

## INTRODUCTION

Community-initiated and faith-motivated efforts to meet human services needs have been a central element of the American landscape since the founding of the country (Olasky, 2008). Especially in the past several decades, faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) have played a vital role in identifying social problems, bringing them to public attention, and providing services to the disadvantaged (Ebaugh, Chafetz, & Pipes, 2005). At times, FBCOs have been the social institutions most responsive to the needs of residents at the local level and the most viable partners for collaborative community social service delivery (Small, 2002). During the late 1990s, federal and state policy makers began to recognize the potential of partnering with smaller FBCOs because of their unique ability to respond to local needs and win the trust of their communities. This shift is exemplified by the advent of the Charitable Choice provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which allowed faith-based organizations to receive federal funding for social service programs without having to change their religious identity (Small, 2002). This effort served to encourage and codify what had previously been a legally and administratively ambiguous interrelationship.

By their very nature, community-based organizations are embedded in neighborhoods and help to build trust among community members. Similarly, faith-based organizations provide social service programs as a means to serve their communities. These and other characteristics can make FBCOs uniquely suited to support individuals and families facing devastating problems, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, crime, poverty, natural disasters, and inadequate housing. However, research and experience have pointed out that without a funding source, trained and experienced staff, and strengthened technical capabilities, FBCOs may not have adequate capacity to provide professional-level services to their respective communities.

Recognizing the important role that FBCOs play in serving communities and those in need, on January 29, 2001, President George W. Bush signed two executive orders that established the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI). One executive order created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (White House, 2001b). A second executive order established the Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) within five federal agencies and charged these offices to “coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and strengthen their capacity to

better meet social needs in America's communities" (White House, 2001a). As the FBCI progressed, three more executive orders created additional Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, resulting in centers being established in a total of 11 major federal agencies—the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Homeland Security, the Agency for International Development, and the Small Business Administration (White House, 2002, 2004, 2006).

The FBCI is designed to encourage federal and state government to consider opportunities to involve FBCOs in meeting human services needs and to build the capacity of FBCOs to help meet those needs within their communities. The FBCI is grounded in the idea that governments can recognize, fund, and equip FBCOs to do their best to compassionately serve those in need.

Since the FBCI began, there have been significant shifts in the ways the federal government interacts with the faith-based and community-based nonprofit sectors in the delivery of social services. In many service areas, the FBCI has facilitated the funding of grants to FBCOs that may have not received federal funding before either because of perceived or actual barriers or because these organizations may have lacked the capacity to compete for funding. The FBCI also represents a shift in how the government interacts with the nonprofit sector by encouraging federal and state program officials to consider how they can prepare future partners to participate in the delivery of social services.

While there is some initial research on the partnerships that began in the mid- to late 1990s, much less is known about more recent developments since the advent of the FBCI in 2001. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has identified 10 signature governmental innovations since the inception of the FBCI:

- identifying and removing unwarranted barriers that inhibit government partnerships with faith-based and community organizations
- expanding partnerships with community organizations through vouchers, mini-grants, and intermediary grantees
- implementing the FBCI through federal agencies that administer human service programs so that new and strengthened partnerships can further each agency's mission
- building mutually reinforcing clusters of services so interrelated social ills can be resolved through comprehensive approaches
- applying a massive-scale response to the prevention, care, and treatment of those afflicted with HIV/AIDS

- expanding key elements of the FBCI in all 50 states
- building the capacity of nonprofit-sector leaders through training and technology
- expanding public-private partnerships
- forging partnerships with domestic and international volunteer efforts
- utilizing the FBCI to promote successful service models that involve FBCOs.

The innovations resulting from the implementation of the FBCI have not only led to changes in governing strategies, but have changed the landscape of social service delivery. Many of the perceived barriers that prevented FBCOs from being active participants in social services activities have been challenged, and some of these organizations have become viable partners in social service delivery networks (WHOFBCI, 2008).

Overall, the FBCI has resulted in more guidance to organizations on the appropriate role of religious activities and religious character for organizations receiving public funding. By working internally with federal as well as state and local governments, the FBCI has increased the depth and specificity of guidance over time by taking the lead in helping to standardize, clarify, and disseminate legal and regulatory guidance that initially was provided on an as-needed basis. In publishing regulations and providing education in numerous venues across the country, the FBCI has helped increase the knowledge level about the appropriate role of religious activities as well as the allowance for faith-based organizations to maintain their religious character.

### **THE NEED FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF THE FBCI**

The underpinnings of the FBCI have broad appeal for policy makers and practitioners. However, more information is needed to better understand program implementation, best practices and challenges, and effective program components. The evaluation of faith-based and community-based programs and services is of paramount importance if the impact of the FBCI is to be understood and if faith-based organizations are to be fully integrated within a systematic framework of social service delivery (Zanis & Cnaan, 2006).

Several challenges common to evaluative research exist in investigating questions of effectiveness for FBCOs. For example, many of these organizations are small and have limited capacity for data collection. Among faith-based programs, there is often a lack of understanding of the role of faith in these programs, including whether and how faith may impact program outcomes (Fischer, 2004). In the extant faith-based outcomes research, the role of faith in faith-

based services tends to be viewed as a contextual factor rather than as a specific program component that directly influences clients' experiences (Ferguson, Wu, Spruijt-Metz, & Dryness, 2007). Also, it is imperative to conceptually and operationally define what is meant by faith-based and community-based organizations if an exploration of the effectiveness of these programs is going to be undertaken. One significant challenge in the design of comparative research studies is specifying a comparison group. There can be difficulties in undertaking random assignment at the organizational level and a risk of high attrition at the participant level. The organizational mission of many FBCOs is to offer services to anyone in need (Fagan, Horn, Edwards, Woods, & Caprara 2007), thus making it ethically unacceptable to refuse treatment to some applicants as required under a random assignment approach. Also, there may be higher attrition rates for those with lower levels of faith who are randomly assigned to a faith-intensive program (Fisher & Stelter, 2006).

Researchers have begun to chronicle the characteristics that appear to differentiate faith-based organizations from community-based organizations (Wuthnow, 2004). Faith-based organizations demonstrate by their policies, practices, or mission statements that they are motivated or guided by religious ideology or that they are directly connected with an organized faith community. Other characteristics that identify an organization as faith-based are the receipt of substantial support from a religious organization or the initiation by a religious institution (Cnaan & Milofsky, 1997; Wuthnow, 2000). In contrast, community-based organizations tend to have a governing structure and staff that involve members of the community. These organizations may be less likely to have a specific association with a religious organization or ideology. Both types of organizations tend to focus more on providing emergency services and less on the organizational capacity that is often required by major funding organizations, such as the government.

As increasing numbers of grants have been awarded to FBCOs and program implementation has progressed, several evaluations and research studies of these initiatives have been launched by universities and research organizations and funded by private organizations, foundations, and the government. Currently, there are several federally sponsored research evaluations that span a range of agencies and program areas. Some examples include the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative and Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative funded through the Department of Justice; the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and the Latino Coalition Intermediary Grant Program Evaluation funded through the Department of Labor; and the Mentoring Children of Prisoners and Intermediary Model Benchmarking Study funded through the Department of

Health and Human Services. Many of the large-scale evaluation studies are ongoing and it will take time to report findings that measure program effectiveness.

In addition to the government-sponsored evaluations of federally funded faith-based programs, there are several small-scale research projects that have been undertaken in the field. These research projects focused on the efforts of specific churches or locally funded community initiatives (Wood, 1997) as well as thought-provoking collaborative articles by researchers and clergy who discuss their program experiences (Boddie & Cnaan, 2001) and why they do or do not apply for funding (Pipes & Ebaugh, 2002). This emerging literature is critical to exploring the nuances of program delivery in-depth. For example, how does service delivery vary by different religious traditions, and how do these programs measure “faith” per se? Also, it will be important to understand the reasons why smaller organizations apply or do not apply for government funding.

### **A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE FBCI**

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is sponsoring a national conference in June 2008 to provide a forum for the dissemination of the emerging literature and the wide range of research related to the FBCI. As part of this effort, two national calls for paper abstracts were issued that focused on research studies sponsored by the federal government and private or nonprofit organizations that examine federal and state faith-based and community-based initiatives. Using an objective scoring system, an expert panel of reviewers selected abstracts to be developed into full papers for presentation at the White House conference and inclusion in a research compendium. For more information about the calls for paper abstracts, the expert panel, and the paper selection process, see the Appendix.

Presenting information on FBCI efforts and accomplishments through a national conference and commissioned empirical research provides policy makers, researchers, and social service practitioners with much-needed information to inform decision making at all levels of government as the FBCI continues to evolve as an innovative governing strategy.

#### **Research Studies**

The studies presented in this compendium, representing the current state of legal and social science research pertaining to the FBCI, address a range of topics and programs. Because the FBCI emphasizes the building of collaborations with organizations that may have limited

experience with research and data collection, the development of the FBCI evidence base has evolved from descriptive studies that illustrate the various services, organizations, and program components of the FBCI to studies that focus on participant outcomes and program effectiveness.

Included in this research compendium are four types of studies that characterize the evolution of the research in this area: (1) descriptive studies of FBCI innovations, such as intermediary models, technical assistance, capacity building, and effective public-private collaborations; (2) descriptive studies examining FBCO service components, funding, accessibility to clients, barriers, and the faith orientation of organizations and clients; (3) studies focusing on participant outcomes—in some cases using comparative research designs to examine program effectiveness; and (4) an analysis of the legal and regulatory issues that govern the FBCI and influence the social service environment on which the research presented in this compendium is focused.

### ***FBCI Innovations in Governance***

Some of the research papers in this volume present studies about the innovations in governance encouraged by the FBCI and note successful partnerships as well as some of the challenges to be addressed as the FBCI develops in future years. Byron Johnson makes the case that a comprehensive approach to addressing social problems, if brought to scale, would require new partnerships and a significant influx of volunteers, many of whom could be drawn from religious congregations. Johnson examines the case of prisoner reentry, one of the signature federal initiatives of the FBCI, and assesses what it would take to bring this effort to full scale. Because religious activities can play a positive role in the lives of prisoners while they are incarcerated, and research shows that religiosity is associated with reducing negative outcomes and promoting prosocial behavior, Johnson asserts that faith-based organizations can play an important role in helping reduce recidivism. Johnson concludes that intermediaries are necessary to bring a comprehensive prisoner reentry effort to scale because these organizations serve as the bridge between ex-prisoners and the many social service providers and various governmental agencies in the areas of employment, housing, education, and counseling; provide technical assistance and oversight; and offer training to strengthen faith-based and community-based organizational capacity.

Growing the role of intermediaries, developing small grants programs, and providing technical assistance to help build FBCO capacity are important goals of the FBCI. Mitchell Brown focuses her research on organizational capacity and technical assistance issues of FBCO domestic violence service providers who participated in the evaluation of the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant Program Special Initiative: Faith-based and

Community Organization Pilot Program, or Rural Pilot Program (RPP), funded by the Department of Justice. The RPP is implemented by intermediary organizations to administer competitive small, one-year, grants programs with FBCOs in rural areas for the provision of domestic violence services.

The research reported in this paper is drawn from a survey of funded and nonfunded organizations as well as qualitative interviews with staff members in intermediary and grantee organizations. Overall, the findings indicate that while all of the applicant organizations had many capacity needs, such as reporting requirements and staff training, the most pressing needs were not the ones anticipated, such as obtaining 501(c)(3) status and establishing evaluation benchmarks; rather, these organizations needed help to build their capacity to undertake program evaluation. Overall, Brown concludes that the RPP did help FBCOs build capacity and provided useful technical assistance, and that the funded organizations realized some modest positive changes in capacity compared with those that were not funded.

Encouraging partnerships between FBCOs and government agencies to deliver services to low-income families is an important component of the FBCI. Reporting preliminary findings from a Department of Health and Human Services sponsored study of promising practices and successful partnerships between agencies administering the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and FBCOs, Courtney Barthle, Rebecca Makar, and Jeannette Hercik present an overview of five TANF and FBCO partnerships, identify the common themes associated with their success, and discuss the implications for possible future collaborations in social services provision for low-income and at-risk families. Common themes relating to the fruitful collaboration between TANF and FBCOs include recruiting a steady volunteer base and providing training to volunteers, establishing a formal referral system for clients from the TANF agency to FBCOs, building program collaborations in increments to allow infrastructure to develop, targeting services to clients that organizations have a strength in serving, and strategically locating services in a place that resonates with the target population.

### ***The Scope of FBCO Services and Programs***

Important goals of the FBCI are to reduce barriers to the participation of FBCOs in the federal funding process and to increase their organizational capacities to deliver social services. Researchers are just beginning to understand the menu of services that FBCOs deliver, differences between the types of services provided by organizational type, and barriers to participation. Three papers examine services delivered by FBCOs in different domains:

emergency assistance, mental health, employment, housing, and substance abuse recovery programs.

Scott Allard researches program service delivery, accessibility of services, and organizational stability among faith-based organizations and secular community-based organizations. Drawing on a survey of nonprofit service providers, this study compares services, organizational characteristics, funding, and access to faith-based and secular organizations in several urban and rural communities. Notably, the survey distinguishes between faith-based organizations that integrate religious elements into service delivery, faith-based organizations that segregate religious elements from services, and secular nonprofit organizations. Allard found that both types of faith-based organizations deliver more emergency assistance services and less mental health, substance abuse, or employment-related services compared with secular nonprofit organizations. Faith-based organizations that integrate faith into service delivery and secular nonprofit organizations are more accessible to poor populations than faith-based organizations that do not integrate religious elements into service provision. Allard concludes that overall faith-based organizations have fewer resources than secular community-based organizations, and speculates that fewer resources may, in part, lead to a different menu of services compared with community-based organizations.

Richard Hula, Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, and Laura Reese consider the nature of faith-based and secular service delivery models in the housing sector. This study reports on the preliminary results of an ongoing survey exploring the role of FBCOs operating in housing markets in inner cities in Michigan. The authors found that, for the most part, faith-based organizations and secular community-based organizations engage in similar activities and report comparable barriers to growth, suggesting that faith-based organizations are at least as productive as secular community-based housing providers in terms of their activities and involvement in the housing arena. The authors also highlight some important differences depending on organizational type. One example is that faith-based organizations perceive local politics and regulations as more problematic to their participation in delivering services than community-based organizations. The study concludes that increasing the role of faith-based organizations in housing services may require state and local actors to help alleviate some of these participation barriers or at least the perception of barriers.

The role that faith plays in faith-based organizational settings and service components is not well understood (Wuthnow, 2004). In their pilot study, Fred De Jong and Claudia Horn examine the efforts of Gospel Relief Missions (GRMs), faith-based providers of substance abuse recovery support programs for the disenfranchised that are located throughout the country. To develop



measurement of the components of faith that permeate the organization and services, researchers convened work groups composed of various GRM staff members and interviewed key stakeholders about the organizational mission and the faith-based substance abuse recovery services as well as any secular services. The preliminary results indicate that clients experienced some variation in the faith-based services received, had strong faith orientations, and rated their relationships with staff highly in terms of quality and trust, which were positively associated with their spiritual growth and faith convictions.

### ***Evaluating Participant Outcomes and Program Effectiveness***

Reviewing recent published quantitative studies on the effectiveness of services delivered by faith-based and community-based organizations, Robert Fischer presents the status of the evidence base on the effectiveness of FBCO programs and the implications for growing and strengthening research in this area. Because of the relative youth of the FBCO field, much of the research is descriptive in nature and lacks rigorous methodological program evaluation designs, although Fischer notes that both the number and the quality of studies that are able to access program effectiveness are increasing.

To assess the state of the research in the field, Fischer casts a broad net and undertakes a preliminary quantitative synthesis that yields 18 studies in the realm of prisoner rehabilitation, welfare assistance, and substance abuse treatment. These studies all use comparative research designs in which program participants' outcomes in FBCO-provided services are compared with a similarly situated group that received the usual services, secular programming, or who did not receive services. The findings of these studies show that while the overall effect of FBCO programs tends to produce somewhat better outcomes, they are of modest size. Fischer asserts that more research with larger sample sizes is needed to confirm these positive findings, but also to examine the effects for defined target populations.

Using a novel research approach that includes mixed methods and a comparative research design, Fred Ssewamala and Leyla Ismayilova present a study of an asset-building and educational intervention that is implemented by a faith-based organization to serve families caring for orphans and vulnerable children in rural Uganda. The intervention provides families in randomly selected schools with Children's Development Accounts, which are matched savings accounts that can be used for future education or business development. The intervention also includes skill-building components, including educational workshops and monthly mentoring meetings. The findings from the group randomized trial suggest that the intervention improves children's expectations about future careers and increases their motivation to make more careful

choices regarding sexual risk-taking in the treatment group compared with the comparison group. The results also suggest that poor families caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda can save for the children's educational needs and that the faith-based provider was effective in implementing the program.

Diana Brazzell and Nancy LaVigne present findings from a unique process and outcome evaluation of the Faith and Character-based Institutions Initiative (FCBI) at two Florida correctional facilities. The study findings are based on an analysis of Florida Department of Corrections longitudinal inmate data; interviews with FCBI management, staff, and volunteers; focus groups with inmates participating in the FCBI programs; and firsthand program observation. The authors used a quasi-experimental evaluation design that included a matched-comparison group. The quantitative analysis showed no evidence that the FCBI program reduced recidivism, as measured by reincarceration, for either men or women. However, FCBI staff, volunteers, and inmates endorsed the program and suggested replicating it at other facilities. The authors recommend that policy makers and corrections officials clearly define the intended outcomes of the initiative, create benchmarks for measuring success, and implement systems for tracking and analyzing outcomes data.

### ***Legal and Regulatory Framework of the FBCI***

The last paper in this volume presents an overview of the regulatory and legal framework guiding the social service environment in which this research has taken place. Ira Lupu and Robert Tuttle provide a description of the regulations that established the FBCI and the key points in the development of the relevant constitutional law. Their analysis demonstrates that the legal environment pertinent to the FBCI is complex and still developing. Against this backdrop of the changing legal environment and the inherent difficulties in translating regulations and case law into day-to-day operations, the authors note the successes and challenges of integrating the FBCI regulations into this complex legal environment. They conclude with the implications for federal and state regulations and guidance designed to facilitate the FBCI while maintaining constitutional bounds.

## **SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES**

Although the research papers included in this compendium examine a number of social programs and use a range of research methods, it is possible to identify some broad themes about the state of the FBCO research literature.

There are several examples of successful FBCI innovations. These include using intermediary models, building several dimensions of organizational capacity, and providing technical assistance in the areas of prisoner reentry, TANF, domestic violence services, asset building, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Addressing a range of social problems, FBCOs provide assistance in many areas, sometimes in small pockets, and other times as part of larger programs and initiatives.

Faith-based organizations tend to provide more emergency services than community-based organizations, in part because of more limited resources; however, the research presented here highlights the diversity of needs being served by both faith-based and secular organizations. Clients in need are likely to have multiple problems that can be addressed more effectively in a holistic manner and can benefit from an individualized approach to providing assistance and skills. These organizations also may be equipped to address these issues in ways that accommodate clients' faith and culture and recognize family and community contexts. Thus, it is important for stakeholders to consider comprehensive and scaleable strategies.

Some of the papers in this compendium provide examples of intermediaries that effectively build FBCO capacity. Notably, using mini-grant programs among domestic violence service providers increased organizational capacity among organizations that were funded by the grants program; and, interestingly, capacity also increased among organizations that intermediaries worked with but were not funded by the grants program. This finding suggests that intermediaries can assist organizations in more ways than just providing access to funding. There also is evidence of the successful use of intermediaries in prisoner reentry programs that build organizational capacity and facilitate service delivery by leveraging a broad base of volunteers from congregations and community organizations to serve as mentors.

In addition, studying successful partnerships between TANF agencies and FBCOs has shown that FBCOs can provide individualized support services and mentoring to families to help achieve successful outcomes. An important finding is that faith-based providers and secular community-based organizations in urban and rural areas serve predominantly low-income populations. And this research emphasizes the importance of the location of FBCOs in terms of proximity to and ease of access for clients, but also in fostering comfort levels and trust.

Further, these studies point to the improving capacity of local faith-based and community-based providers and government agencies to undertake data collection and implementation of program interventions that include an extensive research component. For instance, the pilot research undertaken with the Gospel Rescue Missions (GRM), a large network of faith-based providers

that had not previously participated in any major research project, allowed researchers to “open the black box of services” and attend meetings and interview staff to understand the organizations’ and clients’ faith orientations. GRM employees benefited from training in Web-based survey assessments and the collection of participants’ outcome data.

Similarly, the partnership highlighted between a faith-based organization and a university to implement a program intervention in rural Uganda, which included randomization of treatment at the school level, shows that research on these types of activities is starting to take root in other countries as well. FBCOs can act as a full research partner in these efforts.

State and local government agencies are also starting to collect more data and give researchers access to facilities, as demonstrated by the Florida Department of Corrections allowing researchers to analyze program participation data and to conduct participant interviews and observation within the prisons.

The FBCI promotes the provision of social services by both faith-based and community-based programs. An increasing number of research studies are using comparative research designs to examine whether there are differential effects of faith-based programs compared with secular programs, usual services, or no services. Several papers highlight the effects of FBCO programs on participants’ behavioral outcomes. The assessment of the most recent 18 studies that use comparative designs shows a mix of negative, null, and positive findings about the effects of faith-based services on outcomes. However, pooling the results of these studies, the mean effect of faith-based programs is statistically significant and positive, although small in magnitude. Pooling the studies by topic shows a statistically significant positive effect for welfare services that is of moderate effect size, and a smaller, though still positive effect for prisoner reentry programs.

One of the studies in this compendium found a positive effect of a program on reducing reincarceration, although it was not statistically significant. Another study found a significant treatment effect that included increasing educational aspirations and reducing risk behaviors. Although the findings in these two studies varied in their statistical significance, the program staff and clients in both programs found them to be worthwhile. While these studies represent some of the most rigorous designs in the literature, there are limitations to the findings because participants were not fully randomized into treatment and control groups, which can introduce bias into the estimates of program effects due to selection issues.

While there are clearly notable successes, the empirical research presented also points to challenges in program implementation and evaluation. One challenge is that while there are examples where organizational capacity increased, overall faith-based organizations generally have lower levels of organizational capacity than community-based organizations. This makes it difficult to offer a wide range of programs, hire staff, provide training to staff and volunteers, and participate in labor-intensive research projects. In addition, sometimes FBCO staff assume that they have the capacity to undertake research, but in reality they may not have a clear understanding of program evaluation, survey assessment, and data collection. One study noted that faith-based organizations also may in fact not have organizational barriers to participation to funding and service delivery, but may perceive that local political barriers are present. Moreover, the evolving case law and regulations about allowable activities for grantees receiving federal funding can be difficult to translate into the everyday practices of FBCOs, which may make these organizations initially wary of participating in or conducting research. While a significant amount of effort and progress has been made to increase the capacity of FBCOs to undertake research, and ongoing technical assistance and guidance has been provided that stresses the importance of research to potential and actual grantees, there are some important next steps to help guide ongoing research on the FBCI.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Based on the findings of this important initial research on the FBCI, there are a number of steps that could be taken to move the field and the FBCI forward.

### **Examining FBCO Services**

First, it will be important to include specific examination of FBCO services and programs in government and academic research on social service delivery. Evaluation and research have become increasingly important for federal programs as well as for the social service delivery network as a whole. Policy makers and practitioners want to know the results and outcomes achieved from investments in this sector. Evaluation and outcomes research presents the opportunity to determine the best ways to leverage the unique strengths of FBCOs in serving particular populations through different kinds of service delivery approaches.

### **Conducting Mixed-Method Research**

As the burgeoning research on FBCOs evolves, there is a need to move beyond descriptive research and short-term outcomes to a mixed-method (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) approach that provides a more comprehensive understanding of program outcomes over time. Incorporating the multiple perspectives, for example, of participants, program staff, and

community members on program implementation can help to elucidate the impact of the program on those involved in the work of FBCOs. This broad data collection strategy will improve understanding of the context in which FBCOs provide services. By using longitudinal studies that include comparison groups in particular, researchers can explore the sustained effects of the FBCI on client outcomes over time and begin to uncover the specific aspects that contribute to successful social service delivery among FBCOs.

### **Considering the Effects of Policy and Practice**

As the field gains a better understanding of the role of FBCOs in service delivery, research could consider the effects of federal, state, and local government policies and practices on their operations. Research presented in this compendium raises questions about the degree to which the social service sector understands the regulatory and legal framework that has developed around the FBCI. Research could shed more light on the context in which FBCOs operate by determining grantees' and potential grantees' levels of understanding and areas of confusion about the regulatory framework implemented over the past 7 years. Having a better understanding of grantees' perspectives could help policy makers determine the need for further clarification.

### **Standardizing Definitions of FBCOs**

The research field could help address some of the definitional issues that can cause confusion in the service delivery arena. Specifically, the lack of an agreed-on definition of what constitutes a faith-based organization or a community-based organization makes it difficult to isolate how these organizations operate and succeed as compared with other organizations. A first step in addressing this issue is to obtain consensus on a standardized definition of faith-based and community-based organizations.

### **Specifying the Faith Component**

Another focus area for future research centers on the need to specify the faith component in faith-based programs and services. Inasmuch as many faith-based organizations conceptualize faith as a primary or central component in their programs and services, future research needs to explicitly address this construct in evaluation studies.

### **Exploring the Community Factor**

Lastly, as reflected in this compendium, a considerable amount of recent research has focused particularly on faith-based organizations. However, one study presented here suggests that smaller community-based organizations can play a prominent role in social service delivery.

Thus, one important area for future FBCI research would be to explore what could be termed the community factor or the extent to which both faith-based and community-based organizations are embedded in the broader communities they serve. Examining these broader organizational relationships as well as the individual relationships with clients will provide insight into the operational processes of faith-based and community-based organizations. This research avenue will also enhance understanding of the level of organizational acceptance within communities. Understanding this broader community context is also essential to identifying and addressing participatory barriers for faith-based and community-based organizations. Examining the complexity of these organizational relationships will enhance understanding of the FBCI overall as well as the implications for and impact on the lives of the individuals, families, and communities served.

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