



Weed & Seed

Best Practices:

Evaluation-based Series



VOLUME 2

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Weed & Seed

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This publication is created to share programs and practices that have been successful in reducing crime, violence, juvenile delinquency, and increasing neighborhood vitality and economic strength. We encourage you to contact the people listed at the end of each article for further information on how they accomplished their work. They are proud of their accomplishments and pleased to share them so others may benefit as well.





The City of Albuquerque, New Mexico

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*Pat Gilbert prepared this
summary of the evaluation
of Albuquerque Weed and
Seed Sites: Trumbull and
La Mesa Neighborhoods*

The Weed and Seed initiative seems to bring out the best in everyone involved with the process—neighborhood residents, site coordinators, agency partners, and steering committee members. They develop innovative approaches to the most difficult problems by making maximum use of the available resources. Successful results are often generated by a small number of dedicated volunteers working collaboratively in their community.

The Weed and Seed story across the country is really about these successful partnerships. The Albuquerque court-monitoring program is an excellent example of a successful collaborative effort that helped residents “take back” their neighborhood from criminals.

As problems with gang activity and drug dealing began to increase, residents of the Trumbull and LaMesa neighborhoods began looking for ways to react that were both positive and aggressive. The drug dealers were becoming well entrenched in the neighborhood and their resources seemed to be increasing. They had money and the power of intimidation, but neighborhood residents were determined and ready to use the Weed and Seed structure to counter this menace in their community.

Albuquerque Weed and Seed: History and Background

The Albuquerque Weed and Seed sites received official recognition in 1997 and first received funding in 1998. Two areas of the city, Trumbull and La Mesa, were designated as the Weed and Seed sites. These two neighborhoods had high crime rates, active drug dealers, and gang activity. The area was considered the “worst of the worst” and had become known as the “war zone.”

The strategy that was developed when the Weed and Seed site first applied for official recognition strongly emphasized weeding out violent crime, gang activity, drug use, and drug trafficking. A number of programs were developed to address these negative issues. One of the most innovative was the creation of the community and prosecutions coordinator (CPC) position in the district attorney’s office.

Half of the salary for this position was paid with funds from the Weed and Seed grant, with the city of Albuquerque picking up the rest of the cost.

Court-monitoring Process

The CPC developed and maintains a database with information on drug-trafficking cases prosecuted in Albuquerque. Using the database, the CPC tracks the scheduling of court hearings. It notifies neighborhood association (NA) members and crime victims of upcoming trials and criminal sentencing. On a monthly basis, the CPC advises the NA representatives of cases scheduled for the drug offenders from their respective neighborhoods.

The CPC assists the neighborhood residents in establishing neighborhood associations and then works closely with them supporting their crime prevention activities. The unique and effective partnership between Weed and Seed and the CPC resulted in court monitoring, which is a process of following drug offenders arrested in their neighborhoods as they are processed through the legal system. The purpose of following the offenders through the hearing and sentencing phases in the courts was to influence the outcomes. They have been able to demonstrate some success using this process. The CPC and the effectiveness of court monitoring will be the focus of this report.

Evaluation Methodology

The overall evaluation question was framed to elicit information about the impact of the CPC on the neighborhoods of Trumbull and La Mesa. The question was further specified by examining the effect of the NAs' court-monitoring activities on successful prosecution of drug-trafficking cases in the Weed and Seed sites.

Research Design

The evaluation was designed to address two fundamental research objectives: (1) to determine the effectiveness of the coordination between the CPC and the neighborhood associations of Trumbull and La Mesa and (2) to examine the effect of court monitoring on the sentences offenders received. The evaluator first gathered detailed information on the relationship between the CPC and the neighborhood associations of Trumbull and La Mesa. The second step was

designed to compare the prosecution rates for drug offenders arrested in Trumbull and La Mesa with those arrested in neighborhoods with an inactive NA or none at all. Due to their small size, the inactive neighborhoods and those without associations were collapsed into one category for comparison with the Weed and Seed neighborhoods.

The evaluation team met with the CPC and the Weed and Seed coordinator to gain a better understanding of the details of the collaboration between the district attorney's office and Weed and Seed members. The team developed an interview guide that included questions about coordination logistics, participation in neighborhood crime prevention activities, level of community satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement in the relationship. In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of active NA members who were selected based on their involvement in many neighborhood functions, especially court monitoring.

NA members who volunteer their time play a critical role in the court-monitoring system. After receiving notice of upcoming hearings or trials, designated NA members arrange to attend the proceedings. At the hearing, the NA member will usually give the judge a letter describing the neighborhood's problems with the drug offender and outlining why the defendant should be punished. If the defendant is sentenced to drug court or receives probation, the NA automatically sends a letter to the judge asking for a stay-away order, which is a provision of probation that mandates staying away from the neighborhood as a condition of probation. A violation of the stay-away order results in the defendant going back to court. The district attorney then asks the judge to revoke probation and sentence the defendant to time in prison.

The NA members are willing to donate their time for this process because they feel it is important to rid their neighborhoods of the destructive element of drug dealers. They feel that preventing them from coming back into the neighborhood will have a positive effect on the safety and security of the residents. If the offender is actually a resident of the neighborhood and it is not possible to keep him or her away, the judge can impose a curfew.

For all of the strength of the process, the plan is not without downsides. When the criminals cannot return to the same neighborhood, they may move to a nearby area and begin selling drugs there; consequently, the problem is not solved but only transferred. However, that sequence of events is not all

negative. Sometimes the new neighborhood residents create a neighborhood association in their area to organize against drug dealers.

Neighborhood Association Member Interviews

The eight NA members who were interviewed as part of the evaluation process praised the court-monitoring system and the important relationship that developed with the CPC and the district attorney’s office. Several of the members stated that their partnership with these offices and the Albuquerque police department has become an essential part of the system. Without the information provided by the CPC, the court-monitoring process would be difficult if not impossible for the volunteers to operate. The members of this collaborative effort share information about problem properties, arrests, and drug dealers’ activities. Although the partnerships are informal, they have performed very well and are making a difference in the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

Data Analysis

The evaluation team developed a hypothesis that offenders were more likely to be prosecuted in areas where the court-monitoring process was in place. Based on their analysis, the research team concluded that when a NA representative contacted the judge about a sentencing issue or a probation violation, the offender was more likely to be prosecuted successfully and thereby prevented from returning to the neighborhood.

In parts of town without NAs, there seemed to be less interest in court monitoring even though the CPC was willing to share its information with every neighborhood. The research team was unable to find an explanation for this lack of interest in these other neighborhoods.

Results

To test the hypothesis and examine the interaction of neighborhood actions and prosecution outcomes, the evaluation team originally planned to use a cross-tabulation procedure to examine for a variety of statistical tests. Unfortunately the numbers were quite small, making it difficult to perform the thorough analysis hoped for. In spite of this issue, the evaluation team was able to provide supportive, although somewhat limited, evidence for the success of court monitoring and the CPC process.

The table below illustrates the difference in the charge outcomes between Weed and Seed neighborhoods and non-Weed and Seed neighborhoods.

In neighborhoods without Weed and Seed, fewer drug-trafficking cases end in a prison sentence. In Weed and Seed neighborhoods where court monitoring is well established, more “stay-away orders” are issued and fewer cases are dismissed by the judge. This success validates the commitment among the partners who work together to improve the neighborhoods.

Conclusion

The creation of the community prosecutions coordinator position in the district attorney’s office represented a major step toward creating a strong collaborative arrangement in Albuquerque. Other stakeholders in this partnership are members of neighborhood associations who perform as court monitors by attending hearings and trials of people accused of drug trafficking. The third partner in the collaboration is the Albuquerque police department.

The commitment of the NA members is particularly impressive. They volunteer many unpaid hours of their time to this project. They also put themselves at risk by letting the drug offenders know who they are and what they are doing. They are vulnerable to threats and retaliations from the criminals. Although

Neighborhood	Dismissed	Probation/Drug Court Only	Probation-Drug Court Plus Stay-away Order	Sentenced to Prison
Weed and Seed Neighborhood	27	27	39	21
Non-Weed and Seed Neighborhood	38	57	4	13

their numbers were not large, they were sufficient to send a strong message to the drug dealers who decided to move out of these neighborhoods. This effort helps to demonstrate what can be accomplished when people work together to achieve shared goals. Reclaiming a neighborhood is a major triumph.

This program illustrates the Weed and Seed principle of bringing people together to accomplish the bold goals of a community. The volunteer activities and commitment of the residents when joined by the organizational structure of the district attorney's office and the support of the police department creates a strong partnership. Weed and Seed communities need this kind of collaboration and coordination to effectively change their neighborhoods.

Residents of Trumbull and La Mesa neighborhoods are understandably proud of what they have accomplished with the court-monitoring program; however, they are concerned about keeping it operational when Weed and Seed funding is no longer avail-

able. Nevertheless they are committed to continuing because they are convinced of its importance.

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Bethel Weed and Seed Initiative

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Pat Gilbert prepared this summary of the evaluation of the Bethel Weed and Seed Site in Eugene, Oregon

A group of stakeholders concerned about issues in the Bethel neighborhood began meeting in 1998 to develop an application for official recognition as a Weed and Seed site. The individuals in the group represented a wide range of community interests including the Eugene Police Department (EPD), Lane County government, Eugene city staff, community agencies, neighborhood residents, private nonprofits, and local business owners. The site received official recognition and was awarded funding in February 2001. The city of Eugene is the grant recipient.

The Bethel Weed and Seed area follows the boundaries of two neighborhood associations: Active Bethel Citizens and Trainsong Neighbors. The area encompasses a large physical space and a large population that is 86 percent white. Bethel is the fastest growing area of Eugene, primarily due to available buildable residential land. The crime rate and poverty is also growing faster than in Eugene as a whole, which makes the Weed and Seed initiative particularly critical to the health of the community.

Evaluation Design

The steering committee contracted with the Community Planning Workshop at the University of Oregon to create a methodology to use in conducting yearly evaluations for the Bethel Weed and Seed site and to actually conduct the first annual evaluation. The evaluation was designed to analyze whether

- the partnership was functioning in the best possible way,
- Weed and Seed activities had been implemented as planned,
- these activities were producing the desired immediate effects, and
- improvements or changes were needed.

The evaluation was organized functionally around the following elements:

- logic model: graphic representation of the resources, activities, outputs of the initiative;

- process evaluation: assessment of competing and complimentary efforts and current operations; and
- program impact: quantitative and qualitative assessment of the impact of the initiative.

The researchers divided their examination into four tasks:

1. **Document review:** During this phase of the process, the research team reviewed the grant application, steering committee minutes, by-laws, and other relevant documents. This review provided them with information about the community priorities and the goals and objectives designed to address the issues in each of the four Weed and Seed components.
2. **Data analysis:** The data analysis phase gathered and analyzed information from both primary and secondary sources, such as census data, crime statistics, calls for service, police staffing patterns, volunteer activity, and other community-generated activities.
3. **Interviews:** Approximately 20 key individuals, identified by the site coordinator, were interviewed by telephone to help assess the overall effectiveness of the initiative, its impact on the community, and the role of the partnerships. Those interviewed included steering committee members, residents, police officers, a representative of the office of the U.S. Attorney, service providers, and partners from city government.
4. **Focus group meeting:** The focus group meeting was a continuation of the interview process with six individuals selected for a more detailed discussion of issues identified in the document review and the telephone interview phases of the evaluation. The individuals who were chosen represented three key partners and three steering committee members.

Neighborhood Benefits

Using these research components, the evaluation report identified an impressive list of positive results reflecting the Weed and Seed presence in the community. Many of the benefits can be traced to the partnerships developed among agencies that resulted in better coordination of services and improved use of available resources. These overarching benefits can be seen especially in law enforcement efforts, but they are also a factor in the seeding activities.

Weeding Initiatives

Public Safety Forums

Two particularly notable weeding successes in the Bethel site emanated from a series of public safety forums conducted under the auspices of Weed and Seed, the office of the district attorney, the Eugene Police Department, and the neighborhood associations. Participation in the forums exceeded expectations, with more than 176 people attending. The attendees at the forums included senior groups, parent teacher organizations, neighborhood associations, the Eugene Police Commission, and parole and probation. In an effort to be inclusive, one session was conducted in Spanish.

In addition to providing crime statistics and public safety information to the residents, the agenda was developed to encourage everyone to comment on neighborhood safety issues and suggest possible solutions. The residents identified three weeding priorities from the discussions at these forums: youth violence and delinquency, drug dealing, and traffic safety.

One tangible result of the forums was the development of a user-friendly brochure on safety tips and suggestions for dealing with neighborhood drug trafficking. An even more important result was the improved sense of trust and shared communication generated by these events. This change was evident to both the police and the residents. The fact that the police were willing to listen to the community and then respond to their concerns demonstrated a new relationship based on mutual respect.

Bethel Public Safety Station

The Bethel Public Safety Station, opened in 2001, is a highly visible demonstration of the coordination among the Weed and Seed partners. The station was created to provide a community location for residents to report crimes and gather public safety information. By increasing the police presence in the area, the station has increased patrol time in the neighborhood and generated better services overall. The increase in the number of public visits is a strong indicator that residents are more trusting of the police. The number of police volunteer hours spent in the neighborhood has also increased, and the residents view all this activity as an indication that EPD cares about the Bethel community.

Bethel Community Accountability Board

Another example of a good working collaborative effort is the Bethel Community Accountability Board (BCAB), which is a voluntary board of residents who are trained to define sanctions for low- and moderate-risk offenders who have committed crimes in the area. BCAB is the restorative justice special emphasis initiative of the Bethel Weed and Seed site. The partners in this effort include the district attorney's office, parole and probation, Community Mediation Services, and the Community Service Agency of Lane County.

The goal of the BCAB is to reduce the number of recommitted crimes and to increase accountability among offenders. The BCAB hears cases and hands down rulings that result in offenders performing community service, receiving treatment, making apologies, and securing employment. Hundreds of volunteer hours from both BCAB members and offenders have been recorded since the beginning of the operation in spring 2001.

Responses from the interviews and focus group meetings indicate a strong positive response to the BCAB. The establishment of the board is generally viewed as the most successful part of the Weed and Seed component.

Bethel Intensive Supervision Collaborative

The Bethel Intensive Supervision Collaborative (ISC) is yet another example of community coordination promoted by Bethel Weed and Seed. When it began operating in 2001, the ISC received funding from Bethel Weed and Seed for police officers to make home visits to parolees. Other partners in the ISC include probation and parole, EPD, the district attorney's office, and several social service agencies.

The ISC is intended to increase supervision of high-risk offenders who have returned to the neighborhood. When problems developed in getting ex-offenders to participate, the EPD agreed to fund the program through the police department and cooperatively with probation and parole to perform team visits to the homes. Although Bethel Weed and Seed no longer commits funds to ISC and its role is more limited, it is seen as another success in its promotion of coordination in the community.

Each of these collaborative programs is an example of the important role Weed and Seed can play in a community. The Weed and Seed grant funds are not

large enough to attack all the problems identified in a community; nevertheless, Weed and Seed can serve as the catalyst for bringing together the agencies and individuals who have the resources to provide solutions by working collaboratively.

Seeding Initiatives

Bethel Weed and Seed has been successful in establishing a network of strong working relationships with agencies throughout the community, which enabled it to develop programs that serve families and children well. The programs include truancy prevention, youth internships, and youth crisis centers, as well as programs with United Way and all the public schools in Bethel. The core of the seeding activities is in the Safe Haven programming, which includes more than 49 community service projects. With this vast array of programs, Bethel Weed and Seed is able to serve a large number of community residents.

Safe Havens

The Bethel Safe Havens incorporate eleven sites, which include all Bethel public schools, the Bethel Branch Library, Peterson Barn Community Center, and the Red Cross. This coordination of resources provides opportunities in recreation, art, and literary pursuits for everyone. Thus duplication can be avoided and a greater variety of offerings can be provided.

One of the most popular activities for youth is the teen club, which is an evening drop-in program for middle school youth. This project filled a need in the community and received universal praise from everyone interviewed.

Cascade Truancy Prevention Project

The Cascade Truancy Prevention Project began as one of Bethel's special emphasis initiatives targeting the attendance problems in the Cascade Middle School. The program combined home visits, homework help, and social services in an effort to build family support, bring the individual student up to grade level, and provide special services as needed.

Weed and Seed matched the school district's funds to elevate a full-time counseling position from a half-time position. Training was provided, families were assisted in dealing with their problems, and those needing extra services were referred to the Weed and Seed Safe Haven.

Everyone seems to agree that the Cascade Truancy Prevention Project was a real success story. Bethel Weed and Seed may not continue funding the effort since Cascade Middle School's attendance reached the state average in 2002.

Willamette Youth Interns Program

The Willamette Youth Interns Program provides high school students job experience through internships with Weed and Seed affiliated programs. In serving the internship, the youth gain work experience while serving the community. After completing the internship, the youth serve on a youth advisory board, advising the steering committee on youth issues. The Bethel Weed and Seed recognizes the importance of developing the future leaders in the community; therefore, they see the Willamette Youth Interns Program as an excellent way to involve youth in the ongoing issues that affect the community.

The seeding activities received praise from the individuals interviewed during the evaluation process, especially the large number of programs offered at the Safe Haven. Again, Bethel Weed and Seed demonstrated a clear vision of an effective way to leverage resources and build collaborative partnerships.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation report cited many successes of the Bethel Weed and Seed and praised the coordinator and members of the steering committee for vision and leadership; however, it also noted several challenges that must be addressed. The following challenges are often faced by many Weed and Seed sites:

- involving more community residents,
- developing additional resources,
- developing a sustainability plan,

- formalizing the subcommittee structure, and
- marketing Weed and Seed more effectively.

The site will address the issues identified by the evaluation team using its successful collaborative model. Bethel Weed and Seed has avoided many problems over the years because of its strong networking collaboratives. It is an excellent model for an initiative that demonstrates that working together really does work.

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Buffalo Weed and Seed Program

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*Pat Gilbert prepared this
summary of the evaluation
of the Buffalo Weed and
Seed Program*

The Buffalo Weed and Seed site received official recognition in 1996, after four years of community efforts to develop a crime prevention strategy. At that time, Buffalo's crime rate was the highest in the nation in the use of assault weapons in commission of a crime. Drug use, violence, and prostitution were also major problems in the city.

Weed and Seed has been a positive force in the community as evidenced by the decrease in crime rates and significant improvement in quality-of-life issues. From 1996 to 2000, there was a 33 percent decrease in the number of murders in the city, a 35.6 percent decrease in the number of rapes, and a 41 percent decrease in the number of robberies. Although the steering committee recognized the accomplishments resulting from Weed and Seed, it felt the need for some objective assessment of the program to help inform its future decisions; therefore, Buffalo included a proposal for a quality-of-life evaluation when it submitted its recertification application.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation was a collaboration between Weed and Seed and the University of Buffalo's Center for Urban Studies, with funding provided by a Healthy Homes Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Although the HUD funding was withdrawn, a less costly quality-of-life evaluation process went forward. The only loss to the program was the elimination of a pre/post quality-of-life survey. Weed and Seed developed a strong local working partnership, which included the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning, C.R.U.C.I.A.L (community services organization), YO! Buffalo (youth opportunities program), and the University of Buffalo's School of Architecture and Planning and the Urban Design Project. This partnership provided the resources necessary for the evaluation process to proceed.

The University of Buffalo's School of Architecture and Planning and the Urban Design Project was contracted to evaluate the Buffalo Weed and Seed site.



Clean up in the Weed and Seed Community involving the Box Street J.R. block club on Box Street.

The evaluation was designed to be both formative and summative in nature, ensuring a comprehensive review of the program. The component elements included in the evaluation were

- review of the Buffalo strategy,
- review of the steering committee minutes,
- review of the official recognition application,
- design of the interview instrument,
- interviews with key stakeholders, and
- comparison of crime statistics with the neighboring community.

This first evaluation of the Buffalo Weed and Seed site was designed not only to provide a thorough operational analysis of the program but also to establish a base line for future evaluations.

A criticism mentioned throughout the report was the amount of time available for the examination. To effectively conduct multiple interviews using a comprehensive questionnaire, adequate time must be set aside for the process. After the interview process is completed, there must be time to collect and analyze the responses. The principal investigator in Buffalo found that the time pressures related to this process presented a problem. The recommendation for future evaluations is to allocate more time for this part of the process.

The evaluation examined the structure and governance of Buffalo Weed and Seed through interviews and review of documents. It also attempted to gauge the level of community involvement and support over the years of operation. In the interview process, respondents were asked to assess the impact of the program overall, as well as its various component parts. This review reflected a range of comments, mostly positive, about the direction of the program and its staff.

Governance Issues

Steering Committee

The steering committee has undergone significant changes over the years. In 1997, most of the members represented law enforcement, and the community provided little input. Of the 22 members of the original steering committee, ten were from law enforcement.

In 1999, the steering committee received technical assistance in developing vision-and-mission statements to help direct the planning and future path of the program. One of the changes that came from the technical assistance retreat was a change in the size and composition of the steering committee. The result was a newly configured 46-member steering committee with seven representatives from law enforcement and the remainder from a variety of agencies and block clubs. In 2002, the steering committee changed again to include only two law enforcement representatives and 29 representatives with a broad range of interests.

In response to the question of who was missing from the steering committee, most respondents felt the representation was very good. The only group underrepresented was the business community, which was partly due to the fact that an active business representative moved out of the area. Local planning initiatives were suggested as a possible addition.

Setting Policy

The membership changes resulted in a steering committee with more community involvement and the

opportunity for residents to have a role in developing policies while maintaining a good working relationship with law enforcement officials. These positive changes were made as the residents and community leaders developed a better understanding of the nature and purpose of Weed and Seed.

The steering committee still needs to define the roles of each group in setting policies. Most respondents felt this function belonged to staff rather than to the steering committee. This interpretation may be the result of staff dominance in the earlier years of Weed and Seed rather than the way current operations are delivered.

The investigator noted that the responses generally reflected the specific responsibility of the respondent. A member of the steering committee was likely to have a different interpretation of the operation than a person whose only contact was through the safe haven. The staff and law enforcement officials also perceived issues through their own level of involvement.

Implementation Responsibilities

When asked about program implementation, most respondents saw a partnership between staff and law enforcement as responsible for implementing programs in law enforcement; in the Safe Haven, they saw partnership responsibilities between Weed and Seed staff and Safe Haven staff. They expressed strong positive feelings about partnerships in the community. These partnerships are generally viewed by the stakeholders as effective and necessary for accomplishing the goals of the program. The level of trust that has developed among the partners is exceptionally good.

Role of the City of Buffalo

The city has been supportive throughout the period of Weed and Seed operation, beginning with the role of Mayor Masiello when the site first received official recognition. The mayor allowed city employees to devote time to Weed and Seed. Support from that level is a critical element in the success of these initiatives. City representatives have contin-

ued in an active role on the steering committee, and the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning has also been a strong partner.

Most comments about the city's commitment were positive; the only negative statements were related to the fiscal crisis in Buffalo at this time. Respondents expressed concern about the ability of the city to continue its strong commitment to Weed and Seed while facing severe budget problems.

Law Enforcement and Community Policing

Respondents gave the police high marks for the decrease in criminal activities in the community. They offered comments about the increased presence of police, which has contributed to a perception of greater personal safety.

Community policing has been one of the most highly prized segments of Weed and Seed. Respondents were in agreement in their praise of community policing.

Safe Haven

Strong partnerships support safe-haven activities. Respondents were most likely to know of Weed and Seed through the Safe Havens. The wide range of services—educational, health, social, and cultural—



Announcing Buffalo Weed and Seed partnership with the Project Exile Program in Buffalo, NY, with former U.S. Attorney Denise O'Donnell.

offered at the Safe Havens covers every age group and interest. Job training activities, computer facilities, and recreational activities are offered at various locations including the Buffalo Science Museum, the King Urban Life Center, the C.R.U.C.I.A.L. facility, and a senior citizen's center.

Weed and Seed Staff

In the interview process, the Weed and Seed director was given very high marks. The respondents praised his commitment. Because of his dedication to the Weed and Seed strategy and his ability to communicate and reach out to the community, he is credited with much of the success Weed and Seed has enjoyed.

The current small staff is composed of the director and the youth coordinator. The respondents expressed concern that the workload was too great for only two people to handle. There seemed to be universal agreement concerning the need for additional staff, but everyone understood that additional funding is unlikely.

Evaluation Findings

The Buffalo Weed and Seed site has experienced a decrease in the crime rate while the geographical area it covered has increased. It has developed strong partnerships that provide a wide range of services. The four components of Weed and Seed—law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration—are all included

in the Buffalo strategy. Most important, the neighborhood residents have been involved from the beginning and have continued their commitment to the initiative.

All the positive elements of the Buffalo program are encouraging; however, issues remain. The respondents offered very thoughtful suggestions for improving the operation of the program. The following list includes the most frequently mentioned recommendations from the respondents:

- Set priorities and develop strategies.
Recognizing that Weed and Seed is a long-term process and that Buffalo has developed many of the necessary components, respondents thought it time to re-evaluate the strengths and re-examine their strategy.
- Find partners and collaborate.
Although much has been done to develop partnerships, the respondents recommended bringing even more groups together to work on the issues that face the community.
- Set benchmarks.
Several respondents recommended putting more emphasis on outcomes. They want to ensure more defined objectives for the program.
- Address quality-of-life issues.
Respondents want to see more attention paid to physical development of the neighborhood. These issues affect attitudes and behaviors, which in turn influence the quality of life.
 - Learn from other Weed and Seed sites.
Respondents recommended looking at what has been successful in other places and examining the possibility of adapting ideas to address Buffalo's issues.
 - Link Safe Havens more effectively.
The variety of programs offered at the various Safe Haven locations could be more effective if their offerings were coordinated. At the very least, they should share information on a regular basis.
 - Get additional staffing.
As mentioned before, the director is seen as the most



Community clean up in Weed and Seed target area. Part of the Christmas in April “Buffalo Partnership” known as Rebuilt Together Buffalo.

important element in making Weed and Seed successful in Buffalo. The respondents worry that he may “burn out” from working so hard.

- Reach out to the business community.

Respondents felt that Weed and Seed needs to direct more effort toward getting support and participation from the business community.

- Find time to reflect, regroup, and focus.

While praising the efforts and lauding the successes of Weed and Seed, the respondents expressed the need to self-evaluate and reflect on what Weed and Seed does best. They recommended that staff and the steering committee meet at the end of the year and discuss and learn from their accomplishments and mistakes before they go into the next year.

- Look to the future.

As they look toward expanded boundaries of their site, they want to move judiciously on governance issues using the past experience as a guide.

This evaluation did not focus on any single accomplishment; rather, it examined the total operation of the site relating it to the community. In this way, the document provides a guide for the future as well as a report on the past.

It is especially encouraging that the key stakeholders in Buffalo Weed and Seed are proud of the progress so far, while developing plans to build on and improve the program. They are not only concentrating on problems and obstacles but also on strategies to provide sound solutions for the future.



After a community clean up on Box Street with the residents and students from the University of Buffalo and the Mayor of Buffalo, Anthony M. Masiello (middle).

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of the Humboldt Weed and
Seed Program*

The city of Humboldt, Tennessee, received official recognition as a Weed and Seed site in 1998 and first received funding in 1999. The area of the city known as “The Crossings” was designated as the Weed and Seed site. This area had a reputation as a place for criminal activity, gangs, and crack houses. Residents had long complained about drug use and drug sales, public drinking, loud music, and abandoned buildings.

When Humboldt applied for official recognition, the public supported Weed and Seed by writing letters and by making contributions and pledges of resources. These pledges were of vital importance to the site because the community seemed lacking in both services and organizational structure. This support was also evidenced by the membership of the first steering committee, which included the



Christmas ornaments made by students in art class.

U.S. Attorney's office, the district attorney's office, the Board of Aldermen, the police chief, public housing, schools, business, churches, and residents.

After three years of operation, the site had met many of its original goals and had brought about positive change in the community. It had also experienced some attrition in the steering committee; therefore, it seemed to be an appropriate time to have a comprehensive evaluation of the site. The steering committee contracted with the University of Tennessee at Martin to perform the review.

Evaluation Design

The program evaluation was carried out using multiple sources of data beginning with the initial grant application. Other documents used in the review process included arrest data from the police department, minutes from the steering committee meetings, and progress reports submitted to the Executive Office for Weed and Seed at the U.S. Department of Justice. To supplement the document review, interviews were conducted with members of the steering committee, neighborhood residents, and law enforcement representatives. In addition, evaluations by participants who were enrolled in training programs were reviewed. Generally everyone was willing to participate in the review and, even though the numbers were small, the information was valuable in the evaluation process.

Crime Statistic Challenges

Since no prior year crime statistics were available from Humboldt, the investigator decided to use statistics



Having fun at the Safe Haven.

from Brownsville, Tennessee, for comparison. The two cities are of comparable size and geographical location. The investigator encountered another problem with the crime statistics. The method of crime reporting changed after Weed and Seed was implemented. The difference between the old and new data collection methods made comparisons more challenging. The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) compiles

crime data based on the most serious offense committed. The new data collection methods—the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS)—report all crimes committed by an offender, not just the most serious. How this change affects the analysis of crime data can be seen by this example. Under the old system, if an offender committed a burglary, robbery, and murder in one incident, only the murder would be reported since it is considered the most serious of those offenses. Under the new system, all three crimes would be reported, even though they were all committed by one individual at one time.

Three factors that should be noted in analyzing crime statistics from Humboldt are

- the actual amount of crime may not have changed, only the way the data were collected;
- the increased law enforcement and community participation in a Weed and Seed program may also result in an increase in the crime reported; and
- in neighborhoods under stress, residents often feel that it is not worth reporting criminal activity but as the community becomes more stable, the residents gain confidence in the police and become more proactive in attacking crime in their neighborhood.

There was another problem with the way the crime statistics were gathered in Humboldt. The information was available for the entire city but not disaggregated by neighborhoods, which made it difficult to get a true picture of the crime issues in the Weed and Seed area. The police department personnel were cooperative and helpful; however, they were not able to provide the statistics in exactly the form that the evaluator needed.

In spite of these obstacles, the evaluation report provided a clear picture of the progress of the Weed and Seed site relative to the goals outlined in its strategic plan. The four components of the strategy (law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration) were examined and analyzed in the report.

Review of Strategic Goals

Some of the positive results that reflect strategic goals demonstrate the initial success of Weed and Seed in Humboldt.

- The biggest problem in law enforcement was identified as lack of coordination between local and federal law enforcement agencies. Since the implementation of Weed and Seed, interagency coordination among law enforcement agencies has improved and has resulted in the arrests of ten drug dealers in the city.
- A major goal under community policing was to reduce fear of crime and improve overall quality of life. The main performance measure for the objective of increasing police presence in the neighborhood was the number of bicycle patrols during peak hours. Within the first year of operation, bike and police foot patrols were established in the target area.
- The objective given the highest priority under prevention, intervention, and treatment was to reduce school drop-out rates by providing additional educational assistance and

after-school programs. As part of the Weed and Seed program activities, a Safe Haven was opened with two certified teachers to provide services to children needing school work assistance. Other services are also provided at the Safe Haven.

- The goals of the neighborhood restoration component emphasized demolishing or cleaning up existing properties through code enforcement. By September 2002, 45 dwellings, three buildings, six mobile homes, 11 outbuildings, and one garage had been excavated in the target area. In addition, 266 cars, 12 vans/SUVs, and 21 pick-up trucks were removed.

Evaluation Methodology

By tracing the development of the Humboldt Weed and Seed site through its goals and objectives as stated in its original strategic plan, the evaluator was able to provide an effective report for the steering committee to use for guidance. Overall, the Weed and Seed site has shown substantial progress in meeting its goals.

Strategic Success

Much of this success can be attributed to the creation of innovative programs designed to meet the needs of the community, an active fund raising strategy, and the dedicated leadership of the steering committee.



Field trip to Chattanooga, TN, Lookout Mountain, Ruby Falls.

These elements together with strong partnerships in the community proved to be a winning combination for the Humboldt Weed and Seed site.

Challenges and Choices

One of the most effective initiatives is a program called Challenges and Choices, offered by the Humboldt Police Department. It is a youth violence prevention program modeled after a program developed by the San Jose, California, Police Department. Officers from San Jose traveled to Humboldt to train officers in the curriculum and activities used in the program. The officers use videos, interactive activities, and homework assignments to teach students in the third, fifth, and seventh grades about violence prevention. The curriculum includes such topics as violence and the media, anger, conflict resolution, self-esteem, peer pressure, drugs, gangs, and the law.

Safe Haven

The Safe Haven received special praise from residents for the variety of offerings it provides for all ages. It has proved to be a unifying source for the neighborhood. In addition to tutoring, services offered at the Safe Haven included educational programs, computer training, health information, and recreational activities.

Fund Raising

One measure of the success of the Humboldt site can be seen in its ability to raise money for its programs. Many Humboldt community institutions, residents, and businesses have contributed generously to community policing; neighborhood restoration; and prevention, intervention, and treatment programs. This support is especially important not only for continuing day-to-day operations but also for the future sustainability of the positive changes that have occurred.

Role of the Steering Committee

Members of the steering committee generally agreed that they worked well together and had a clear vision of their role. They seemed to be comfortable with their responsibility for setting policy, implementing the various programs, and providing oversight. The

steering committee has carefully followed the established bylaws and federal guidelines for Weed and Seed. Detailed minutes of its meetings document its actions and provide a record for future decisions.

Members of the steering committee also expressed satisfaction with the progress made in Humboldt through the Weed and Seed initiative measures both in weeding and seeding activities. While the steering committee members felt the efforts had been successful, they also voiced concerns about some continuing weaknesses.

The major problem cited was the lack of community involvement and the low level of voluntary participation in Weed and Seed activities and programs. However, everyone concurred with the suggestion to include more residents on the steering committee as a way of increasing the sense of ownership in the program and thus engendering more involvement of community residents.

Members of the steering committee expressed the desire to continue and expand the successful efforts they have begun. One of the programs that produced measurable positive results is the tutoring program, which receives much credit in the reduction in truancy rates in the community. The steering committee members, as well as other community residents, have volunteered for that and other programs.

Recommendations

The evaluator included a section in the report with recommendations for improving the quality of evaluations in the future. Many of the points she raised offer helpful ideas that might apply to other Weed and Seed evaluations.

- Allow adequate time for the evaluation and preparation of a report. The total process includes designing the study, preparing an interview questionnaire, reading copies of reports and meeting minutes, conducting surveys, and writing a report.
- Begin planning for evaluation early in the operation of the site. The evaluator can be helpful in suggesting the best way to collect the data that will be needed for evaluation.
- Organize law enforcement records so that they will be more useful for gathering Weed and Seed information. If the police department knows ahead of

time, it may be able to accommodate the Weed and Seed evaluation needs in a more satisfactory way.

- Because community resident and steering committee interviews require approval from an institutional review board if the evaluator is connected to a university, time should be allowed during the evaluation process for this approval.

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