

Community Conversation – Vallejo 2009

Summary Report

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2009

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Purpose

In the roles as grantmaker and community leader, the Solano Community Foundation (SCF) established the Nonprofit Partnership Program (NPP) and initiated a process for beginning to identify community issues with the intent of providing financial resources to local programs addressing specific community needs. This process, referred to as the Community Conversation, was launched in the city of Vallejo in the fall of 2009.

The purpose of the Community Conversation was to begin to gain a basic understanding about the current, presenting issues in Vallejo for SCF to release a Request for Proposals (RFP), in the spring of 2010, which would target the highest identified community need. The results of this process are not intended to guide on-going funding decisions beyond the spring of 2010. It is intended however to set the stage for further identifying the unmet or insufficiently addressed issues in Vallejo.

There were two primary components of the Community Conversation:

- I. Community Issues Opinion Survey
- II. Facilitated Community Conversation among 35 NPP members

Community Issues Opinion Survey

A simple survey was developed and distributed to community members and residents of Vallejo. The survey was sent out electronically via email, a link was posted on the SCF website, and press releases/advertisements went out the local media. The goal of the survey was to solicit community input on what respondents saw as issues facing the city and residents of Vallejo. A total of 70 respondents completed the survey.

Results from the survey were compiled and sorted by rating level to identify those issues that received the highest rating. The highest rated issues were placed in a summary report (see Appendix A) which was used to launch the discussion at the Community Conversation. The issues that met the following conditions were included in the summary report:

- Received an average rating score of 4.0 or higher along a 5 point Likert scale (i.e., respondents identified that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* it was an issue for Vallejo)
- Any issue where 50% or more of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agree* it was an issue for Vallejo

Facilitated Community Conversation

On October 14th 2009 the SCF convened a forum of 35 NPP members to review and discuss the top issues as identified through the survey. Among the attendees were Vallejo residents and representatives from the following disciplines and focus areas:

- Education (primary and secondary)
- Children's services
- Senior services
- Humane Society
- Faith-based communities
- The arts
- Health
- City Council and government
- Housing
- United Way
- Media

The participants were presented with the top issues identified through the Community Issues Opinion Survey. It was noted that just because an issue was not on the summary report *did not* imply that it was not important or worthy of being addressed. Due to the nature of the process, it was important to filter the issues based on the highest ratings, as identified by the community members through the survey, to reach the objective of the Community Conversation.

Limitations

As with any data collection, there are limitations inherent in the process. It is imperative that these limitations be stated here.

- 1) This was not intended to be a comprehensive needs assessment for the city of Vallejo.
- 2) The survey was designed to gather *opinions* from the perspective of Vallejo residents.
- 3) The goal of the Community Conversation was to make a *close approximation* to identify *the most* pressing issues in Vallejo *at this point in time* so that the SCF can develop a RFP designed to reflect the needs and interests identified by the community.

Results of the Community Conversation

Top Identified Issues

Community Conversation participants discussed the presenting issues and identified the highest issues they saw facing Vallejo. The top three issues identified in order of priority were:

- 1) Education (e.g., significant dropout rate for high school students, quality of K-12 instruction, availability of afterschool programs)
- 2) Basic Needs (e.g., poverty)
- 3) Jobs/Livable Wages (e.g., unemployment, livable wages, skilled workforce)

In addition, participants identified the following as important issues:

- 4) Lack of strategic leadership
- 5) Public safety
- 6) Health
- 7) Vallejo morale

The participants agreed that the issues are interconnected. Education is correlated with one's ability to find a job at a livable wage. A livable wage is correlated with one's ability to meet basic needs. An ability to meet basic needs or lack thereof is correlated with stress, poor health, crime and so forth.

Top Identified Needs

In response to Education as the top issue, the participants were asked to identify what they thought was most needed to address that issue. The following needs were identified by the participants in order of priority:

- 1) Increase community engagement and volunteerism.
Participants identified the importance of community involvement in addressing the issue of education. In particular it was mentioned that Vallejo needs more volunteers to work with youth. Examples included mentoring and intergenerational programs.
- 2) Improve quality of education.
It was stated that there is a need to improve quality instruction and have qualified and dedicated teachers. Suggestions included providing incentives for teachers and developing mentor programs where seasoned teachers mentor newer teachers.
- 3) Parent engagement/responsibility.
Parent engagement and assumed responsibility in their children's education was a stated need.

Next Steps

The information obtained through the Community Conversation will be used to inform future action and grantmaking by the SCF. It will also be widely distributed to the community-at-large (e.g., donors, policy makers, government officials, community members, etc.). Information about the RFP and subsequent grants will be posted on the SCF website at www.solanocf.org.

Appendix A
Summary of Highest Issues Identified through the Survey

Basic Needs

1. Unemployment (Rate Avg. 4.57) - 66.7%	Not adequate resources/services 55.1%
2. Job Growth (Rate Avg. 4.37) - 55.2%	Not adequate resources/services 76.5%
3. Livable Wages (Rate Avg. 4.33) – 53%	Not adequate resources/services 63.8%
4. Poverty (Rate Avg. 4.19) – 46.4%	Not adequate resources/services 50.0%
5. Skilled Workforce (Rate Avg. 4.12) – 27.9%	Not adequate resources/services 38.2%

Public Safety

1. Crime (Rate Avg. 4.60) - 70.9%	Not adequate resources/services 75.4%
2. Safety (Rate Avg. 4.43) - 57.4%	Not adequate resources/services 64.5%
3. Substance Abuse (Rate Avg. 4.39) - 59.4%	Not adequate resources/services 53.1%
4. Juvenile Crime (Rate Avg. 4.16) – 49.2%	Not adequate resources/services 63.5%

Education

1. High School Dropout (Rate Avg.4.63) -79%	Not adequate resources/services 83.6%
2. Quality of K-12 Ed. (Rate Avg.. 4.31) - 61.3%	Not adequate resources/services 69.4%
3. After school Programs (Rate Avg.3.89) - 54.8%	Not adequate resources/services 65%

Community/Civic Development

1. Rundown Neighborhoods (Rate Avg. 4.41) - 60.3%	Not adequate resources/services 69.5%
2. Graffiti (Rate Avg.4.17) - 44.8%	Not adequate resources/services 53.4%
3. Safe, Access. Streets/Sidewalks (Avg. 4.08) - 40%	Not adequate resources/services 49.2%

Health

1. Adult Sub. Abuse (Rate Avg. 4.19) - 65.5%	Not adequate resources/services 50%
2. Teen Sub. Abuse (Rate Avg. 4.14) - 61.4%	Not adequate resources/services 51.7%
3. Obesity (Rate Avg. 4.04) – 56.1%	Not adequate resources/services 51.7%
4. Mental Health (Rate Avg. 3.88) - 57.9%	Not adequate resources/services 50.9%