue-to-change model is to catalyze structural changes that build a stronger, more equitable democracy. In general, site coordinators, coalition members, and dialogue facilitators spoke about how the organizational work reflects their deepened respect for community: “I never really understood before what their lives were really like. I have a deepened respect for these people.” A number of participants said that they went into the process with pre-conceived ideas, and that their ideas changes radically through their participation in the project. Hearing the experience of the people living in the community, from the people living in the community, built relationship across difference, and brought people to the sense of “doing with” rather than “doing for.”

One example of how organizations have integrated community voice into their work is the interest on Photovoice—a process for using photography to give voice to communities and to mobilize for community change. Three Photovoice projects have been implemented through the Strong Starts project (NAPPR, Pajarito Mesa, and New Futures school), and there has been interest by a few DOC/FDP coalition members to implement a Photovoice process in communities across the state to help mobilize communities around early childhood.

*Individual Level*

Interviews, surveys, and project observation documented various changes resulting from the Strong Starts project at the individual level. These included changes for grantee staff, coalition members, dialogue participants and facilitators, and action team participants. As in the subsection above on organizational changes, changes for individuals are discussed within the areas of awareness, leadership, and dialogue-to-change capacity.

*Awareness*

Project participants involved in every component—the coalition, dialogue, and action teams—reported increased awareness of how vulnerable children and their families are affected by conditions within their communities: “It opened my eyes to the challenges that families and single women face in Albuquerque.”. To a lesser degree, participants discussed a new awareness of what is needed to create a more equitable and supportive community system for young children and their families. The dialogue process was mentioned a number of times as an effective process to create change in communities—a number of participants expressed the desire for continued dialogue.
In addition to a community-focused awareness, many dialogue participants reported understanding the needs of their own children better, and changing their parenting practices—as one participant said, “I know that that love is not enough—it takes more.”

**Leadership**

Leadership development at the individual level was profound in some places, and more subtle in others, but there were signs of increased leadership across all grantee sites. Leadership grew out of the dialogue process itself, where individuals felt empowered by the knowledge they gained, the relationships they developed, and the experience of speaking their mind and listening deeply.

As participants moved into the action phase, they were supported in their new leadership capacity, but also challenged as their visibility in the community grew and the need for a more finely honed skill set emerged. A number of people expressed the disappointment that there wasn’t more leadership development and support; it was clear that community leadership potential was tapped, but that these new leaders needed greater support than what was available. There were a number of barriers to continued support for leadership, and biggest of these was the time frame of the project. Had the project had the time to be an iterative process with multiple rounds of dialogue, those taking on a leadership role might have had time to deepen their understanding of the underlying theory and principles that undergird the Everyday Democracy model. Inherent in this model is the idea of shared leadership, which grows out of dialogue and collective action.

Additionally, the coalitions took a back seat once the action phase began, and much of the community organizing experience and skills sat within the coalitions. It might have strengthened the support for new leaders if there been a way to maintain a stronger
connection with the coalitions. Not only could this have provided a mentoring type of experience, but it could have provided a support network for these emerging leaders.

Despite these barriers, the seeds of leadership were sown throughout the project sites; if support can be provided through the next phase, or through other avenues, some of these seeds are likely to grow to fruition. Examples of increased leadership include:

**Pajarito Mesa**

- While the coordinator was hired from outside of the Pajarito Mesa community, a community resident (Luz Maldonado) quickly rose into a leadership role and, with support from the coordinator and the coalition, took over much of the planning and oversight of the project. This was a benefit to the project as well as to the community overall; Ms. Maldonado brought her knowledge of the community, her commitment to community change, and her network of community residents to her efforts in support of the Strong Starts project. But this leadership model also brought challenges. In spite of the positive work that was done, there were jealousies that surfaced, and towards the end of the project it was becoming clear that Pajarito Mesa’s Strong Starts effort did not represent the voice of all community members. Yet again, this is a place where a more iterative dialogue process might have drawn out the dissenting voices that were reticent to engage initially.

**DOC/FDP**

- Within the new Futures dialogue group, a group of young mothers (students at the school) took the initiative to initiate a Photovoice project in order to build awareness of what it is really like to be a teen mom. Because of scheduling conflicts and the daily life demands on these young women, the group that actually participated in the Photovoice project during the fall semester was made up of different participants who were not so connected to the project. With some outside professional facilitation, they developed a passion for the project, to document the daily struggles of teen motherhood through a Photovoice film. The film teacher liked the process, and has adopted Photovoice as part of her film curriculum. The original team of young women had become the catalyst for a powerful process that is likely to continue at the school.
- Through her participation in the dialogues, a woman from the South Broadway dialogue group was appointed to a state advisory group for birth to 3 issues—the interdisciplinary coordinating council.
- Another man became more active in promoting early childhood through his involvement with Kiwanis, and has approached the Albuquerque Mayor to discuss the importance of early childhood.
- A woman from the South Valley Dialogue group went to the legislature to advocate for increased funding for early childhood, and has written letters to her congressman.
Cuidando los Niños/NM Campaign to End Child Homelessness

- The place where individual leadership growth was seen most strongly in this grantee site was in the growth of the student film-makers who participated in the action project. Five students from the Ralph Bunch Academy, a Charter school, chose to work with Cuidando los Niños as senior interns. Cuidando was able to employ three of them, and they will help with planning the second annual film festival.

NAPPR

- As with Cuidando Los Niños, individual leadership for NAPPR grew out of the action phase of the project. As families engaged in a process to inform the development of a culturally responsive Native American elementary school as an expansion of the Native American Community Academy (NACA), they built connections to one another and a commitment to helping Native youth thrive, beginning with the early years. Follow-up will be needed to see how this carries forward as the NACA elementary school is built.

Capacity for Dialogue-to-Change Efforts

At the individual level, capacity for dialogue-to-action efforts was expressed through individual motivation for action—this is where the dialogues moved from being “just talk” (which was a fear of some participants) to a process that catalyzed community change. In every site participants talked about feeling more motivated, and about taking action at some level—some through the Strong Starts action teams, others within their community but separate from the Strong Starts project, and still others within their own personal lives. While there were some people who said that they enjoyed the dialogues, but were not doing anything differently because of them, many reported that they are, in fact, motivated to act. A number of people discussed their commitment to continue to reach out and educate others about the situation: “I think we have to go house to house to get the homebound that the really poor to understand,” and, “I have been legging people I know about the neighborhood association.” One participant talked about wanting to start a non-profit looking at the big picture—a many faceted early childhood resource to draw all early childhood programs together.

Barriers to action were related primarily to time—many of the participants simply felt too busy to do any more. A few, on the other hand, wanted to do something, but either didn’t connect with the actions that were chosen by the group, or didn’t know how to get plugged into an action. This speaks to the need to spend more time on thinking about action at multiple levels, throughout the dialogue process. When the push for action comes primarily during the action forum, participants can easily be left behind, and the potential for more emergent action might be lost. Additionally, a number of people suggested that it would have been useful to reconvene the dialogue groups at certain times, to re-engage people who might have been “left behind” in the move to action. At the very least, people felt that communication following
the dialogues was sparse, and that continued communication to the dialogue group might better help them stay in the loop. Finally, a number of people felt that there needed to be more training on how to move to action—both how to connect the dialogues to action, and how to support effective community-driven action. It was felt that this would need to be more than a one-time training, but that action teams should be brought together on a regular and periodic basis to continue support.

Of note was that, while a number of “spin-off” dialogue groups did happen (discussed above), and many participants felt that the model was very effective, none of the community participants talked about wanting to organize another set of dialogues themselves—either related to this issue or another issue. A number talked about wishing the dialogues would continue and expand, but as a project of either the sponsoring organization or another organization. The idea that this could be something spearheaded at a grassroots level did not come up.

This seems to point to a disconnect between the dialogues and the action—dialogue is seen to originate from and be supported by an organization; action, on the other hand, is more readily owned at the community level. What are the implications of this for a more coherent “dialogue-to-change” process?
A number of people spoke to this disconnect between the dialogues and the action. The dialogues did lead to action, but a few felt that some of the of the actions didn’t arise out of the dialogues per se. Rather they were driven by either somebody from within the dialogue group who had an agenda, or they were driven by people who hadn’t been involved with the dialogues.

**Community Level**

Changes at the community level were captured using the *Community Readiness Assessment* developed by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. This assessment uses a series of key informant interviews to document the communities’ readiness to address an identified issue. Community readiness is documented within six dimension: A) existing community efforts; B) knowledge of community efforts; C) Leadership; D) community climate; E) community knowledge about the issue; and F) resources related to the issue. We conducted the assessment at the beginning of the Strong Starts project (summer 2010), and then again at the end (summer/fall 2011). Key informants included a diverse set of individuals—providers, community members, government officials, business leaders, etc. They were identified because they were believed to have the best overview of the situation, including knowledge of and exposure to the different dimensions addressed through the assessment. Key informants were not asked to give their opinion about what should be—they were expected to provide insight into the current status of situation based on their experience. Results are presented for each Strong Starts community, and other relevant information is included in the discussion (more information on the *Community Readiness Assessment* can be found in the Appendices).

Across all sites, every Strong Starts community showed positive movement on the *Community Readiness Assessment*, both within specific dimensions, and in the total readiness score. With the exception of one dimension cross-site (existing community efforts), and one site specific exception (resources related to issues in the DOC/FDP site), all dimensions showed positive change in every Strong Starts community. Dimension A, Existing Community Efforts, actually decreased in two communities, remained the same in one, and had a very minor increase in one. Because this dimension had the highest scores on pre-test, these results are not surprising, and, in fact, can be thought of as a good outcome—the theory behind the community readiness assessment assumes that a balance in the readiness domains is important for forward movement on the identified issue—in other words, the most effective approach would be to bring the dimensions that score lowest up to the level of those that scored the highest. It is also important to note that one likely reason for the decrease in Dimension A, after combining this information with data from the interviews, is that participants became increasingly aware through the dialogue-to-action process of the issues related to early childhood and aware that the community was only now beginning to address them.
Community Readiness pre/post assessment results are presented below for each community.

As can be seen in table 2, assessment results for the NAPPR site, leadership is highest at post-test, and it also represents the dimension with the greatest change from pre- to post-assessment. This was attributed to Strong Starts, where leadership within NAPPR was built. Community knowledge about the issue was lowest at both pre- and post-assessment, and showed minimal change. NAPPR was working with a very large community (urban Native Americans, as well as some Pueblo communities) and community change in this aspect will take time.

Table 2. Pre and Post Readiness Assessment Scores: NAPPR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site: NAPPR</th>
<th>Pre-Scores (Summer 2010)</th>
<th>Post-Scores (Summer/Fall 2011)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension A: Existing Community Efforts</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Efforts</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension C: Leadership</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension D: Community Climate</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension E: Community Knowledge about the Issue</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension F: Resources Related to Issues</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Community Readiness Score</td>
<td>Preplanning: 4</td>
<td>Preparation: 5</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3, the assessment results for DOC/FDP, community climate showed the greatest gain—a good sign for the Decade of the Child project, which is focused on changing the community attitude about early childhood. Likewise, community knowledge about the issue showed substantial change over the course of the project.
Table 3. Pre and Post Readiness Assessment Scores: Decade of the Child/FDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site: Decade of the Child/FDP</th>
<th>Pre-Scores (Summer 2010)</th>
<th>Post-Scores (Summer/Fall 2011)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension A: Existing Community Efforts</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Efforts</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension C: Leadership</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension D: Community Climate</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension E: Community Knowledge about the Issue</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension F: Resources Related to Issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Community Readiness Score</td>
<td>Preplanning: 4</td>
<td>Preparation: 6</td>
<td><strong>+2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4, the assessment results for Pajarito Mesa, also sowed the highest gain in community climate. Again, this is not surprising, given the fact that the Pajarito Mesa coalition was so strongly community based.

Table 4. Pre and Post Readiness Assessment Scores: Pajarito Mesa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site: Pajarito Mesa</th>
<th>Pre-Scores (summer 2010)</th>
<th>Post-Scores (Summer/Fall 2011)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension A: Existing Community Efforts</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Efforts</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension C: Leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stabilization</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension D: Community Climate</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension E: Community Knowledge about the Issue</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension F: Resources Related to Issues</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Community Readiness Score</td>
<td>Preparation: 5</td>
<td>Preparation/Initiation: 5.9</td>
<td><strong>+.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The assessment results for CLN show substantial change in both leadership and in resources related to the issue— with the involvement of the national campaign to end child homelessness, increased resources and leadership have come into New Mexico for this issue. Table 5. Pre and Post Readiness Assessment Scores: Cuidando Los Niños

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site: Cuidando Los Niños; Child and Family Homelessness</th>
<th>Pre-Scores (Summer 2010)</th>
<th>Post-Scores (Summer/Fall 2011)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Mean Dimension Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension A: Existing Community Efforts</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Efforts</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension C: Leadership</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension D: Community Climate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension E: Community Knowledge about the Issue</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension F: Resources Related to Issues</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Community Readiness Score</td>
<td>Vague Awareness: 3</td>
<td>Preparation: 5</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way to look at this data is to consider average change within each domain across sites. Figure 4, below, indicates that change, highlighting the negative change in Domain A: Existing Community Efforts. But this chart also indicates areas of greatest overall change in community readiness. In Dimension E: Community Climate, participants noted a significantly more empowered attitude and sense of responsibility in the community toward the issue of improving early childhood conditions.
Figure 4. Average Change in Community Readiness Domains

Average Dimension Change Across All Sites

-0.3  1.0  1.3  1.7  1.0  1.3

Existing Efforts  Community Knowledge of Efforts  Leadership  Community Climate  Community Knowledge of Issue  Resources related to Issues
ALIGNMENT WITH EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY TOC

This section of the report explores the alignment between the Strong Starts implementation. The Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change model is based on a set of core principles and outcomes that provide the “how” and “why” behind the “what” of the model. It must be recognized that, while implicit in the work from the beginning, these principles were not clarified and made explicit until the Strong Starts project was almost complete. This analysis of is not to be viewed as a judgment of “compliance,” but rather a source of learning about how well the process as implemented unfolded according the principles. This should shed light on practices that are effective for, and barriers to, promoting the dialogue-to-change model. The principle are: inclusion/equity; individual and collective agency; structural analysis; leadership; governance process and structure; and results. These principles are described in more detail below, followed by a discussion of how project implementation reflected the principles.

**Inclusion/Equity:** National democracy-building must include local voice; democracy (and representation) requires the representative voice of all those in communities, including the diverse groups and perspective of those most affected in communities: racial equity explicitly but not exclusively; vertical and horizontal inclusion; on-going analysis of who needs to be at the table (taking into consideration and adapting for shifting power analysis and structural inequities); include those who are not traditionally included

The Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change model is centered around the concept of equity, not only in relationship to the desired outcomes of the process, but also in the design for implementation. Ideally the work of building and sustaining a coalition, implementing dialogues, and supporting actions that lead to change unfolds within a framework of equity and inclusion. The implementation of the Strong Starts project in New Mexico points to both successes and challenges in relationship to this principle.

Inclusion and equity were integrated into the projects differently by each of the four grantees that implemented the full dialogue to change model. The coalitions were founded on the ideas of inclusion and equity, but it was not always defined the same way. In some coalitions, it meant bringing others’ voices to the table rather than making a place at the table for the other. Two of the coalitions were dominated by professionals; for these, inclusion and equity were a focus rather than inclusion and equity being the process of the coalition. For example, one of the facilitators discussed in an interview that it was difficult to get professionals to come evenings or weekends, so they didn't come. The process didn't seek to bring professional in as equals, so that they still felt as though they were “giving up” their evening or weekend, whereas the community members were willing to spend that time engaging in the dialogues. Had there been more time to plan, shared buy-in might have developed so that people were
eager to spend the time—they had to feel that they were doing this for themselves rather than doing somebody else a favor.

When asked about diversity during interviews, it was interesting to note that both facilitators and participants commented on the fact that there was very little disagreement among the group, not recognizing the fact that diversity of opinion is important for deeper understanding and change. This may have been an area where more guidance in the facilitation process would have been helpful.

Pajarito Mesa was the most inclusive. Their project came out of a model that is more aligned with what Everyday Democracy usually does—community-driven change. Initially, the community was mobilized by the coalition, but they quickly saw the importance of including community members in the planning and implementation of the dialogues. Members of the Pajarito Mesa community, with strong leadership from one community member, worked though action implementation issues with the lead agency, YDI, and arrived at a point that was mutually respectful. However, it became clear towards the end that there was a segment of the community that was not involved, and jealousies and internal tensions were beginning to develop.

DOC/FDP had very little community representation on the coalition, but during the action phase, they basically handed the projects off to the communities. While the communities might have benefited from more support, they were also empowered by this process. What didn’t happen through the project was to integrate the voice of community more fully into the Decade of the Child Campaign.

NAPPR/NACA is very inclusive of the mix of tribes that are represented in New Mexico. They built a platform that allowed for community voice in the development of the elementary school—this was key to the long-term effectiveness of this school for supporting families and young children who live with a foot in both worlds.

**Individual and Collective Agency:** *People can work with each other and with the institutions across the power structure to make change.*

This evolved over time—the dialogues were not initially “owned” by the communities, but as they moved into the action phase, community agency came to the fore, and community members took ownership of the action items. Had there been time for a more iterative process, this would have developed differently over time, with the community agency folding back into the coalition and dialogue process.
**Structural Analysis:** There is shared understanding and insight to key issues facing all members of a community; including an analysis of power structures and structural causes of inequity, with a particular focus on racial equity; analysis includes the current system and is also applied to all proposed actions and solutions

The dialogue process, especially when implemented in the series of five dialogues, was an effective way to build understanding of the structural issues. Dialogue participants reflected they came away with a greater understanding of what the problems were, and what the underlying causes might be. They felt motivated to take action, and were beginning to understand what effective action might look like. However, it became evident that the theoretical underpinnings of the dialogue process that provided for analysis of power structures and structural causes of inequity weren’t always well understood by facilitators and coordinators. This meant that these ideas were not reinforced or examined as well as they might have been.

Dealing with “power” explicitly is difficult and takes great facilitation skill. There was pushback within some of the dialogues in relationship to racial equity analysis. Discussion was focused on outcomes rather than opportunities—for example, the fact that the dropout rate for people of color is much higher rather than the fact that many people of color attend sub-standard schools, or are subjected to educational discrimination. With a focus on outcomes instead of opportunities, it becomes too easy to move to a place of feeling blamed rather than understand the inequities in the system.

**Leadership:** Collective leadership; shared and reciprocal accountability; shared responsibility

Collective leadership that promoted shared responsibility emerged as a key factor in the dialogue-to-change process. Leadership roles were assumed at all levels of the project: at the Everyday Democracy grant-manager level, at the coalition level, within the dialogues, and most importantly, in the action-to-change process.

In the initial implementation phase, grantees took the lead in pulling together a coalition and organizing the dialogues.
Whether the project was community based or city-wide, coalitions recognized the need to engage community leaders and community members in the recruitment of dialogue participants and in the move to action. Leadership roles were also important for the action and the action-to-change components.

*Everyday Democracy.* Everyday Democracy provided leadership in training coalitions on the model. They also had role in supporting emergent leadership throughout the project. Their leadership role was ultimately to enable the coalitions to support communities in their efforts to build effective community change efforts. The Everyday Democracy approach is to imbed the dialogue-to-change process from a grassroots level up, leaving people able to impact community change over time, to build a stronger and more equitable democracy. This is a considerable task, and in many ways the short time-frame and the lack of a trained liaison in Albuquerque meant that only pieces of the model were absorbed into the dialogue-to-change Strong Starts efforts. The training and the support of emergent leadership was effective, as reported by the coalitions and the participants. But they wanted more – more opportunities to hold dialogues, more facilitation training, and more support for the action implementation. However, although Everyday Democracy trained people on the ground, they did not really have a “trainer of trainer” model. This meant that there was no one left behind with the capacity to expand implementation of the model, and no one to provide real-time guidance to projects that needed support.

Project participants also appreciated the Everyday Democracy leadership in providing racial equity training. People felt it was powerful and effective, but again, they needed more and wanted more people exposed to it, at the coalition level and at the action team level. This is another area where there wasn’t enough time or training to steep all of the people involved the projects in the methods and processes of the model. Ultimately, many coalitions explained that they always felt somewhat unsure of how to sustain the momentum. It is also a concern that there were people who said, “yes we can train our own people now”, without having had the time to internalize the core aspects of the dialogue-to-change process. This means they might just use pieces of the model they do get and incorporate them into their own established processes.

Focus on structural change toward a stronger and more equitable democracy is a very complex idea, and organizations need a great deal of time and support to imbed the fundamental ideas into their community work.

*Coalitions.* The issue of “accountability to learning” was brought up in the interim report, and this continued to be a challenge—how to hold groups accountable to a learning process that is larger than their own learning needs? This brings to mind the idea of a community of practice, which happened informally, but didn’t really coalesce into something bigger. Because there
were five groups in Albuquerque, there was a lot of exchange; however, nobody really took a leadership role in the overarching Strong Starts project. Would this have been more effective if a local project coordinator had been brought on to support all five coalitions? In a very small way, the evaluation team took on this role, but it is one that has to held very gingerly in the realm of evaluation—the evaluators can act as a guide, a liaison, a touchstone, but can’t take on leadership. In retrospect, this left a bit of a void.

**Action phase.** The place where leadership was weakest across the project was in the action phase. Ironically, this is where community leadership flourished. However, that wasn’t enough to pull the thread through from coalition to dialogues to action in such a way that capacity was nurtured to embed this cycle into the way communities (including the professionals who work in them) work for change.

Ultimately, the data indicates broad but unconnected leadership. Everyday Democracy provided some leadership. Coordinators provided leadership. Community folks provided some leadership. But these pieces only came together in isolated ways.

**Governance Process and Structure:** The **way** we listen to others in the community; collective voices shaped decision-making, and decision-making processes, always informed by structural analysis; somebody (or many) in power must be listening and willing to act—distinguish “I hear you” from “I am changing my behavior”; institutionalized commitment to shifting structural causes of inequity/supporting structural equity.

The most significant shift in governance and structure occurred in the Pajarito Mesa Strong Starts project. The original organizations that formed the coalition, YDI and the County, began implementation with in-house decision-making. In fact, the leadership in the grantee organizations explained that they originally thought that they could help “cure” the problems in the Pajarito Mesa community that they perceived led to vulnerable children. As they moved into the dialogue process and listened to community voices, there was a structural shift, moving power and decision-making into the community itself.
The DOC/FDP coalition had a somewhat similar experience. As the action teams formed, three of them became independent of the coalition, going in directions shaped by the collective voice of the community. The teen parent action team experienced significant challenges as they tried to convene an action team because, due to school scheduling conflicts, the voice of the teens was not present. Eventually, recognizing both the need for collective voices of those most impacted by the issue, and the challenges of forming a team with youth participants, the project morphed into a school film class that incorporated Photovoice.

Cuidando faced governance and structural challenges because their project was subsumed into issue a national project to end child homelessness, and that project didn’t want shared leadership.

**Results—how does the structure impact individuals/community?** Efforts open a pathway to collective decision-making by affected populations; creating, influencing “governance structure” and supportive policy is a requirement to be effective across systems, institutions, communities.

In thinking about the relationship between project implementation and the principle of “results” as identified in the Everyday Democracy framework, the question becomes, “to what extent did the project implementation, explicitly or implicitly, integrate these results into its desired outcomes? And, further, did implementation of the project components align with these results?”

A fundamental outcome of the Everyday Democracy dialogue-to-change process is that communities profoundly change the way they address challenges and issues. The degree to which the Strong Starts communities fundamentally changed varied across projects, and even within projects. The results or impact of implementing the process ranged from little change at the community level to significant change.

The Pajarito Mesa project is an example of significant but tenuous change at the community level and at the organizational level. The significant organizational results included the recognition by stakeholders that community change had to come from within the community. No organization could effectively impose structures or systems. Thus, they sought ways to support community leadership and community voice. The community results are most evident in their recognition that successful implementation of their action items required resources, which led to structural changes, including the formation of a 501(c)3 community organization to apply for grants and to be its own fiscal agent. But the lack of results for the specific action teams, and the continued singular leadership of Luz Maldonado has led to some dissipation of the initial energy to pursue change.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no question that the Strong Starts coalitions feel strengthened and renewed in their understanding of community change through implementation the Everyday Democracy process. If anything, there is a clamor for more dialogue circles, only this time, the request is coming from a true understanding of the principles upon which Everyday Democracy stands. The time frame and the lack of opportunity for guided practice of the principles and processes resulted in a generally effective, but less than perfect dialogue-to-change process, and only time will tell if there is fundamental change in the ways participating organizations and communities do business. The developmental nature of this evaluation has helped to inform the process, and reveals some implications for even greater success:

Recommendations

- Plan greater support for coalitions as they learn the process, from coalition building to dialogue circles to action and change.
  - For coalition building, need support in experiencing the whole process. Maybe even spend a year building local capacity to organize, facilitate and sustain the process.
  - For dialogue circles, ongoing reflective learning and support for facilitators, and funding for additional dialogue circles to develop.
  - The dialogue-to-action process needed more facilitation and guidance. Coalitions struggled a bit to “complete their duty” to hold the Action Forum and form teams, but there was little guidance for how to smoothly transition from the forum to the actions, and beyond.
- The dialogue-to-change model is a process, not stepping stones to an end. In fact, the process should be imbedded in a community, to be practiced for ongoing democratic agency to fully develop across all members.
- Work intensively with one or two local “trainers-of-trainers” in order to have on demand support for coalitions and action teams.
- Provide for leadership training at the community level.
APPENDIX:
Community Readiness Assessment
## Interpreting the Community Readiness Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Dimension Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension A:</strong></td>
<td>To what extent are there efforts, programs, policies that address this issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Community Efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension B:</strong></td>
<td>To what extent do community members know about local efforts and their effectiveness and are the efforts accessible to all segments of the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension C:</strong></td>
<td>To what extent are appointed leaders and influential community members supportive of the issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension D:</strong></td>
<td>What is the prevailing attitude of the community toward the issue? Is it one of helplessness or one of responsibility and empowerment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension E:</strong></td>
<td>To what extent do community members know about the causes of the problem, consequences, and how it impacts your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Knowledge about the Issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension F:</strong></td>
<td>To what extent are local resources, people, time, money, space, etc available to support the effort?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Related to the Issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness Stage:</th>
<th>Readiness Stage Description:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: No Awareness</td>
<td>No identification of the issue as a problem. “It’s just the way things are.” Community climate may unknowingly encourage the behavior although the behavior may be expected of one group and not another (i.e. gender, race, social class, age, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Denial</td>
<td>Recognition of the issue as a problem, but no ownership of it’s a local problem. If there is some idea that it is a local problem, there is a feeling that nothing needs to be done about it locally. “It’s not our problem.” “It’s just those people who do that.” “We can’t do anything bout it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Vague Awareness</td>
<td>Beginning of recognition that it is a local problem, but no motivation to do anything about it. Ideas about why the problem occurs and who has the problem tend to be stereotyped and/or vague. No identifiable leadership exists or leadership lacks energy or motivation for dealing with the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Preplanning</td>
<td>Clear recognition of the issue as a problem that needs to be addressed. Discussion is beginning, but no real action planning is taking place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness Stage:</td>
<td>Readiness Stage Description:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community climate is beginning to acknowledge the necessity of dealing with the prob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Preparation</td>
<td>Planning on how to address the issue is underway and decisions are being made on what to do and who will do it. There is general information about local problems and about the pros and cons of prevention activities, actions or policies but it may not be based on formally collected data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Initiation</td>
<td>An activity or action has been started and is ongoing, but it is still viewed as a new effort. There may be great enthusiasm among the leaders because of limitation and problems have not yet been experienced. There is often a modest involvement of community members in the efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Stabilization</td>
<td>One or two efforts or activities are underway and stable. Staff are trained and experienced, but there is no in depth evaluation of effectiveness. There is little perceived need for change or expansion. Community climate generally supports what is occurring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Confirmation/Expansion:</td>
<td>Standard efforts are in place and leaders support improving the efforts. Original efforts have been evaluated and modified. Resources for new efforts are being identified, and modified and new efforts are being planned or tried in order to reach more people. Data are regularly obtained on extent of local problems, and efforts are made to assess risk factors and causes of the problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: High Level of Community Ownership</td>
<td>Detailed and sophisticated knowledge about the issue exists within the community. Community members want to know what’s going on and feel ownership and involvement. Highly trained staff are running programs or activities, leader are supportive and community involvement is high. Special efforts are targeted at specific populations as well as more general efforts for the whole community. Effective evaluation is routinely used to test and modify efforts and this evaluation information is provided back to the community on a regular basis through newspaper articles, media, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Readiness Stage:</th>
<th>Readiness Stage Goal and Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: No Awareness</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Raise Awareness of the issue</strong></td>
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<td>Strategies: Make 1-1 visits with community leaders/members. Visit existing and established small groups to inform them of the issue. Make 1-1 phone calls to friends and potential supporters.</td>
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<td>2: Denial</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Raise Awareness that the problem or issue exists in the community</strong></td>
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<td>Strategies: continue 1-1 visits and calls. Discuss descriptive local</td>
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<td>incidents related to the issue. Approach and engage local educational/health outreach programs to assist in the effort with flyers, posters or brochures. Begin to point out media articles that describe local critical incidents. Prepare and submit articles for church bulletins, local newspapers, club newletters, etc. Present information to local related community groups.</td>
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3: Vague Awareness  
**Goal:** Raise Awareness that the community can do something  
Strategies: Get on agendas and present information at local community events and to unrelated community groups. Post flyers, posters, and billboards. Begin to initiate your own events and use those opportunities to present information on issue. Conduct local surveys and interview community people by phone or door to door. Publish newspaper editorials and articles with general information and local implications.

4: Preplanning  
**Goal:** Raise awareness with concrete ideas to combat condition  
Strategies: Introduce information about the issue through media and presentations. Visit and invest community leaders in the cause. Review existing efforts in community to determine whom the target populations are and consider degree success of efforts. Conduct local focus groups to discuss issues and develop strategies. Increase media exposure through radio and television public service announcements.

5: Preparation  
**Goal:** Gather existing information with which to plan strategies  
Strategies: Conduct community surveys. Sponsor picnic to kick off efforts. Conduct public forums to develop strategies from the grassroots level. Utilize key leaders and influential people to speak to groups and participate in local radio and television shows. Plan to evaluate success of efforts.

6: Initiation  
**Goal:** Provide community specific information  
Strategies: Conduct in service training on Community Readiness for professionals and paraprofessionals. Plan publicity efforts associated with start up of activity or efforts. Attend meetings to provide updates on progress of efforts. Conduct consumer interviews to identify service gaps, improve existing services and identify key places to post information. Being library or internet search for additional resources and potential funding. Begin some basic evaluation efforts.

7: Stabilization  
**Goal:** Stabilize efforts and programs  
Strategies: Plan community events to maintain support for issue. Conduct trainings for community professionals and community members. Introduce your program evaluation through training and newspaper articles. Conduct quarterly meetings to review progress, modify...
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<td>strategies. Hold recognition for your local supporters or volunteers. Prepare and submit newspaper articles detailing progress and future plans.</td>
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| 8: Confirmation/Expansion: | **Goal: Expand and Enhance Services**  
Strategies: Formalize the networking with qualified service agreements. Prepare a community risk assessment profile. Publish a localized program service directory. Maintain a comprehensive database available to the public. Develop a local speakers bureau. Initiate policy change through support of local city officials. Conduct media outreach on specific data trends related to issue.. Utilize evaluation data to modify efforts. |
| 9: High Level of Community Ownership | **Goal: Maintain momentum and continue growth.**  
Strategies: Maintain local business community support and solicits financial support from them. Diversify funding resources. Continue more advanced training of professional and paraprofessionals. Continue re-assessment of issue and progress made. Utilize external evaluation and use feedback for program modification. Track outcome data for use with future grant requests. Continue progress reports for benefits of community leaders and local sponsorship. At this level the community has ownership of the efforts and will invest themselves in maintaining efforts. |