



# **SETTING A COMMUNITY AGENDA**

**A Case Study of  
THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION  
Kansas City, Missouri**

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**December 1998**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Center is extremely grateful to the Commissioners of the Local Investment Commission, their staff, state and local agency partners, citizen volunteers, and residents of Kansas City for their willingness to share their experiences and insights about LINC's contributions to improving the lives of children and families in Jackson County. Their willingness to endure countless hours of interviews and discussions over the past year made a significant contribution to the richness of this case study.

We appreciate the financial support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation which made this report possible.

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# SETTING A COMMUNITY AGENDA

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local INvestment Commission (LINC) in Kansas City, Missouri, is a citizen board dedicated to improving the well-being of children and families in the Kansas City region. LINC defines its mission as creating “... *a caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families, and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the common good.*”

The Commission’s 36 members represent all parts of the Kansas City community, with especially strong leadership coming from the corporate and business worlds and from Kansas City neighborhoods. The Commission is supported in its work by literally hundreds of volunteers who participate on its working committees and in its community activities; by a Professional Cabinet made up of public agency staff and representatives of private service providers; and by a staff of approximately 35 full and part time people.

LINC is an example of the *local governance partnerships* that are emerging around the nation as state governments devolve responsibilities and seek to engage communities in new ways. As such, LINC is distinguished in several ways:

- ***Its scope is comprehensive.*** LINC Commissioners have decided to do “whatever it takes” to promote child and family well-being. From an initial interest in improving the local office of the Missouri Department of Social Services, LINC’s work has broadened into the spheres of employment and training, health care, child care, housing, elderly affairs, and education.
- ***LINC’s partnership with state government is producing a new level of citizen involvement in guiding public expenditures.*** From the beginning, state government has supported LINC, and invited the Commission to alter the way public funds are spent in the Kansas City region. LINC’s leadership in welfare reform, for example, forged new and productive ties among local employers and state and local social services, manpower development, and economic development agencies, resulting in more jobs for welfare recipients.

- ***LINC's focus on neighborhoods ensures that services and supports respond to families where they live.*** LINC sees its role as strengthening neighborhood capacity in a variety of ways, from creating leadership roles for neighborhood residents to organizing community data bases around neighborhood boundaries and needs.
- ***LINC is interested in influence rather than control.*** LINC Commissioners and staff believe their credibility stems in large part from an operating style which values partnership and demonstrates respect for partners. LINC works aggressively to influence how resources are used on behalf of children and families, but not to control other agencies' operations and funds or to compete with them. Commissioners see their role as mobilizing people to work together on community goals, and provide the Kansas City region with a clear community agenda, but not to take over other organizations' turf.

LINC's major initiative is the development of ***Comprehensive Neighborhood Services (CNS)***. Using state Caring Communities funds, LINC has funded sixteen CNS sites covering 28 neighborhoods. Schools are the hubs for services in these sites, and a site council made up of residents and parents is created in each neighborhood to guide the development and implementation of the neighborhood's plan. LINC reviews each plan, funds some or all of the planned activities, and then provides technical support and training. LINC Commissioners believe that CNS has expanded neighborhood services as well as strengthened neighborhood leadership and participation.

LINC has led the ***implementation of welfare reform*** in Kansas City. In perhaps the clearest example of a partnership between public agencies, business leaders, and neighborhood interests, LINC develops new jobs for welfare recipients and administers a wage supplement program which converts former recipients' cash benefits and food stamps into funds that are sent directly to an employer—who then uses the funds to supplement the hourly wage in a newly created job. LINC has also developed a partnership with several public and private employment and training agencies in Kansas City to open two job centers in Kansas City neighborhoods, with extended evening and weekend hours so they are easily accessible. Finally, LINC has introduced new performance-based contracts with local employment/training providers so that full payment is made only upon successful execution of performance milestones (for example, the retention of job placements for at least 90 days). Over 3200 people have been placed in jobs through LINC's welfare reform efforts, with a job retention rate of 73% as of August 1998, and an average starting wage of \$6.98/hour.

A major LINC focus has been ***helping to strengthen the Jackson County office of the State's Division of Family Services (JCDFS)***. LINC helped the income support unit to reorganize its management structure and install new personnel policies. For child welfare

services, LINC helped agency administrators to connect with neighborhood resources to recruit foster and adoptive homes, eliminating a backlog of children awaiting adoption. With LINC's help, child welfare officials revitalized the agency's training in order to reduce staff turnover and increase professionalism. LINC and JCDFS developed their present relationship slowly, allowing time for trust to build and for LINC to demonstrate that while it was interested in more effective performance, LINC Commissioners shared JCDFS' staff's goals for self-sufficient families and safe children.

LINC is creating the *stable funding base* that it needs to achieve its goals. In 1998, LINC's budget of \$8.5 million included \$5.9 million of directly controlled funds that support basic operations and special projects, and another \$2.6 million that LINC influences, but does not directly administer. To provide an on-going source of funds for core expenses, LINC launched an effort to draw down federal entitlement funds that is now yielding over \$2.5 million per year, of which LINC keeps about \$800,000. LINC's claims on these funds are based on activities by its many local partners on behalf of at-risk children. This funding, once claimed and received, can be used by LINC and its partners to advance their community agenda since the dollars are without federal restrictions or conditions. This financial strategy yields an ongoing, permanent funding base for LINC above and beyond state funds earmarked for specific purposes or discretionary, time-limited foundation dollars.

Finally, to promote effective communication among partners and effective decisions by the Commission, LINC is *developing sources of data, across agencies and across neighborhoods*. A *Community Technology Forum*, available through the Internet, makes available community resource information, by zip code, from over 350 public and private organizations. A *data warehouse* compiles information from 60 different data bases in the metropolitan area and will eventually integrate information from these data bases for a variety of users. To support the operations of the CNS sites, LINC has established an *Information Sharing System (IS)* as a client data base that links all 16 CNS sites. LINC views these accomplishments as the first steps in a longer range plan to develop reliable, accessible, and user-friendly information sources that support both neighborhood service delivery and data-driven community decision making.

LINC gets high marks from Kansas City's public and private sector leaders. State agency officials also point to LINC as the prototype for Missouri's other community partnerships. And, LINC is increasingly sought out by other states and communities—and by other nations as well—for its lessons on local governance. Most importantly, while LINC Commissioners themselves recognize their achievement, they focus even more intently on their future agenda as they work to improve results for children and families.

# I

## INTRODUCTION

***“There are over 500 volunteers involved with LINC, both commissioners and members of the committees and professional cabinets, making us the largest working organization in Kansas City—not the largest membership organization, but the largest working organization. The reason so many of us are involved is that we honestly believe we can change people’s lives for the better.***

***With greater national interest in local governance, we at LINC may be learning lessons that can be useful for our colleagues in other states and communities. The key to our success is that we’ve learned how to work together to make things better for Greater Kansas City.”***

Bert Berkley, Founder  
Local INvestment  
Commission

The Local INvestment Commission (LINC) in Kansas City, Missouri, is a citizen board dedicated to improving the well-being of children and families in the Kansas City region. Based on a cooperative effort of a Kansas City businessman and the Director of the Missouri Department of Social Services, LINC was launched in 1992. It has earned recognition for its experience in setting and pursuing a “community agenda.” With support from a wide array of local leaders, as well as a partnership with State government, LINC is an example of a local *governance partnership*—a focal point for community leadership to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families.<sup>1</sup>

LINC’s purpose is similar to other governance partnerships emerging around the nation, but its membership and structure differ in important ways. The Local INvestment Commission is composed of citizen leaders from all parts of the Kansas City/Jackson County region. LINC enjoys strong leadership from the corporate world, from neighborhood residents, and from civic leaders in many other walks of life. Hundreds of volunteers help carry-out LINC’s work, through participation on various committees and in community activities. LINC thus differs from many of the new decision making bodies which are emerging in other states, which draw their membership primarily from human service professionals in public agencies or private, nonprofit organizations. Elected officials, public agency staff, and service providers participate in LINC, but as advisors, technical consultants, and implementation partners rather than as decision makers.

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<sup>1</sup> The Center for the Study of Social Policy defines a *governance partnership* as the decision making process by which a community takes responsibility for developing and implementing broadly supported strategies to achieve better outcomes for children, youth, families and communities.

LINC's scope of activities is broad. Its original charge was to help spur improvements in the local office of the Missouri Department of Social Services. Founding Commissioner Bert Berkley recalls that this was to be achieved through "LINC's oversight of federal and state social service monies that were being spent in Kansas City." LINC's activities now extend far beyond social services. LINC uses the resources of the Kansas City business community to expand employment opportunities and promote economic self-sufficiency for low-income residents. Tapping into funds from Missouri's Caring Communities initiative and other sources, LINC and its many community partners are helping to create comprehensive neighborhood supports. LINC is involved in health care, housing, and economic development—all because Commissioners see these as critical resources for creating a community where families can thrive.

LINC's relationship with state government has been important to its mission and operations. For much of LINC's life, Missouri state government has been engaged in a reform process, aimed at engaging communities in the human services that have traditionally been provided by state agencies. For state leaders, LINC was the prototype of a "community partnership"—a local decision making body that could gradually assume greater responsibility for public sector activities and dollars. Over time, LINC's influence on the administration of state-funded programs in Kansas City has increased. For example, LINC's role in welfare reform has illustrated for other Missouri communities how a traditional "state" program can be redesigned and carried out by a local/state, public/private partnership.

Underlying LINC's diverse activities is the Commissioners' adherence to a set of principles that guide their approach to local leadership and local governance. The principles reflect a determination to respect all segments of the community, reduce the complexity of government, constantly question whether existing resources can be better used, and make services and supports more accessible and responsive to families. LINC is also committed to continually judging its success by whether its endeavors make a difference for children and families.

LINC's leadership roles vary according to circumstances. For example, LINC does not always seek to be "out front" in its work. LINC Commissioners and staff often try to avoid prominent positioning, knowing that they can be more effective by acting in partnership with and giving credit to the people and organizations that have been working to improve child and family well-being for years. A guiding principle for LINC is to seek situations where its presence can "add value" and its way of doing business can make a difference.

LINC's citizen leadership, accomplishments, and work style have earned it a high level of credibility in the Kansas City region and among state agencies. Increasingly, LINC's role is recognized not only by the business and corporate sector, where it was always viewed positively, but among public agencies and neighborhood leaders as well. LINC's challenge

now is to *use* this credibility in the most effective ways. Given the trust, experience, and authority that LINC has built up, how can it accelerate, expand, and deepen its community agenda, so that its impact on children, youth, and families is even greater?

This report describes LINC's development, accomplishments, and potential challenges. It offers a snapshot of LINC's activities that may be useful to other jurisdictions exploring governance partnerships. The report is based on interviews with LINC Commissioners, staff, and partners as well as a review of written materials provided by LINC.

The report is organized as follows:

- # Section I reviews LINC's mission, purpose, and structure.
- # Sections II, III, and IV illustrate LINC's approach to governance by examining three major areas of work. Section II describes LINC's approach to Comprehensive Neighborhood Services—one of LINC's overarching goals. Sections III and IV describe LINC's efforts to improve publicly funded services, through its welfare reform activities and its work with the Jackson County Office of the Missouri Department of Social Services.
- # Section V reviews a recent development: LINC's activities to expand its funding base. LINC's development of a new stable funding stream creates new possibilities for advancing a community agenda.
- # Section VI describes LINC's emerging efforts to ensure more effective communication strategies and data availability among partners.
- # In the conclusion, we look to LINC's future. What challenges lie ahead? What are the major opportunities and pitfalls that LINC could face in the future?

# II

## LINC'S PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

*“A citizen’s charter works when it substitutes individual responsibility for the implementation of a bureaucratic rule-book. LINC’S task is to guarantee that these objectives are realized: to make more with what we’ve got; to ensure that all who participate in this process become guarantors of its fairness, its independence, its faithfulness to those constitutional rights now worldwide in their appeal, and the liberation of communities at risk.”*

Landon Rowland  
Current Chairperson  
Local INvestment  
Commission

### A. Purpose

LINC’s purpose is to create a “*caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families, and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.*”<sup>1</sup>

LINC didn’t start out with such a broad mission. Its original goal was to strengthen the operations of the local (Jackson County) office of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS). In 1991, the Department was being criticized publicly for its ineffectiveness and was under court order to improve social service operations. Gary Stangler, the Director of the State Department, had organized a Business Roundtable of nine individuals from across the state to help improve the department’s operations statewide. Local business leaders were receptive, believing they could bring their expertise to bear in improving DSS’ management, organization, and responsiveness to community priorities.

An influential member of the Business Roundtable was Bert Berkley, a native son of Kansas City and Chairman of Tension Envelope Company, a national corporation headquartered in Kansas City.

Having heard that Mr. Berkley had been critical of the Department’s operation, Mr. Stangler called Mr. Berkley and said, “I understand you don’t like the way the Department operates.” Mr. Berkley acknowledged this, to which Mr. Stangler followed-up, “Well, what do you want to do about it?” At first, Mr. Berkley responded, “I don’t know.” He recalls that he had been frustrated because some service officials in the state capital were making decisions affecting Kansas City with precious little knowledge about the impact of those decisions. Moreover, Mr. Berkley thought agency priorities were skewed as well. Trained social workers in Kansas

City were sitting behind desks deciding whether or not people qualified for assistance, rather than being out with clients where they could do the most good.

Subsequently, in a conversation with SuEllen Fried, a former National Chairperson of the Coalition for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Berkley learned that a small Kansas town was considering how citizens could influence the funds available to prevent child abuse. Upon hearing this, he said, “SuEllen, you may have just opened the doors.” Intrigued with the notion of citizen oversight of governmental operations, Mr. Berkley outlined a plan for creating a commission made up of only citizens. Defying skeptics, who doubted whether a citizen-led body could muster the expertise to advise the Department, Mr. Berkley was steadfast. His reasoning went like this:

“After thinking about it for several weeks, I called up Gary Stangler and asked him to come see me the next time he was in Kansas City. ‘I’ve got an outline of a Commission that I want to run by you,’ I told him. The program was as follows.

First it would be a citizen organization with only lay people on it: no professionals, no politicians. My reason for not including politicians on the Commission was based upon my experience with politics. The responsibility of a good politician is rewarding his constituency. If people on the Commission were thinking small and only for their narrow constituency, we would become divisive rather than productive.

Second, there would be no agency or government people on the Commission but there would be a professional cabinet because we lay people know a lot less about specific problems than those who are in the business. The professional cabinet would sit in on every meeting—and they have done so ever since we started—but they would have a voice, not a vote. It is the *voice* that is important in this instance, not the *vote*, and they would have a strong voice. My logic was simple. If you put somebody on the Commission representing an agency, and his or her organization got an extra 15 cents, every other agency in Kansas City would kill LINC.

Third, if we were going to be responsible for solving problems in Kansas City, and if we were going to get busy business and community people to serve on the Commission and committees, we would have to make decisions about how the money was spent. The Commission would have to have decision making authority over resources.

To Gary Stangler's everlasting credit, after hearing the plan, he said, 'Okay, let's try it.'

Mr. Stangler's willingness to place citizens in a position to influence DSS' operations and policies, including giving them a role in deciding how federal and state monies would be spent, has been praised as visionary. At the time, however, he saw the move as the *only* option. "I don't see any alternative," he said. "We have to do something different, offer different types of services, and get our communities to share responsibility for child and family well-being."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stangler believed a citizen-driven board would offer an exciting opportunity to garner greater local involvement in public agency operations, and he was eager to set this process in motion.

The more that LINC Commissioners learned about DSS and its problems, the more they recognized that no one public agency could address all the causes of "rotten outcomes" for disadvantaged children and families. If LINC's contribution was to be more than rhetorical, the Commissioners needed to mobilize resources on a much wider scale than in the past. Within a year, LINC's purpose shifted from focusing on one public agency to achieving a more comprehensive vision. The redefinition grew stronger as each of LINC's committees

began coming up with the same conclusions: in order to improve the Department's and the community's results, they needed to have a broader focus, one that looked at economic development, housing, education, training, and many other areas.

***"[LINC] has created a tremendous umbrella for bringing people together. There're a lot of people who are serving as citizen benefactors to this community, who are involving themselves in grassroots activity. This is a whole new perspective that often times gets lost in discussions in board rooms. LINC seems to be able to connect the grassroots and the board room."***

Colleen Low  
Mayor's Office of  
Neighborhood and Community  
Services  
Kansas City, Missouri

This broad purpose remains. Today, LINC sees its role as "...(*providing*) leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City community in creating the best system to support and strengthen children, families, and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes toward the system."<sup>3</sup> The key here is the word "influence." LINC Commissioners say their mission is to advise and persuade public and private agencies in the pursuit of improved outcomes for families and children. For example, they make recommendations to the local DSS agency, they encourage businesses to develop new jobs or relocate a job site, and they help neighborhood councils develop and fund local strategies. Occasionally, they administer a program, such as the wage supplementation component of Jackson County's welfare-reform program. But their primary role is as a convener, advisor, and problem solver.

LINC's vision extends beyond merely providing services to promoting far-reaching changes in service systems. And the "system" envisioned by LINC extends beyond formal public services. LINC works to cultivate neighborhood assets and resources, including informal supports and the resources available through community organizations and service providers. LINC's definition of family support also encompasses economic opportunities, housing, health and mental health, and education.

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*The role of staff for LINC is completely different than a traditional executive director's role. I work for over 500 citizens. They are my bosses.*

*I learned early on that if LINC was going to be a successful, neutral convening body, it would have to create an open process for everyone, a process that allowed every citizen from the most elite to the traditionally voiceless to have a place at the decision-making table. In this instance, no table is ever big enough for us. It is my job to keep the LINC process open and welcoming to everyone. Today I work for over 500 volunteers but when you work for LINC, by definition that number can never be too big.*

*We want everyone involved. We don't point fingers, we don't cast blame, just as we don't promote or publicize our efforts. Our aim is to improve results, to make things work better in Kansas City and we will work with whomever we need to to make that happen.*

Gayle Hobbs  
Executive Director  
LINC

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## **B. Structure and Organization**

The Commission and its subcommittees translate LINC's mission and vision into action. They are responsible for determining LINC's short-term and longer-range action plans. Organizationally, LINC started out in 1992 as a group of citizen volunteers, appointed by a state official to help guide a public agency's operations, not as an incorporated organization. In 1994, when LINC needed legal authority to receive private foundation funds, it created a separate nonprofit corporation (a 501(C)(3) organization) called "Greater K.C. LINC, Inc." This nonprofit arm receives and spends 91 percent of LINC's total budget. [A fuller description of LINC's structure and organization is provided in Appendix A.]

The Commission is the overall decision making body, comprised of 36 citizens appointed by the Director of the

Department of Social Services. Commission members are drawn from many parts of the community, with substantial representation from the business community and neighborhood organizations. Business leadership has been particularly important to LINC. The Commission has attracted many of the Kansas City region's most influential corporate leaders, including the owners and chief executive officers of several area corporations such as Kansas City Southern Industries, Tension Envelope Corporation, American Beverage Container Corporation, and a local real estate firm. Other business members of the Commission include a Managing Partner at McDonald's Corporation and a senior manager at the accounting firm,

Deloitte & Touche. These representatives of Kansas City's business elite are joined at the table with former AFDC recipients, a former state legislator, neighborhood advocates, and civic leaders. LINC Commissioners represent themselves, not their organizations. They serve solely as a group of citizens who have accepted an enormous responsibility for taking a broad view of their community's strengths and needs and setting an agenda to improve it wherever they can.

The Commission's day-to-day work is carried out by committees supported by a team of staff. LINC has three standing committees to address issues of Finance and Operations, Data and Evaluation, and Communications and Advocacy. Program and strategy development—the nuts and bolts of LINC's community agenda—are the responsibility of ad hoc committees that have been formed as needed to address local priorities. Currently, LINC has seven of these committees.

- # The **Health Care** committee reviews the delivery of primary care services to disadvantaged families and children and looks for opportunities to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of care. The committee's work focuses primarily on improving school health standards, CHIPS<sup>4</sup>, and MC Plus<sup>5</sup>.
- # The **Quality Services** committee works to improve the skills, capacity, and resources available to the Jackson County Division of Family Services (the local office of the state child welfare agency), a subdivision of the Department of Social Services. For example, one priority for this committee has been to improve the recruitment and retention of foster care and adoptive homes in the county.
- # The **Aging Committee** works cooperatively with the Division of Aging to focus on helping neighborhood sites to be aware of and respond to senior citizens' needs, including the creation of adult day care, organizing Elderly Volunteering with the Elderly (EVE) and working with the Department of Mental Health to provide services to the frail and elderly.
- # The **LINCWorks Council** guides LINC's welfare-to-work activities. Because self-sufficiency is central to LINC's vision and mission, this committee has been one of the most active and its work is described more fully in Section III.
- # The **Neighborhood Involvement** committee coordinates LINC's activities to engage neighborhood residents and leaders. The committee promotes strong and ongoing two-way communication between the LINC Commission and neighborhoods.

- # A new committee recently added by the Commission is the **Education Committee**. The Education Committee will focus its initial efforts on working with the Caring Communities sites to increase student achievement. Adult education, training, and literacy will also be on this committee's agenda, especially as they relate to the objective of employment for all able adults.

Each committee is chaired by a member of the Commission, and includes members of the Professional Cabinet. Committees include citizens and professionals who are not Commission members but who are among the hundreds of community volunteers involved in LINC. The Commission periodically reviews the committees' progress and ensures that they are addressing the most relevant community issues. As necessary, LINC establishes additional working groups to address issues that do not fit neatly into the existing committees' purview.

Staffing for the Commission, the committees, and LINC's neighborhood initiatives, is provided by an Executive Director and staff who now total 35 full or part-time people<sup>6</sup>. The Missouri Department of Social Services contributes eight of these staff positions. Other positions are funded by public and private monies awarded to LINC for general or particular purposes.

In addition, LINC has a policy of hiring staff and placing them with other partners to build community capacity, address a need, or establish greater linkages. For example, the Chamber of Commerce and the Income Maintenance Division both receive staff from LINC for such purposes. LINC Commissioners add that they see this strategy as a way of incubating LINC principles into the region.

LINC would not be able to function without continuous communication among the various participants. The Commission meets once a month, and many people attend besides Commissioners. When a committee is presenting its work to the full Commission, committee members often participate in the discussion. Committees themselves meet according to the dictates of their agenda, but rarely less than monthly; some meet several times a month. Staff members are responsible for ensuring that information flows between committees freely and frequently. A weekly bulletin informs all participants and partners of LINC's main activities and upcoming events. About 7,000 people receive the bulletin each week. By keeping channels of communication open, Commissioners and staff strive to keep LINC's separate activities moving harmoniously toward a common agenda.

### C. Relationship to State Reforms

LINC's evolution coincided with new efforts by Missouri state government to improve results for children, youth, and families. The timing of the two initiatives was not coincidence. Both LINC and the state reforms result in large measure from the leadership of Gary Stangler in his role as Director of the State Department of Social Services. In many ways, the two efforts have worked hand in hand. Missouri's statewide community partnerships<sup>7</sup>, for example, are based in part on the experience gained through LINC. Similarly, LINC's Comprehensive Neighborhood Services initiative and its welfare-to-work strategies have been greatly accelerated by the funding and other resources provided by state agencies.

*The relationship between state government and LINC is one of partnership to get the job done. We're not their bosses in any sense. We're co-conspirators to put in place more effective and more accountable strategies for children and families. The State creates incentives, opportunities a set of outcomes, and a few parameters with which LINC works. The rest is, and should be, local initiative and local creativity.*

Gary Stangler

The way LINC has evolved along with state agency changes has been particularly important in two areas. First, both LINC and the state reforms have adopted an outcomes focus. To oversee the movement toward more local decision making and neighborhood-based services linked to schools, the State established the Family Investment Trust, a public-private oversight board with representation from several state agencies. The Family Investment Trust established six "core

results" for use statewide in local program planning and evaluation. LINC staff members and other local representatives helped the Family Investment Trust develop these core results, and LINC now incorporates them in its own set of desired outcomes.

LINC's and the State's strategy are also closely related in terms of defining roles for community partnerships. For several years, LINC was one of only two or three collaborative entities in Missouri that could conceivably be seen as governance bodies. Since the other entities were in smaller, rural areas, the State often turned to LINC when it had questions about how local decision making could work. While LINC leaders and state officials recognized that each of Missouri's community partnerships would be unique and should be tailored to local conditions, state officials drew on their knowledge of LINC to define statewide parameters for community partnerships.

LINC's progress has been particularly substantial in three major areas: (1) implementing Comprehensive Neighborhood Services; (2) promoting strategies to move people from welfare to work; and (3) helping to improve the Jackson County Division of Family Services. Although LINC is involved in other activities—such as a child care development program

called Educare—this case study focuses on the three areas listed above because they best illustrate LINC’s innovative way of solving community problems and bringing new resources and new approaches to longstanding community priorities. The next three chapters examine each of these initiatives in greater detail.



# LINC’S MAIN FOCUS: COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

*“There is a push to make all city services a part of the neighborhood. The new Fire Chief wants to make fire stations part of neighborhoods, which seems appropriate given that in this town neighborhoods are so strong. For many years the schools were yanked out, psychologically, as part of the neighborhood because children were bused all over the place. Now they are going to recreate the neighborhood school. The more of these anchor points you can get in a community, the stronger it’s going to be.”*

Colleen Low  
Mayor’s Office of  
Neighborhood and  
Community Services  
Kansas City, Missouri

## A. What Does LINC Mean by Comprehensive Neighborhood Services?

Comprehensive Neighborhood Services (CNS) are the end product of what LINC is attempting to achieve through all of its endeavors. LINC Commissioners and staff members see CNS as simultaneously a broad goal, a philosophy of decision making, a strategy for service delivery, and a culture of leadership development and support.

LINC commissioners believe that the futures of neighborhoods and of families are inextricably interwoven. Neighborhoods cannot thrive without strong families. Families cannot thrive without safe, economically viable, and family-supportive neighborhoods. LINC’s goal, therefore, is to strengthen Kansas City neighborhoods. Whenever new state or local initiatives are suggested, LINC asks: How does this affect neighborhoods in the Kansas City area? Does this initiative give parents in neighborhoods the support they need to raise their children?

CNS is intended to be a philosophy which holds that neighborhood residents should shape the decisions that affect their lives. Through CNS, LINC seeks to create a community culture which organizes the residents of a neighborhood, empowers them with information, and authorizes them to use assets and

resources so that they may help themselves. LINC is committed to having extensive input from neighborhood residents on critical decisions affecting human service dollars, staff, and program strategy.

**Launching an Early Childhood Center**

**As a part of its CNS strategy, the Bryant Site Council in Independence, Missouri, opened an early childhood center to serve twenty 3 and 4 year olds. The Council wanted to address the core result of ensuring that all children are prepared for school, and they chose this strategy as a beginning step after canvassing residents and finding strong support for the idea. Council members first obtained permission from the Independence School District to develop the program; they then convinced the District to give them space in a vacant house next door to a school that the District had recently purchased. (Council members argued that they needed a facility close to the school, and the School District agreed not only to provide the site, but to renovate it.) LINC helped the Council negotiate local zoning regulations and raise the needed revenue from the State and federal governments. The School District agreed to allocate Title I funding to support the effort and provided some start-up funds. The State Departments of Social Services and Elementary and Secondary Education each contributed funds and the center opened in 1998. Throughout this process, LINC's role was to help the Council find the connections and linkages they needed to obtain the required resources.**

CNS is also a strategy for service organization and delivery. LINC Commissioners believe that services are most effective when they are planned and carried out at the neighborhood. Service providers should be “in and of” neighborhoods whenever possible. Formal services should draw on the resources of friends, family, and informal organizations. In reshaping public and private human services in this way, CNS advocates for systems change in the mainline public agencies.

Finally, CNS is intended to be a leadership development strategy. Through CNS, neighborhood leaders encounter new opportunities for professional and personal growth. LINC Commissioners hope that, through CNS, neighborhood residents and leaders can develop their skills, influence the world around them, and join in networks of people and activities that have an impact on the entire Kansas City community. CNS opens up opportunities for residents to discover, strengthen, and exert their leadership on a broader scale.

To understand how CNS works “on the ground,” it is useful to look more closely at the neighborhoods involved, the programs generated by the approach, and the results to date.

**B. Neighborhoods that are the Focus of LINC's Activities**

LINC concentrates its efforts in 16 Comprehensive Neighborhood Services sites, which together include approximately 28 neighborhoods. The sites are centered around schools, because LINC (and the Family

Investment Trust at the state level) has adopted an approach that views schools as the hubs of neighborhood service activity. LINC plans to increase the number of CNS neighborhood sites and may actually expand the number of CNS sites in 1999 from 16 to 26 sites.

Nine of the sites are located in the Kansas City School District and eight are within the city limits (Bancroft Elementary, Blenheim Elementary, J.S. Chick Elementary, James Elementary, Ladd Elementary, McCoy Elementary, Woodland Elementary, and Central High School). Van Horn High School is also in the Kansas City School District although it is located in the city of Independence. Two sites are located in Fort Osage School District (Cler-Mont Elementary and Buckner Elementary). Four are located in the Independence School District (Bryant Elementary, Procter Elementary, Randall Elementary, and Santa Fe Elementary). One site is located in the Hickman Mills School District (this school is also named Sante Fe Elementary).

Generally, the neighborhoods surrounding these schools are among the poorest in the Kansas City region. They were selected on the basis not only of need, but evidence of parent involvement and community commitment to collaborative decision making. Although LINC and Missouri's state agencies initially struggled over which sites would be selected to participate, a compromise was worked out that satisfied both local leaders and state officials. (State agencies were involved in site selection because the funding for school-linked services came through the State's Caring Communities program.) The Kansas City neighborhoods selected are predominantly African American, and several have substantial Hispanic populations. In the neighborhoods outside of Kansas City, the population is predominantly Caucasian. Most of these neighborhoods share common challenges, such as high crime, joblessness, drug problems, and poverty.

### **C. Neighborhood Planning and Program Strategies**

Each of the 16 neighborhood sites has carried out a planning process in which neighborhood residents agree on the desired results they want to achieve and the strategies that they believe will achieve those results. Sites start by choosing their desired results from the set of six core results established by state agencies and the Family Investment Trust and adopted by LINC as well: (1) parents working; (2) children safe in their families and families safe in their communities; (3) children prepared to enter school; (4) children and families that are healthy; (5) children and youth succeeding in school; and (6) youth ready to enter the workforce and become productive citizens. Each neighborhood site can choose to work on one or more of these results, but all of their intervention strategies must relate to at least one. By design, site planning emphasizes not just formal human services, but also strategies aimed at engaging neighborhood residents in the challenge of improving child and family well-being.

***Examples of Resident Involvement***

***The Comprehensive Neighborhood Services sites promote resident involvement through extensive use of volunteers, as well as by helping residents to perform a service for pay. For example:***

**➡ *At Bryant Elementary School, a retired dentist who sits on the neighborhood council agreed to organize a dental program for students and their families using other retired dentists. A clinic was set up at the school, and hours were advertised for free dental services.***

**➡ *At Woodland Elementary School, the neighborhood council hired a parent to knock on doors to let neighbors know about the availability of free health and dental services at the school when few people initially signed up. In two months, the enrollment went from 150 families to 350.***

**➡ *At McCoy Elementary School, the neighborhood council hired a woman on the council to be a recreational leader for the summer enrichment program. She was so resourceful that the next year she took the lead in planning the summer program for the council.***

In promoting neighborhood planning and service delivery, LINC has used funding made available by the state through its Caring Communities initiative. It is important to understand how LINC approaches Caring Communities, since this example typifies how LINC approaches state resources generally.

Caring Communities is a statewide initiative, administered collaboratively by the seven state agencies on the Family Investment Trust Board. Caring Communities, as defined by the State, involves provision of school and community-based services to achieve the core results. State agencies provide Caring Communities funds to the local “community partnerships.” The partnerships then provide funding to selected schools and neighborhoods, as LINC has done in its 16 sites.

In some parts of Missouri, Caring Communities is the entire neighborhood service agenda. LINC, however, envisions an even broader neighborhood development approach. To LINC, Caring Communities funds are just an important financing stream to help achieve the more comprehensive goal of CNS. This distinction is important. If LINC’s neighborhood-based activities depended only on Caring Communities funds, there would be a danger, according to LINC Commissioners, that their efforts would become “just one more state-funded program.” Emphasis would be on what could be paid for with state money, rather than on what the neighborhood really needed. What would be lost, according to Commissioners and LINC staff, would be LINC’s broader aim to promote neighborhood-based decision making and leadership. Thus, while LINC Commissioners and staff greatly appreciate Caring Communities dollars, they are careful always to define Caring

**One Community's Priorities**

**Central High School's School Neighborhood Advisory Committee chose to focus its work on six outcomes: improved school attendance/performance; decreased violence in the school and the community; decreased drug usage and sale in the community; greater summer recreation opportunities for disadvantaged youth; increased employment of youth and young adults; and a lower incidence of teenage pregnancy. To accomplish these goals, the committee developed and/or helped fund the following interventions: keeping the school open from 6:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. with staff on hand to run programs and provide services for youth and families in the community; a school-based health clinic for students; alternative out-of-school suspension program; a program for teenage mothers; a job development and training program; an after-school sports program; after-school tutorial services; evening parks and recreation program; a summer enrichment program; GED classes; and evening adult education classes. The School Neighborhood Advisory Committee meets regularly to monitor these activities and makes adjustments as necessary to reflect changes in the neighborhood's needs each year.**

Communities as a *funding source* that contributes to their Comprehensive Neighborhood Services goals.

CNS activities in each neighborhood are coordinated by a site council. Strictly speaking, site councils are advisory to LINC, but they play a decisive role in choosing CNS priorities in each neighborhood and in spending Caring Communities funds. Site councils complete a planning process that results in an action plan for service delivery. The plan also recommends the agencies or individuals with whom LINC should contract for services in that neighborhood.

LINC helps site councils to develop effective plans by providing neighborhood leaders with tools and resources.

Tools provided by LINC include:

- # Data books that are developed for each neighborhood and include census tract information, useful programmatic data, school-based data (such as proximity of schools to students), etc.;
- # A CNS website that allows sites to share information and resources, and be connected to the "community technology forum" which links community data from 60 sources and is organized by zip code;

- # Case management software so that data are compiled routinely across sites and are comparable;
- # Training for site council members and staff, as well as neighborhood residents, in computer skills and the use of the Internet. Training is also provided to residents on results-based planning, how to use data to make decisions, and leadership development.
- # Results from resident surveys which help the councils set neighborhood priorities and improve neighborhood services.

LINC's responsibility is to ensure that site plans fall within the broad parameters established for all neighborhood sites, and to work with each site to obtain the revenues needed to implement their plan. LINC encourages each site to first explore neighborhood resources, both formal and informal, that might be used to help support their programmatic interests, and only then to look for outside assistance. While Caring Communities funds are made available to LINC by the State on a per child basis, LINC also weighs other factors when it distributes monies to neighborhoods. For example, LINC may consider the availability of other community resources and the need for and merits of the planned intervention.

LINC's funding of the 16 CNS sites does not stop with the allocation of state Caring Communities dollars. Because the sites' needs are far greater than the amounts that Caring Communities funding can support, LINC works with the neighborhood site to raise additional funds and in-kind resources to support site plans. These include other state and local, public and private contributions, most of which are in-kind resources that remain in other agencies' budgets but help the neighborhood achieve its goals. LINC reports that the state Caring Communities dollars are only half of the total resources spent on behalf of the CNS agenda.

LINC selects the site coordinators for neighborhoods, with input from the site council and the school principal. (In a few cases, the coordinators receive their paychecks from the school districts for which LINC provides the funds.) Site Coordinators are located at each of the school-based CNS sites. In all cases, the expectations for site coordinators are the same. LINC continues to participate in site coordinators selections for several reasons. The site councils are not incorporated entities, and thus cannot hire staff. LINC believes that it is better to have the site coordinators report to LINC rather than to any one agency or institution in the neighborhood (for example, the school). The CNS strategy is intended to cut across agency and public/private sector boundaries. LINC commissioners believe that this is more easily accomplished when site coordinators are not "owned" by any one community agency.

#### **D. Results of Comprehensive Neighborhood Services**

Although not enough data are available yet to measure the impact of LINC's CNS activities, commissioners, staff, and other community leaders point out three types of interim results.

*First, LINC Commissioners and staff believe that CNS has expanded and strengthened neighborhood leadership and participation, engaging a greater number and variety of people in the challenge of improving results for children, youth, and families.* LINC staff believe that many people who would not be interested in a region-wide agenda are willing to contribute their time and energy when the focus is on *their* school, the safety of *their* neighborhood, and the interactions with *their* neighbors.

The roles neighborhood residents play are diverse. Some neighborhood plans call for volunteer efforts, such as tutoring or mentoring children. Other residents are more interested in serving on the site councils. Often, one type of involvement leads to others.

In one Kansas City neighborhood, Lee Bohannon, a grandfather who attended a "donuts for dads" gathering with his grandson at Blenheim Elementary School, helped instigate a full-scale volunteer group called "Men on the Move." Mr. Bohannon, who owned a small construction company, was moved by the attendance of 70 other fathers and grandfathers at the school function. As the men talked with one another, they realized that many of them had been inspired by the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. and its message of commitment to family and community. They decided to organize themselves into a volunteer group to support the school and neighborhood. Men on the Move was born.

These men (and some women) started simply, by volunteering to serve as school monitors. Teachers reported a dramatic improvement in student behavior when the volunteer fathers were on the school grounds. Monitoring activities progressed to other services like counseling, and eventually LINC provided resources so that Men on the Move participants could be trained as tutors in math and reading. The men attended neighborhood organization meetings and asked to speak at neighborhood churches to get others involved. When the neighborhood site council was started at Blenheim Elementary, the men were active participants along with other parents, business representatives, and neighborhood service providers. In the course of this activity, Mr. Bohannon became a visible leader for resident involvement in neighborhood development. Today, having given up his construction company, Mr. Bohannon works as one of LINC's three Neighborhood Services Coordinators, providing technical assistance and support to all CNS sites.

Through CNS, neighborhood residents are influencing the expenditure of public human service dollars. In the past, decisions about spending Caring Communities dollars would have been made by school district officials or even by state agencies. Today, the neighborhood site

councils have almost full discretion over these funds. In addition, LINC estimates that, for each neighborhood, over \$1 million of in-kind services are generated over and above the Caring Communities dollars allocated to that neighborhood. Neighborhood residents are guiding how this total pool of these resources is used.

***A second byproduct of CNS has been an expanded array of services and supports that were not previously available to families.*** Figure 1 illustrates the types of services provided by some of the 16 CNS sites, and it also indicates the core result(s) each is intended to address. Even though the impact of new services cannot yet be fully measured, the presence of more resources, based on neighborhood priorities, is viewed by the Commission as a significant accomplishment.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Examples of Service Strategies in CNS Sites**

CNS Site	Core Result	Service Strategy
Procter Elementary Santa Fe Trail Elem. Woodland Elem. Randall Elem.	Children and Youth Succeeding in School	An extended school day is offered to students who are behind in school, with tutoring provided by teachers who are working overtime, or by community tutors recruited for that purpose. Students participate in the study program after school, and transportation home is provided.
Bryant Elementary Central High School Randall Elementary Van Horn High School	Parents Working	A job fair is held in which local businesses disseminate job placement information and conduct initial interviews for parents and other community residents. Businesses also participate in a referral network with community agencies providing job training and employment services.
Procter Elementary Randall Elementary Santa Fe Elementary	Healthy Children and Families	A neighborhood health center is open at the school site one evening per week through a contract with a local health clinic. Primary care services are provided by a Nurse Practitioner with referrals to a physician when necessary.
Woodland Elementary	Youth Ready to Enter the Workforce and Become Productive Citizens	A “Shadow Box Self-Esteem” program is offered to children and youth in a series of after-school workshops that focus on self-exploration, cultural awareness, wellness and self-esteem. The program uses creative instructional techniques.

***Most importantly, CNS is beginning to help neighborhoods position themselves to be able to achieve the six core results for children and families.*** Through an evaluation being coordinated and funded by the Family Investment Trust, LINC will be able to track progress on indicators related to children’s health, safety, success in school, and the degree to which parents are working (i.e., the six core results). Although outcome data will not be available

**Examples of CNS Site Accomplishments**

***In January 1998, LINC surveyed each of the 16 Comprehensive Neighborhood Services sites and asked for their observations about “the difference that Caring Communities has made in their communities” as well as specific results that have been achieved. Evidence they cited includes:***

***➡ At Bancroft Elementary and McCoy Elementary, a Health Fair and outreach program resulted in 100% of students being immunized prior to the start of the 1997 school year. (Young Children Ready to Enter School.)***

***➡ At Central High School, of the 105 students who completed a dropout prevention program, 60% improved their school attendance and 50% showed a decrease in disciplinary actions. (Children and Youth Succeeding in School.)***

***➡ At Procter Elementary School the number of students scoring in the top two quintiles on standardized tests increased between 1994 and 1997 from 52% to 57% in reading an increase of 9.6%, from 57% to 64% in math an increase of 12.2%, from 56% to 86% in social studies and increase of 21.4%, and from 65% to 82% in science an increase of 26.1% (Children and Youth Succeeding in School.)***

until at least 1999, LINC recently developed an interim report that highlights what each of the neighborhood sites believes they have accomplished so far. In an overview, LINC

highlighted eight positive changes. Although these accomplishments are limited to input measures, they hold promise for eventually affecting the core results:

- (1) Far more parents and neighbors have been recruited to volunteer time as tutors, mentors, and activity leaders than ever took part in school activities before.
- (2) Parent involvement in children’s education has increased, as evidenced by parent/teacher conference attendance and participation in school events.
- (3) Children with special academic, social or family needs are receiving specialized attention through such programs as counseling, tutoring and remedial classes, and self-esteem building activities.
- (4) To deal with the challenges of working parents, 13 sites have created before- and after-school child-care programs, providing over 900 children each day with opportunities for learning, enrichment, and supervision during the crucial hours before and after school.
- (5) Seven sites have created school and neighborhood health care centers. In cooperation with area health care organizations, these facilities offer children, parents, and neighbors immediate access to primary health care

and screening. They have increased the number of school based health centers from 2 to 11.

***The Commission sees the strategy of building Comprehensive Neighborhood Services as the route to a more effective system of supports and services for children and families. But, really, it's even more than that. It's the way to begin to rebuild neighborhoods and communities. The process of neighborhood decision making is just as important as the services produced by CNS, since the process reveals untapped potential of neighborhood residents. We know the capacity is out there; it's already in the neighborhoods. Our work is about creating opportunities so that neighborhoods can build stronger systems with formal and informal supports placed together in ways that will work best for them."***

*Tim Decker, LINC staff*

- (6) Site Councils and on-site staff have leveraged Caring Communities funding by attracting the participation of other community agencies and securing donations of dollars and materials from local businesses. LINC projects that they are now generating a dollar for dollar leverage for neighborhood services with Caring Community funding.<sup>8</sup>
- (7) The CNS sites have created 12 safe haven sites for children and youth, and served over 1,800 children.

In summary, LINC views Comprehensive Neighborhood Services as the primary vehicle for achieving its core mission. Formal and information services are expected to be woven together at the neighborhood level. Residents are encouraged to make their own decisions about family services and supports in the neighborhood, and some take part in LINC's broader decision making process that touches the wider Kansas City community. Thus, through CNS, LINC is working to build simultaneously a new neighborhood decisionmaking structure, a service delivery strategy, and a leadership development movement, all at the neighborhood level.

# IV

## LINC'S COMMITMENT TO WELFARE REFORM

***“Almost every success of public sector management reform results from increases in decentralization, pluralism and contestability, handing down responsibility, allowing new ways of doing things, opening up activities that were previously public-sector monopolies.”***

Foster and Plowden  
The State Under Stress

One of LINC's earliest commitments was to improve the employment opportunities available to disadvantaged citizens. Even before the U.S. Congress enacted its federal welfare reform legislation in 1996, LINC set out to create better choices and opportunities for those on welfare and better supports and assistance for those who hire them. Commissioners believed that many of the problems in the urban core existed because employment opportunities no longer existed for the least resourceful members of the Kansas City community. LINC's members subscribe to the notion most succinctly stated by an eminent sociologist, William Julius Wilson: “What explains the catastrophic descent of America's ghettos into ever-deeper poverty and misery? The disappearance of jobs. What's the remedy? Work!”<sup>9</sup>

From early on, LINC's Commissioners sought to rectify what they viewed as an economic disincentive within the current welfare system which, they believed, discouraged work rather than promoted it. They described the problem they were trying to address as follows:

“One of the major failures of the current welfare system is if the parent in the home does take steps to enter the job market and gain even a minimum wage job, he or she loses not only the family's cash grant and food stamp benefits, but also the health insurance provided by Medicaid and child care benefits.”<sup>10</sup>

LINC wanted to build in work incentives and erase the disincentives they saw.

LINC was well positioned to tackle welfare reform, because the Commission combined leadership from the corporate sector and from neighborhoods and had direct access to powerful public human service officials. LINC's corporate leaders mobilized the business community to open up job opportunities. LINC's neighborhood leaders insisted on a commitment to job opportunities that paid a living wage and that promoted skill development. And, LINC's public welfare supporters—notably Gary Stangler and his staff (Missouri Department of Social Services)—opened the doors to public funding and to changing the welfare rules so that program innovation could flourish.

***Drawing on Corporate Resources***

***To make its welfare-to-work activities successful, LINC has done “whatever it takes” and has looked for opportunities whenever it could find them. For example, when President Clinton visited Kansas City in 1996 to acknowledge LINC’s and Jackson County’s success in moving individuals from welfare to work, the president of the Sprint Corporation—which is headquartered in Kansas City—volunteered to set up an ‘800’ number to allow any Kansas City resident or employer who wanted to get involved in the welfare-to-work effort to call and pledge his or her support. However, once the calls starting coming in, Sprint’s staff was not prepared to respond. Sprint contacted LINC, and a LINC staff person began working with Sprint staff, finding useful ways to connect people’s offers of support with meaningful ways to contribute. This connection helped to establish Sprint as a real partner in the welfare-to-work initiative and illustrates LINC’s behind-the-scenes approach to solving a problem.***

LINC’s work on work/welfare issues dates back to 1992, when Bert Berkley accompanied Gary Stangler to a meeting in Washington, D.C. where they discussed with HHS officials the idea of “cashing out” welfare benefits and using them as wage supplements. Mr. Berkley suggested that LINC test the idea. On the flight home, Mr. Stangler and Mr. Berkley met Emanuel Cleaver, the Mayor of Kansas City. Together, Mr. Stangler, Mr. Berkley, and Mr. Cleaver agreed that wage supplementation was an idea worth testing. Mr. Cleaver asked LINC to take the plan to the community first, and if there were no objections, agreed to support the waiver application. LINC proceeded to work with federal agencies (HHS and the Department of Agriculture) to obtain the necessary waivers. Mr. Berkley recalls that HHS’ approval was swift. However, it would take two years to obtain a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow cashing out of food stamp benefits to supplement wages. But in 1994, LINC became the administrator of a “grant diversion program.” Two separate waivers allowed the creation of a single wage incentive program aimed at creating jobs and moving welfare recipients into them.

Within several years, Kansas City’s work/welfare activities had shown significant progress. This fact, and a growing confidence and respect for LINC on the part of the local Department of Social Services, made LINC a logical place to lodge leadership for welfare reform in Jackson County when the new federal law took effect in 1997.

LINC’s welfare-to-work activities are coordinated by its LINCWorks Committee in collaboration with a number of important public and private sector partners. LINC Commissioners view their welfare-to-work activity as a true “community agenda,” dependent for its success on a widely-held community commitment to self-sufficiency. The effort involves five major activities:

***First, LINC and its partners work together to develop new jobs for welfare recipients in the Kansas City area.*** For the first time, four organizations—the Full Employment Council, the Division of Employment Security within the Missouri

Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, The Women's Employment Network,<sup>11</sup> and LINC—work together to develop new jobs. Coordinating in this way reduces duplicate contacts with the same employer, which means employers are more willing to respond and more employers can be contacted. LINC contends that this collaboration alone has opened up new job opportunities, paving the way for more job placements than was previously possible.

***Second, LINC continues to administer a “wage supplement” or “grant diversion” program,*** which converts recipients' cash benefits and food stamps into funds that are sent directly to an employer—who then uses them to supplement the hourly wage in a newly created job. Businesses can receive up to \$533 per month to supplement the wages for a welfare recipient who lives in designated zip code areas. The subsidy can continue for as long as four years. This supplement amounts to a subsidy of approximately \$3.07 per hour for an individual working a 40-hour week, which often raises the individual's income to a liveable wage. The employee continues to receive health insurance through Medicaid as well as child care assistance. LINC is considering turning over administration of the wage supplement program to another organization in the future so that LINC will have more time to convene, mediate, and serve as a forum for problem solving.

***Third, LINC, along with Income Maintenance/DSS, the Division of Employment Security within the State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, the Full Employment Council, and the Women's Employment Network opened two job centers*** in Kansas City neighborhoods with extended evening and weekend hours so they would be easily accessible for area residents. The job centers are dedicated to improving the employability and placement of people seeking jobs. They provide job training, job placement, and job development, as well as case management for job seekers.

***Fourth, LINC helped the Division of Income Maintenance in Jackson County make a number of changes directed at employing more welfare recipients.*** For example, LINC helped the Department change its employees' roles from *eligibility workers* to *employment specialists* by re-focusing workers to help place individuals in jobs immediately when they sign up for cash assistance and only placing them on assistance if a job is not readily available. LINC also helped alter the way recipients are identified as ready for work, with the goal of identifying people who are job ready. Supportive case management services are now offered to clients to help them keep the jobs in which they are initially placed, and transportation and child care issues are addressed up front in the job matching process rather than after the job is secured. For example, if a job requires too long a commute or the work hours are out of sync with the recipients' child care options, DSS would avoid that placement rather than setting up the employer and the employee for disappointment. LINC also helps the local DSS office train its staff, as described in more detail in Section IV.

***Fifth, LINC developed new performance-based contracts with local employment/training***

In served. LINC argued persuasively that it could produce better results when it negotiated contracts because LINC knew the providers and could work out the contracts contingent made only upon successful execution of performance milestones (for example, the retention job placements for at least 90 days). If an employee is trained and placed in a job, but does not If the employee stays in the job, the contractor gets 100 percent of the negotiated rate.

What have been the

February 1998, the number of welfare recipients in Jackson County fell from 11,791 to 8,460, decline of 3331 people or a 28 percent decrease in caseload. During the same period, LINC placed <sup>12</sup> Approximately percent of these people were placed in non-subsidized jobs, while 16 percent had their cash benefits and food stamps converted into time of placement was \$6.44 an hour.<sup>13</sup>

Because LINC is committed to helping recipients *keep*

puts a great deal of effort into job retention. In December of 1997, LINC reported that 61 of the people it had placed in jobs had been employed for more than three months, and <sup>14</sup> These figures include the wage jobs, which had much lower retention rates. For recipients placed through the

Typically, these people are considered to have more barriers to employment, which is why are offered an incentive to hire them. The low retention rate concerned the LINC commissioners, who are now considering combining community work experience with and training activities for many of these recipients who have little or no work experience regular basis, LINC is able to modify its strategies, something few governance partnerships

Table 1 shows that many more AFDC recipients had been placed in jobs and were still

As of August 1998, LINC reports that a total of 3,281 jobs had been filled, with an average starting wage of \$6.98 per hour. Of this total, 1,801 individuals were still working (as of August 1998) for a job retention rate of 73%.

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*Setting a Community Agenda*

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TABLE 1 Welfare Recipients Placed in Jobs in Jackson County and Still Working				
	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>Cumulatively As of 8/5/98</b>
Jobs Filled	525	946	1,168	3,281
Still Employed	179 (34%)	531 (56%)	735 (63%)	1,801 (73.17%)

Source: "An Overview of LINC's Welfare-to-Work Initiative," from LINC's website: <http://www.kclinc.org/initiatives/welfare>



## PARTNERING WITH THE JACKSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

***“I would describe LINC as a group of community volunteers who have come together to try to make a difference in what happens in the relationship between government agencies and the citizens of Jackson County.”***

Thomastine Nosiri  
Former Director  
Children’s Services  
Jackson County  
Office of the Missouri  
Division of Family  
Services

A second example of LINC’s willingness to tackle major system reform is its work to help improve the operations of the Jackson County office of the State’s Division of Family Services (JCDFS). Here again, LINC’s leadership skills have been important. LINC has helped the agency with several of its administrative and organizational tasks—e.g., helping to redesign the organizational structure and to advocate for new personnel policies. LINC’s neighborhood leaders helped the agency connect with neighborhood resources (for example, for foster and adoptive home recruitment) and worked with DSS to plan JCDFS office sites in neighborhoods where over 400 workers have been out-stationed. LINC’s ties to senior state officials have also helped JCDFS overcome bureaucratic resistance on occasion.

LINC’s relationship to JCDFS also illustrates the difficulties that can arise when a governance partnership tries to “help”-, i.e., “change”—a public agency. Both LINC and local JCDFS staff have had to learn how to work together, to understand each other’s perspectives, and to trust that they are indeed seeking the same results. The productive relationship that now exists took years to develop.

From early on, LINC had an intense interest in the local department because, at Gary Stangler’s invitation, LINC’s original mandate was to help the Department improve its operations. Over time, this relationship took three forms: (1) LINC helped JCDFS develop and implement a professional development program for frontline workers, senior managers, and supervisors; (2) LINC helped the Income Maintenance Unit within JCDFS redesign its organizational structure, train workers, and change the way Income Maintenance workers interact with families and the community; and (3) LINC helped JCDFS’ Children’s Services unit take corrective actions to implement a consent decree involving its child welfare services. Each of these roles is described below.

## **A. Professional Development**

A critical component of LINC's work is to focus on professional development in the Kansas City region. It is a cross-cutting strategy that affects many of LINC's initiatives. "It's really human development," explains LINC staff. "It is our attempt to provide people with the skills, knowledge, and abilities that they need to operate in a different way in this new environment." Professional development has been a consistent component of LINC, going back to its original focus on improving the operation of the Department of Social Services. The strategy for professional development has had three phases.

In the first two phases, professional development was geared to training management-level employees of the Jackson County Division of Family Services and providing professional training to front-line workers. In these phases, LINC worked closely with JCDFS managers to develop and coordinate a broad based, multi-phased professional development initiative that would give personnel at all levels of JCDFS the skills they felt they needed. This effort included both the Income Maintenance unit and the Family Services (Child Welfare) unit within JCDFS. In the first phase, LINC worked with senior managers who came together for the first time, across divisions, to establish department-wide expectations for worker skills, knowledge, and approaches to serving families. Prior to this effort, these division directors had rarely sat down together and had not had the opportunity to participate in joint professional development. Phase II focuses on direct service staff—workers and supervisors—and features a locally designed training plan to help workers be more responsive to local family needs. This assistance included LINC's hiring of a trainer on its payroll that was assigned full-time to DFS.

Currently, LINC is engaged in Phase III of their plan which focuses on what LINC staff members call community development: building the skills of the residents, school personnel, and service providers in each neighborhood to address the needs of the whole community. LINC staff describe it as follows: "In a sense, it is everything from developing the capacity of the site advisory councils to be effective governance entities, down to specific skills that will be needed by workers from various agencies like mental health, for example, to work with teachers. The aim is to prepare everyone to work together as a team."<sup>15</sup>

## **B. Reorganizing Services**

In 1997, the Missouri Department of Social Services asked each of its seven regions to develop local proposals for improving the operations and outcomes of the Income Maintenance (IM) units within the local Divisions of Family Services. Senior state managers were interested in obtaining local ideas for how Income Maintenance units could work better with local communities and improve the Department's image.

The proposals they requested were known as “culture change” proposals. When JCDFS-IM received this invitation, they turned to the LINCWorks Committee, where JCDFS managers had been having ongoing conversations with LINC Commissioners and staff about improving JCDFS operations. With this committee, they jointly developed a reorganization plan that not only called for internal reorganization, but also for new definition of worker responsibilities (so that one worker could address family needs comprehensively rather than requiring the family to visit several different workers). As requested by the State office, the plan transformed the unit’s focus from traditional income maintenance to finding jobs and developing self-sufficiency.

The proposal that finally emerged from LINCWorks and JCDFS’ joint efforts was so bold that it was initially turned down by state officials who argued that, if it were implemented, Kansas City’s operations would differ too greatly from those elsewhere in the state. When the proposal was turned down, the JCDFS Director asked LINC to intervene. Together, the LINC Executive Director and the JCDFS Director went to the state office, where they successfully argued their case. The reorganization plan was approved—something the local JCDFS managers feel would not have happened without LINC’s support. The Director of the JCDFS Income Maintenance unit, Peggy Torno, describes the experience as follows:

“I wouldn’t have gotten that design off the ground without LINC. There was considerable controversy with my office reorganization and LINC helped push that through. At first, my boss at the state said they didn’t want me to specialize the way I wanted because they didn’t think it would be compatible with our computer system—even though we told them we found a way around that. LINC basically advanced my case to the Director of the Department, Mr. Stangler, and others on his staff, and I was able to present the plan to them. They finally agreed, but it was because we got the backing of LINC to do what I needed to do.”<sup>16</sup>

Ms. Torno also credits LINC with helping JCDFS achieve a closer relationship with the community:

“We were used to operating within our four walls, so to speak; we didn’t mingle in the community that much. LINC has really brought together that community facilitation and involvement. If there’s one thing that I know for sure, it is that you cannot totally change the culture of your organization both internally and externally without the help of the community.”<sup>17</sup>

### **C. Addressing Corrective Actions under *G.L. v. Stangler***

The third area in which LINC and JCDFS are working together is in complying with an 18-year-old consent decree resulting from a class action lawsuit, *G.L. v Stangler*. The Quality

Services Committee is in charge of this work for LINC, which includes helping the Children's Services unit of JCDFS (1) eliminate a large backlog of children awaiting adoption, (2) revitalize the training unit to reduce staff turnover and increase the professionalism of staff, (3) strengthen resource development efforts to ensure the availability of needed services in the community, and (4) implement a comprehensive quality assurance system to improve management information.

LINC joined with the local Children's Services staff and a representative of the United Way to seek funds from private foundations as well as the state and federal government to implement the decree. A total of \$700,000 was raised for a two-year period. LINC serves as the Contract Administrator of this grant and helped form an oversight committee made up of a LINC Commissioner, representatives from the Kauffman Foundation, and a staff person from the United Way. The oversight committee assures that expenditures are in sync with a comprehensive reform plan and that all the activities have community input.

As part of this work, LINC's Quality Services Committee helped DFS staff make statistical projections about the number of children likely to enter the foster care system in the future. LINC felt this step was necessary for DSS strategic planning. According to the then-Director of Children's Services in Jackson County, Thomastine Nosiri:

“We can now project the numbers of foster children who are going to be coming into the system as a result of welfare reform. I don't know much about statistics and very little about computers, but LINC gave us a formula to help us do these projections. I now have an idea what kind of staffing patterns I'm going to need in the future. They've helped connect us to people who have the expertise to do these kinds of things, things we hadn't been able to do before.”<sup>18</sup>

LINC has also encouraged the Children's Services Unit to reorganize and has provided support in the Children's Services Unit's recent shift to a decentralized delivery system. DFS reorganized its staff in 1996 and 1997 to operate from geographic quadrants of the city and, further, to begin moving workers into school and neighborhood settings. Three community sites have been established with approximately 50 staff in each: one in downtown Kansas City, one in Independence, and one in southern Kansas City. In addition, 16 DFS workers are currently based in schools or community agencies. CNS staff find the DFS workers to be an enormous asset when they are located at a CNS site, and DFS workers report finding it helpful to use the range of services available at CNS sites. The workers who are located in the community sites are also intended to function differently. As they move closer to neighborhoods, they can be more familiar with neighborhood resources. They can also be more visible and less threatening to local residents, and they have more time and opportunities to help families who have not yet been the subject of a formal report of child abuse or neglect. Six additional neighborhood offices are planned.

Once the decision was made to outstation staff, LINC and DFS started working together closely to ensure that staff in the new organization would have the skills that they need for decentralized service delivery. DFS developed extensive training plans and reviewed them with a special LINC subcommittee. LINC then provided the funding for the training (approximately \$90,000 over two years) which LINC, the United Way and the JCDFS had jointly requested from the Kauffman Foundation (with LINC as the fiscal agent for the grant). In this way, LINC acts as a partner with a public agency to encourage and support new directions, but not to dictate or impose them.

The relations between LINC and JCDFS have not always been easy. In fact, they got off to a rocky start. LINC staff and JCDFS staff from both the Income Maintenance and Family Services units acknowledge that a real partnership emerged only over time, after LINC had proved it could generate resources and tools that JCDFS would not otherwise have had.

Initially, JCDFS staff complained that some LINC members “seemed to have opinions about what we should be doing and how we should be doing it, without really understanding who we were and what we were doing.” That posture has changed now. JCDFS staff report that LINC members and staff now take the posture that “we know you need help and *you* know what you need. Help us to understand how we can help.” In this spirit, LINC and JCDFS launched the “Walk in My Shoes”<sup>19</sup> campaign. LINC Commissioners and other members of the Quality Services Committee are paired with workers and spend a minimum of 16 hours in the field, making home visits, following-up, and doing paper work, among other activities. Aside from the invaluable perspective that many LINC Commissioners say that they gained from the experience, Commissioners came back from their walks determined to get caseworkers better resources—like cell phones—that they felt were crucial for safety and to help in emergencies. More importantly, it helped to change the relationship between LINC and DSS workers. As Thomastine Nosiri notes:

“We said, you need to come and see who we are and what we’re doing and why we do what we do. And then help us look at how we can improve it. And it made a huge difference. Now we are very comfortable saying: we’ve identified this area of concern and we think you might be able to help—what do you think? It’s comfortable now for people to question what we do. Now, they say; ‘Yeah, we know the bureaucracy is here and you have to do this and you have to do that. How can we help you manipulate your system to do what all of us agree is good for the people of Jackson County?’ You can see how it is so much easier to respond positively.”<sup>20</sup>

# VI

## CREATING A STABLE FUNDING BASE

A former state legislator who has been on the LINC Commission since its inception offered the following perspective about the early politics that shaped LINC’s fiscal environment:

“Well, you know, when we first started out, I was scared. Having served in the legislature, I thought we were going to have real problems. Here we were talking about maybe \$280 million eventually coming directly into Jackson County and into an organization that is outside the political system that was now going to have something to say about how this money is spent. Now, we *know* that money is power. People who control it have power. And since I knew very well that politicians want to control money, I thought for sure we were going to have problems. But we didn’t.” —*Herman Johnson, LINC Commissioner*<sup>21</sup>

Some of the LINC Commissioners understood from the outset that a citizen-driven governing body with the power to steer how monies are spent on children and families represented a radical departure from the status quo. LINC’s potential for controlling large sums of money could easily be threatening to decision makers. However, the turf battles that could have erupted haven’t, primarily because LINC Commissioners decided they did not want to directly administer all the human services funding in Kansas City. Instead, they wanted to *influence* how dollars are spent, thereby helping to improve a range of public and private services.

To understand LINC’s fiscal strategies, it is necessary to view the universe of funds that LINC directly controls and indirectly influences. Staff report that LINC either controls or influences a total of \$8.5 million in FY 1998. Of this amount, about two-thirds is made up of money that LINC directly receives and spends on operations and special projects. The other one-third is money that they *influence*, but do not directly administer. Another way of viewing this breakdown is to identify two types of budget categories that LINC affects: (1) the traditional budget of directly controlled funds that support basic operational, administrative expenses and special projects (\$5.9 million); and (2) an “influence budget”—a term coined<sup>22</sup> to describe funding that is available to LINC for their agenda but which is held in another organization’s budget (\$2.63 million). Each of these categories is described below.

### **The Traditional Operational Budget: \$5.9 million**

The 501(C)(3) nonprofit arm of LINC has revenue commitments and expenditure plans that total \$5.9 million in FY 1998. These funds support LINC’s operational and project areas, as shown in Table 2. Most of these revenues come from Missouri state government, with a small amount of federal funds and private foundation funds added. The first five items in

Table 2 (totaling \$4.61 million, or 78% of all revenues) are earmarked for specific purposes, whereas the last three items have no restrictions on their use and can be used for whatever purpose LINC wants. This latter \$1.3 million can be considered LINC’s core institutional budget over which it has complete control.

Item #7 in Table 2 deserves special notice. It reflects the product of an effort to draw down federal entitlement funds that is now yielding almost \$2.5 million per year, of which LINC keeps about \$800,000 as the managing agent on behalf of the community. For more information on this new funding strategy, see the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s separate case study entitled, “*Breaking New Ground: A Financial Strategy for a Governance Partnership.*”<sup>23</sup> Through this funding strategy, LINC claims federal matching funds on previously unmatched local expenditures by local organizations serving at-risk children and families. LINC discovered that significant amounts of local public dollars were being expended in Kansas City on staff-intensive activities for at-risk populations which were, in fact, federally-reimbursable—provided that appropriate authorizations and documentation were in place. Such funding, once claimed and received, is without federal restrictions or conditions on its use, since it represents federal matching grant reimbursement under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

<b>TABLE 2</b>	
<b>Revenue Sources, FY 1998</b>	
1. Caring Communities Funds from six state agencies for 16 Comprehensive Neighborhood Service Sites	\$3.53 million
2. Educare <sup>24</sup> (federal and some state funds)	.40 million
3. Data and Evaluation (state funds and private foundation funds)	.38 million
4. Welfare-to-Work and professional development (state funds)	.11 million
5. Communications and DSS training (state funds)	.19 million
6. Grant, interest, and administration	.54 million
7. Title IV-E (federal funds)	.75 million
8. Donations	.02 million
TOTAL	\$5.92 million

To carry out this strategy, LINC identified a dozen local agencies that were providing case management-type services to families and children with public funds. These agencies included several emergency shelters, a rape crisis center, a housing referral agency, a teen parent center, a drug abuse prevention program, and other social service providers. In addition, the schools and juvenile probation officers provided services to at-risk youth that were not being used as the basis for claiming federal funds. Staff from these agencies participated in a time study in which they documented their activities for one week every three months. Based upon this documentation, LINC submitted quarterly claims that have reached the level of \$1.9 million per year. The State Department of Social Services agreed to pass 90 percent of this money on to LINC and its local partners, keeping only 10 percent for their administrative costs. LINC then agreed to share a portion of the remaining proceeds with the agencies that participated in the claim.<sup>24</sup>

The value of this financial strategy is that it yields an ongoing, permanent funding base for LINC. Prior to this time, all of LINC's funding consisted of either state funds earmarked for specific purposes or discretionary, time-limited foundation dollars. This new financing strategy creates for LINC an institutional funding base, i.e., one that draws down funds in a constant and enduring way. Once started, the flow of funds continues, in contrast to boom-and-bust grant funding. The new strategy is also unusual in that it is not confined to a single agency or program, as most refinancing efforts are. Typically, states try to maximize federal entitlement funds by looking at one service system at a time—e.g., their child welfare system. In contrast, LINC's strategy looks across several service systems, including child welfare, juvenile justice, homeless shelters and domestic violence, for instance, and does so at the local level.

### **The “Influence Budget”: \$2.63 million**

In addition to the revenues listed above, LINC provides monitoring and oversight for seven welfare-to-work contracts and three other child welfare/domestic violence contracts. In most of these instances, LINC negotiates the contract, specifying the scope of work and performance measures, even though LINC does not directly administer the funds. In the welfare-to-work contracts, money comes from the State to the University of Missouri-Kansas City, which is the fiscal intermediary, and then is paid to the contractor.<sup>25</sup> LINC's role is to monitor these contracts to ensure that the services delivered are in accordance with LINC's welfare-to-work agenda. In addition, LINC has fiscal authority over three other child welfare/domestic violence contracts that allow it to control how these funds are spent even though they do not show up in LINC's bank account.

Finally, LINC receives \$570,103 in in-kind contributions from the State Department of Social Services. The state agency pays for eight of its staff persons to work at LINC, in effect

assigning these DSS employees to LINC on a full-time basis, and it pays for LINC’s rent and other expenses.

Table 3 shows the amounts of these contracts and contributions.

<b>TABLE 3</b>	
<b>“Influence Budget” Contracts - 1998</b>	
<b>Welfare to Work Contracts:</b>	
Genesis School (alternative school)	\$ 84,568
Futures <sup>26</sup> LINC MIS	\$ 96,932
Training and Development	\$ 34,400
Computer Training Support	\$ 46,470
Women’s Employment Network (WEN)	\$ 362,850
Full Employment Council Futures Connection	\$ 92,950
Full Employment Council Wage Supplement	\$ 725,885
<b>Other Contracts:</b>	<b>\$ 257,476</b>
Child Welfare	\$ 117,776
Consent Decree	\$ 53,974
Domestic Violence	\$ 570,103
DSS In-kind Contributions	\$ 2,628,133
<b>TOTAL</b>	

In summary, LINC’s fiscal strategy has unique elements, as evidenced by its “influence budget.” Two-thirds of the Commission’s total \$8.5 million budget is money it directly controls, for specific projects primarily, while one-third falls under its “influence” budget. LINC Commissioners deliberately chose *not* to directly control all human services funds coming into Jackson County for fear of becoming another massive bureaucracy. Instead, they wanted to play a major role in ensuring that resources are used in a coordinated way that is based on the real needs of families in Kansas City neighborhoods. LINC came to understand that what it needs in order to achieve this goal is not the money itself, but to be a trusted influence in directing how the money is spent.

# VII

## BUILDING COMMUNICATIONS AND DATA SYSTEMS

*The challenge for LINC is to target change where it is needed most. With that comes the need to have more and better data than we now have. It is not so much that the information doesn't exist, but it is not in a form that can be processed and it is not available to the right people at the right time. LINC's greatest challenge is collecting information and making it available to Commissioners and the Professional Cabinet and everybody else who needs it. That will help these talented people come up with better answers or at least better questions.*

Oscar Tshibanda  
LINC Commissioner

LINC Commissioners believe that strong communication of information among their many partners is essential if the Kansas City region is to create the neighborhood system of services and supports they envision. To that end, LINC is developing new vehicles by which useful information can be made available, both to agency partners and to neighborhood residents. These include vehicles for sharing information about community resources, as well as new management information systems (MIS) which eventually will allow agencies to share information on individual families when appropriate.

LINC's interest in better information systems began early on when Commissioners recognized the limitations of existing data. As they tried to plan for Kansas City neighborhoods, Commissioners realized that available data were not organized well for looking at community needs. Most information about children and families was available only for the state as a whole; what few data were available about the community had not generally been shared with other community partners. The Commissioners also found that, while a great deal of administrative and financial data were available, there was little information that could be used to promote best practices or to set performance benchmarks. The Commissioners concluded that LINC had to launch a major effort to develop the community-based data they needed for policy development, program management, and evaluation. Such information, they felt, was critical to LINC's long term viability. Further, the closer the Commissioners got to this problem, the more convinced they were that LINC should, over time, redefine the way that data are used in the region. As LINC staff put it, the Commission wants to promote a "more open, data sharing community."

LINC began its work in this area in small ways. For example, the Commission made the sharing of data a requirement of every contract it negotiated with provider agencies. LINC staff report that many organizations resisted this requirement at first. Over time, however, they have noticed a shift in agencies' openness about their data. "Once people see that we

are not trying to get the information to criticize them, but that we are just trying to help create a more informed process, they feel freer to open up their data sets,” explains Gayle Hobbs.<sup>27</sup>

In 1997, LINC applied for and received a three year grant of \$700,000 from the Ewing Marian Kauffman Foundation that has allowed LINC to draw up more comprehensive plans for their data and evaluation activities. The plan is based on an information needs assessment conducted for LINC by the Midwest Research Institute (a private contractor located in Kansas City) and is designed to meet LINC’s information needs for both the short and longer range.

While Commissioners recognize that they are still in the early stage of their data collection efforts, they have launched three activities that already are beginning to access, share, and link data in Kansas City in new ways.

The first of these is the *Community Technology Forum (CTF)*. This is a community resource repository that is Internet-based, and available to dozens of human service providers in the area. The CTF currently includes information from 350 community organizations about the resources they can make available, organized by zip code. For example, CTF provides information about the availability of child care slots, job opportunities, and social service programs—most by zip code, so that individuals or organizations can obtain the information for the neighborhood in which they are interested. In addition, CTF contains information about agency activities, community events, and other items of interest to the network of people who are likely to use the system.

LINC’s second data collection activity is the development of a *Data Warehouse* which compiles data already available from other public and private data systems. Rather than trying to create one mega-MIS, which all agencies would be asked to use—an impossible task—LINC instead has established the Data Warehouse which downloads data from the Department of Social Services and will eventually include data from six additional state departments (Health, Mental Health, Labor and Industrial Relations, Elementary and Secondary Education, Corrections, and Economic Development), the 16 Comprehensive Neighborhood Services sites in the Kansas City area, and other community data sources such as juvenile justice information and housing data. The Warehouse collects and organizes data from these sources, allowing LINC and other community partners who have access to the Warehouse to extract relevant information and use the results to project trends, identify performance gaps, and eventually (it is hoped by staff) build greater accountability.

The Data Warehouse includes information on individuals and families, each with a common identifier. As of October 1998, three data sets are operational: income maintenance, food stamps, and Futures (one of Department of Social Services’ major employment programs in Kansas City). The income maintenance data base, for example, has information on each

individual receiving public assistance in the four county area surrounding Kansas City, including the person's gross income, expenses, living arrangement, and the type and amount of cash assistance he/she receives. Similarly, data on all households who receive food stamps in the four county area are included, as are data on all clients of the Futures program. Each client has a common identifier number so, for example, the system can show what cash benefits, food stamps and employment services the Jones family in Clay County is receiving. Eventually, many other data bases will be added to the warehouse so the user can also tell what health care, mental health benefits and juvenile justice services, for instance, a family receives.

The Warehouse is already an important time saver for LINC. Until now, data from these agencies were hard to find, and had to be assembled piece by piece for any analytic task that was required. Data had to be manipulated manually, because there was no vehicle for sharing it electronically. With the warehouse, when LINC staff need to prepare analyses for the Commission which give community trends or agency caseloads or the number of families being served in a particular neighborhood, that information can be obtained quickly through the warehouse. For example, LINC staff have reported to the Commission the number of assessments completed in the Futures program, and the number of wage supplements provided and their average amount. Because of the greater ease with which information can be obtained, LINC staff report that the Commission's decision making is increasingly data based.

LINC's Data Warehouse is part of a larger state effort to develop data warehouses both at the state level and locally throughout Missouri. As the site for the State's pilot, LINC worked closely with State Department of Social Services staff to ensure that the final design would not only meet state agency needs, but would be user-friendly and geared to community needs as well. For instance, when state staff proposed organizing data by five digit zip codes, LINC staff members pointed out that they ideally needed data for even smaller geographic areas, i.e., neighborhoods. State officials agreed to use the nine-digit zip codes, which provided the needed level of detail.

As the Data Warehouse develops, LINC plans to make it available to many different users. Staff of community agencies (not for profits, local and county public agencies, neighborhood organizations, and State government) will be able to use the data for planning purposes. Users can define the data elements they want to see from among the thousands that will be available within the warehouse. LINC plans to make the data available to frontline workers who will be able to see what other services a family on their caseload is receiving. By having data in a centrally managed place, with increasing ability to integrate data across the multiple systems represented in the warehouse, LINC staff believe they will obtain many of the benefits that otherwise would require the development of a consolidated, cross-agency MIS—an expensive and impossible task.

LINC's third, most recent activity to create better information for community service delivery is the development of its *Information Sharing System (ISS)*, which is an MIS used by the 16 CNS sites. Through ISS, the neighborhood sites and LINC can track services provided by each site, as well as more specific information such as which service providers each site is using. The data base provides information on which providers provide which services, and how many clients some providers are serving in the neighborhood. CNS sites can use ISS to track activity in their own site, or to compare services and resources across sites. This information is also made available to other community partners because ISS information is periodically downloaded to the Data Warehouse.

LINC Commissioners are committed to continuing their development of information systems that can help them to make better decisions, and that can help community providers be more responsive to families. They recognize that the job of collecting and disseminating adequate information is not a special initiative, but rather a necessary, permanent part of the infrastructure that will allow them over time to ensure that LINC's community agenda is indeed responsive to community needs.

# VIII

## CONCLUSION

*LINC's role is that of a facilitator, an impartial facilitator. We help the neighborhoods to mobilize their own capabilities. We go into the community and we say, "Look, historically these programs haven't worked well because they haven't really been keyed to the users' requirements. But, we are not trying to change it, we are only trying to change it with your help and participation." LINC puts the people together.*

*LINC has to have a role in making sure that resources are pulled together and that there is some guarantor of the fiscal integrity, responsibility and accountability for how resources are used. We are not trying to be a watchdog necessarily, but to the extent that public money is involved, we are not going to let it be spent badly.*

Landon Rowland  
Chairperson, LINC

According to many people who observe LINC on a day-to-day basis, LINC's leadership is making a significant difference. Whether in promoting neighborhood service delivery, mobilizing employment opportunities for welfare recipients, or helping public agencies to streamline their services, LINC's efforts get high marks from public and private sector leaders in Kansas City and Missouri. Increasingly, LINC's work is attracting national—and even international—attention as well. Last year, several hundred people visited LINC to learn more about its approach to local governance and local decision making.

What is it about LINC that has triggered these accomplishments? What has allowed LINC to grow in credibility and influence, whereas some other governance partnerships around the

country have stalled in their attempts to affect their communities and improve results for children, youth, and families? Four aspects of LINC stand out: (1) its close relationship with the State, (2) its mix of business and neighborhood leadership, (3) its commitment to local grass-roots decision making, and (4) its ability to broaden the circle of partners who are committed to its agenda, rather than trying to keep influence and power to itself.

LINC has been fortunate to have the support of the State since its inception. The State has funded most of LINC's activities and has assigned eight State staff to LINC, and it has given LINC considerable authority such as the responsibility to operate the welfare reform initiative in the greater Kansas City area. The State recognized that LINC was capable of assuming these and other responsibilities, and has therefore been willing to give them greater decision making authority than most other community partnerships in Missouri.

LINC's approach emanates from a core belief that the decisions that most affect Kansas City and Jackson County residents should be made, whenever possible, by responsible individuals

representing their community. LINC has maintained from its inception that local citizens should be allowed to make decisions affecting families and children, rather than leaving those decisions to state officials and others who cannot know local needs as well as residents do. LINC recognizes that “local” does not just mean civic leaders from the overall Kansas City region. LINC has made a commitment to shift decision making authority and influence to neighborhood leaders as well. Through CNS, and in its day-to-day operations, LINC has tried to mold an approach that allows neighborhood representatives to have more say about the decisions that affect them most.

LINC views its promotion of neighborhood decision making as a long term process. Commissioners and staff know that all decisions will not suddenly be “handed over” to neighborhood leaders. In a society as complex as ours, with as many levels of governmental authority and as many competing private sector interests, an overnight shift to full neighborhood control is not possible even if it were desirable. Instead, LINC’s view is that steady, incremental progress in creating opportunities for neighborhood influence can have a cumulative effect. Slowly, public agencies as well as private sector organizations are changing their own approach to decision making, and neighborhood involvement and influence will become the norm rather than the exception. In the meantime, to ensure that this process in fact yields “better decisions”—not just decisions by different people—LINC and neighborhood leaders are building the capacity of neighborhood residents to make knowledgeable decisions about programs, funding, and other resources that affect their lives. LINC’s support for the neighborhood site councils, for example, is part of its long-term investment in creating leadership opportunities.

LINC’s unusual constellation of leadership has also been critical to its success. LINC’s corporate and business leadership was an important part of its early achievements. Unlike many community initiatives, where business leaders lend their names and reputations to an “initial push,” LINC’s business leaders have sustained and increased their level of involvement. Bert Berkley and Landon Rowland, among others, have put their personal and professional credibility on the line for LINC, and their high profile commitment persuaded many of their colleagues to join in LINC’s agenda.

LINC Commissioners state clearly that they could not have sustained their initial momentum with only corporate leverage. Eventually, LINC would have been seen as representing only one privileged sector of the Kansas City community. By broadening its base, the Commission has created a focal point for leadership in Kansas City that can more accurately claim to represent many community interests. The trust that LINC has engendered through this approach has brought it credibility—and thus influence—in more arenas than if corporate leaders alone continued to be LINC’s public voice.

A third factor that has contributed to LINC's growing influence is less tangible, but may be the most important of all: LINC has taken seriously a commitment to working with other organizations, leaders, and agencies rather than "going it alone." The danger inherent in a group representing as much of the community as LINC's Commission does is that it begins to see itself as having authority or control over what others do. Having started with a vision of broadening citizen engagement, such a group can easily, over time, clasp more and more power to itself. The danger is that this stance can alienate potential partners, rather than engaging them. Instead of expanding the circle of community leadership, such an organization destroys it. By contrast, LINC facilitated the process.

LINC's approach, held by Commissioners and staff, is that whenever possible, it should facilitate good community decisions and activities, rather than trying to control them. LINC can act decisively when it needs to, and can even overrule other decisions when necessary. However, LINC's preferred and usual method of operations is to build bridges with other people and organizations. Some activities that illustrate this approach include LINC's emphasis on enlisting more and more volunteers, its work with an increasing range of community organizations, and its gradual partnership building with public agencies.

While LINC seems mature by comparison to most governance partnerships around the country, many of which are no more than a few years old, the Commission is in fact still growing and learning. It faces several important challenges in the next few years as it attempts to become even more effective in improving the well-being of the region's children, youth, and families. Two of these challenges are particularly important.

The first involves LINC's use of the new funding stream that it has developed during the past year. As a result of LINC's joint effort with the Department of Social Services on refinancing, LINC will have approximately \$800,000 available for its annual use that it did not have in the past. Most of LINC's current funding has been either state program dollars, whose purpose is fixed by state or federal law, or modest amounts of foundation funding. LINC's new source of funds is not constrained by pre-existing mandates, and the amount is large enough to have impact over time. LINC's decisions about these funds will be the Commission's first large-scale opportunity to set *its* agenda and display *its* priorities solely and without the additional compromises of another party. They will be able to make independent decisions about how and where to utilize these resources. These funds have the potential to take LINC to a higher level in setting a community agenda. The way the Commission uses this opportunity, the decision making process it employs, and the directions in which it moves will reveal much about LINC's future vision and intent.

A similar challenge faces LINC as it continues to increase its level of accountability for outcomes and results. Whenever possible, LINC has tried to generate information about its own impact. But the actual information available so far—on CNS for example—concerns

anecdotal and operational results which all appear promising. However, its impact on the six core results remains unknown. As state agencies and others look to LINC to help carry out responsibilities that were formerly assumed by public agencies or elected officials, accountability must be measured by systems that generate usable data on outcomes. The Commissioners seem to understand how important this issue is for LINC's future; they are investing substantial sums in new data systems that should allow LINC's decisions to be based on more accurate and complete information. The test will be whether the Commissioners can sustain this long-term—and sometimes “unsexy”—investment until it pays off and provides the kind of results-driven, community-informed decisions LINC has advocated since its inception.

LINC has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. Beyond its specific accomplishments, LINC's most important marker of success is the way it continually engages citizens and expands its influence in the community. The relevance of this accomplishment cannot be underscored enough. Few governance partners (if any) have gained LINC's measure of clout and attention. In spite of the experience it has gained, LINC still acts and feels like a young organization, one that is continually reexamining its own progress and approaches and refining them in order to be more responsive to its community. LINC's continual self-assessment about how it can be most useful should stand it in good stead as it moves ahead.

## **APPENDICES**

LINC's Descriptions of its Guiding Principles, Mission,  
and Operating Procedures

**APPENDIX A**  
**LINC's Guiding Principles, Mission,**  
**and Operating Procedures**

**LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION**  
**Operating Procedures**

**Mission and Purpose**

The Local INvestment Commission (LINC) is a community collaborative group of business and civic leaders, and private citizens, working with social service professionals, not for profits, and local county, state, and public agencies, to oversee the reform of the social service delivery system in Kansas City, Missouri.

LINC's mission is to provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City community in creating the best system to support and strengthen children, families, and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

**LINC Authority**

The state social services director may enforce LINC's recommendations.

Consistent with federal and state requirements, the director shall retain ultimate authority to regulate departmental funds available to the commission.

**Composition**

The commission is composed of a broad and inclusive group of not more than thirty-six (36) lay persons. The commission shall include business and civic leaders, community and neighborhood representatives, participants of service, and involved citizens. The mayor of Kansas City, Mo., and the Jackson County Executive, or their designated representative, shall be ex-officio members.

Commission members shall be appointed by director of the Department of Social Service Services.

There shall be no appointments based on political party.

Members shall serve no more than three (3) renewable three-year terms.

Under the revised operating procedures, new appointments will be for one year until staggered terms can be developed.

Commission members may resign from the commission by submitting a written letter of resignation to the LINC chairperson.

A list of nominees will be provided by the commission's executive committee to the director of the Department of Social Services to fill any vacancies which exist.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No member of the commission shall have a conflict of interest, receive a preference, or exceed their authority.

### **Steering Committee**

The commission chairperson shall appoint a Steering Committee to oversee the overall operations of the commission including scheduling of meetings, agenda planning, nomination of members, and addressing general operational issues.

### **Professional Cabinet**

A professional cabinet of local, state, and federal officials and professionals from not-for-profit agencies involved in social services shall provide technical assistance and expertise to the commission.

The professional cabinet members shall be appointed by the commission chairperson. Under the revised operating procedures, new appointments will be for one year until staggered terms can be developed.

### **Officers and Duties**

The commission shall elect one (1) chairperson and shall select three (3) vice-chairs and a commission secretary.

The chairperson shall preside over commission meetings and steering committee meetings.

The vice-chairs shall fill the duties of the chairperson in his or her absence and may be called upon to fulfill other leadership duties as determined by the chairperson.

### **LINC Staff**

An executive director, employed by the Department of Social Services, shall be assigned to the commission. The executive director shall designate other employees to serve as staff persons to the commission and its committees.

## **Standing Committees**

The commission shall have three (3) standing committees: Finance and Operations; Data and Evaluation; and Communications and Advocacy. The standing committees will be chaired by a LINC commissioner.

## **Ad Hoc Committees**

The commission chairperson and has the authority to establish ad hoc committees to address specific concerns and projects of the commission.

Ad Hoc committees may also be established through proposals submitted to and approved by a majority vote of the commission.

Committee composition shall include lay persons who have demonstrated interest in the committee's area of focus, community and neighborhood representatives, and those who receive the benefits of government assistance. A professional cabinet of local, state, and federal officials and professionals from not-for-profit agencies involved in social services shall provide technical assistance and expertise to the ad hoc committees.

## **LINC Structure**

The commission shall establish a vision, mission, and guiding principles which will guide the efforts of the commission, committees, and ad hoc groups in their efforts to reform the social service delivery system.

The commission will review proposals which are submitted in order to ensure they are consistent with the organization's guiding principles, make decisions regarding a course of action, and determine the level of commission support and involvement warranted.

The commission will establish general parameters which establish the scope and interrelatedness, (and prevent duplicative efforts) of the committees.

The commission will develop strategies for dealing with crosscutting issues which overlap the designated committee areas.

The commission shall establish expected outcomes which can be used to measure improvements in the social service delivery system.

The commission shall be responsible for developing ongoing training and development activities to ensure the commission is knowledgeable regarding the matters presented to it.

Commission members shall serve as the liaison to a designated committee and will work in conjunction with the committee co-chairs to represent the commissioner's perspective to the

committee, communicate the committee's feedback and needs to the commission, ensure continuity of the committee's efforts with the other LINC committees, and support the efforts of the committee.

### **Procedure for Submitting Proposals**

Proposals for funding, service delivery changes, and requests for action on the part of the commission shall follow the following process:

1. A proposal is submitted to the LINC office and reviewed by the appropriate staff,
2. The proposal is referred to the designated committee to review,
3. The committee conducts the necessary research to ensure a comprehensive and thorough assessment of the proposal is completed,
4. The committee prepares a recommendation regarding the proposal, and
5. The proposal and recommendation are submitted to the commission.

### **Meetings/Minutes**

The commission shall be responsible for scheduling a minimum of nine (9) commission meetings per calendar year. Notice of all commission meetings shall be given in advance of the scheduled meeting.

Special meetings may be called by the commission chairperson as long as reasonable efforts are made to notify all commissioners prior to the meeting.

Meeting minutes are to be approved by the commission during a regular meeting, prior to being entered as a permanent record of the proceedings.

Proposed agenda items for commission meetings shall be submitted to the LINC Office in advance of the commission meeting. The commission chairperson and steering committee shall make the final decisions on agenda items.

### **Confidentiality**

Each member of the LINC organization may have information and records which are confidential. It is the responsibility of each person to maintain security of records and assure the confidentiality of the information within their control. Records and information shall only be released to authorized agencies or individuals as provided for by law or with written consent.

## **Decision Making**

In order for a vote to be taken, a quorum of commissioners must be present at the meeting. A quorum is defined as a majority of the voting members. Commission decisions shall be made by a majority vote of the commissioners present at the commission meeting.

The commissioners are the only members who are eligible to vote on matters before the commission.

Roberts Rules of Order, Revised, will serve as the primary guide for review of proposals and other matters before the commission.

## **Community Involvement**

The commission shall establish ongoing communication strategies to ensure LINC information is regularly communicated to the neighborhoods and the community at large, that regular feedback is received, and that participants are an active part of the LINC decision making process.

The commission shall establish mechanisms to ensure that community concerns are communicated to the LINC office in order that they can be addressed in a timely and thorough manner.

## **LINC Operations Plan**

The commission will establish an operations plan which will set a general direction, action plan, and expected outcomes for the commission's efforts.

The operations plan will be reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis to insure that it continues to reflect the needs and priorities of the community.

## **Revisions to the Operating Procedures**

Any revision or change in the operating procedures of the commission requires a proposal and subsequent motion be submitted to the commission. All changes in the operating procedure require a majority vote of the commissioners as a whole.

## APPENDIX B

### LINC COMMISSIONERS

**Landon Rowland**

LINC Chairman  
Kansas City Southern Industries

**Bert Berkley**

LINC Founder and  
LINC Vice Chair  
Tension Envelope Corp.

**Velda Cook**

Neighborhood Leader  
Jackson County Prosecutor's Office

**John (Jack) C. Craft**

Craft Fridkin & Rhyne

**SuEllen Fried**

Civic Leader

**Robert Glaser**

Truman Heartland Community  
Foundation

**Anita Gorman**

Civic Leader

**Bart Hakan**

Businessman

**Adele Hall**

LINC Vice Chair  
Civic Leader

**Judy Hunt**

Civic Leader

**Marcus Johnson**

Kansas City Power & Light

**Herman Johnson**

LINC Vice Chair  
Herman Johnson Company

**Denise Jordan**

Kansas City Globe

**Jan Kreamer**

Greater Kansas City Community  
Foundation

**Rosemary Smith Lowe**

LINC Vice Chair  
Neighborhood Leader  
Santa Fe Neighborhood Association

**Mark McAfee**

Rite-Way Magic Supply

**Estella Morales**

City of Kansas City, Mo. Planning &  
Development

**Richard Morris**

Businessman

**John Palmer**

EDP Enterprises

**Margie E. Peltier**

Civic Leader

**Oscar Pinsker**

Physician

**Susan Ramirez**

Neighborhood Leader

**Paul Rojas**

Neighborhood Leader

**David Ross**  
NationsBank

**The Rev. Thom Savage**  
National Seminars, Inc.

**Lou Smith**  
E. Marion Kauffman Foundation

**Gene Standifer**  
Neighborhood Leader

**Oscar Tshibanda**  
Deloitte & Touche

**Barry Wilkinson**  
Heavy Construction Workers Local  
Union #663

**Emanuel Cleaver**  
Ex-officio member  
Mayor of Kansas City, MO

**Katheryn Shields**  
Ex-officio member  
Jackson County Executive

## LINC PROFESSIONAL CABINET

**Robert M. Bauermeister**  
Missouri Department of Mental Health

**Phyllis Becker**  
Communities in Schools

**Alvin Brooks**  
Ad Hoc Group Against Crime

**Jim Caccamo**  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Children

**Dianne Cleaver**  
Swope Parkway Health Center

**Barbara Friedmann**  
Coalition for Positive Family  
Relationships

**Dick Gregory**  
Missouri Department of Mental Health

**Jacquelyn Jackson**  
Missouri Department of Labor and  
Industrial Relations

**Jim Koeneman**  
E. M. Kauffman Foundation

**Dick Matt**  
Missouri Department of Social Services  
Division of Family Services

**Cris Medina**  
Guadalupe Center

**Kathy Moore**  
Missouri Department of Social Services  
Division of Aging

**Gail Mumford**  
Missouri Department of Social Services  
Division of Youth Services

**Jim Nunnely**  
Jackson County Courthouse  
COMBAT

**David Smith**  
Boys & Girls Club

**Peggy Torno**  
Missouri Department of Social Services  
Division of Family Services

**Betsy Vandervelde**  
Heart of America Family Services

**David Warm**  
Mid-America Regional Council

**Charles Williams**  
Missouri Department of Health

# ENDNOTES

1. Local INvestment Commission Vision Statement
2. Gary J. Stangler was appointed director of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) by Governor John Ashcroft (Republican) in May 1989 and re-appointed by Governor Mel Carnahan (Democrat) in February 1993. DSS consists of the Division of Aging, the Child Support Enforcement Unit, Family Services (which includes the Income Maintenance Unit and the Children's Services Division), Medical Services, and Youth Services, as well as four support divisions.
3. Ibid.
4. CHIPS-Children's Health Insurance Program is a federally funded, state administered program to expand health care coverage to uninsured children.
5. MC PLUS(+) - A state health insurance program for families who do not have access to affordable health insurance.
6. LINC's central office has 19 staff. There are also 16 site coordinators, for the 16 CNS sites. Central office staff include: 1-Executive Director; 2-Administrative Staff; 2-Business Administrators; 3-Welfare-to-Work Coordinators; 2-Welfare-to-Work Management Information Systems Analyst; 1-Educare Coordinator; 1-Child Welfare, Health, and Aging Coordinator; 1-Research Analyst; 1-Director of Communications; 2-Division of Family Services Liaisons; and 3-Comprehensive Neighborhood Services Coordinators.
7. Eighteen Community Partnerships have been created in Missouri, Community. Partnerships are designated collaborative groups created to improve six core results for an entire county or defined region.
8. "Measuring the Impact of Caring Communities in Jackson County: A Report by the Local INvestment Commission," January 1998, pages 1-2.
9. "When Work Disappears," by William Julius Wilson, The New York Times Magazine, August 18, 1996.
10. Hobbs, Gayle A., "Welfare to Work: the Kansas City Experiment and Experience," 1996, Public Welfare, Fall 1996, American Public Welfare Association, page 7.
11. Women's Employment Network (WEN) is a private job development and job placement provider.

12. “An Overview of LINC’s Welfare-to-Work Initiative,” from LINC’s website <http://www.kclinc.org/initiatives/welfare>
13. Ibid.
14. This information comes from a chart LINC staff created for Commission members entitled “Jackson County Welfare-to-Work Placements” dated 1/22/98. It was included in the LINC Commission meeting packet distributed for the 1/26/98 meeting.  
  
These job retention statistics are point-in-time snapshots. On a given day, people are sorted into how long they have been on the job. This tends to underestimate retention, because it includes people who have only been on the job for a short period. For instance, a person who just got a job two weeks ago would be classified and still working within the category “less than three months,” when actually that person may stay in the job for a much longer period. Including these recent hires in the data base offices lowers the overall retention figures.
15. Tim Decker, LINC Neighborhood Coordinator.
16. Peggy Torno’s comments were made during interviews for this case study, June-July, 1997.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. ‘Walk In My Shoes’ is designed to increase public understanding of the child protection system by pairing community members and caseworkers. It was described in a feature article, “A Look Inside the Child Protection System,” Children’s Defense Fund Reports, August 1997, Volume 18, Number 9. This initiative was also featured in the Kansas City Star, May 17, 1997.
20. Thomastine Nosiri’s comments were made during interviews for this case study, June-July 1, 1997.
21. Herman Johnson is a LINC co-chair. These comments were made during an interview with Mr. Johnson for this case study.
22. Norm Zimlich, a consultant for Center for the Study of Social Policy, coined the term “influence budget” to describe LINC’s unique budgeting practices, as well as those of other governance partnerships.

23. “Breaking New Ground: A Financial Strategy for a Governance Partnership” How the Local Investment Commission in Kansas City, Missouri, Increased Its Funding for Children and Family Services. Center for the Study of Social Policy, June 1998.
24. Educare is an initiative which attempts to increase the quantity and quality of child care providers for children from birth to three years old.
25. Recently, LINC was successful in influencing the State to send these funds directly to Greater K.C. LINC, Inc., to manage and monitor.
26. FUTURES was the name of the States previous job development program.
27. Gayle Hobbs is the Executive Director of LINC. These comments were made during interviews conducted for this case study, June-July, 1997.