

# The Cambridge Nonprofit Summit

## A facilitated exchange of ideas for Executive Directors

June 11, 2013

On June 11, 2013, more than 40 executive representatives of the Cambridge nonprofit community gathered for a facilitated conversation about the state of the sector and possibilities of articulating a common voice for change. The result was a powerful commitment to collaboration towards the betterment of Cambridge residents, beginning with a plan to address City Council regarding the establishment of a fair and reasonable community benefits process.

This event was made possible through the generous support of the Cambridge Community Foundation.

## Major Themes

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### **Nonprofits are concerned about the quality of life in Cambridge.**

Cambridge residents face changing demographics, a widening opportunity gap, mental health challenges, inadequate housing resources, and a difficult job market. Violence, poverty, food shortages, and environmental concerns are impacting the quality of life for residents of Cambridge.

### **Cambridge is rich in resources but poor in access.**

The city of Cambridge has tremendous resources: world-class universities, industry-leading businesses, sizable government services, and many nonprofit organizations. However, many constituents do not benefit from these assets due to a lack of knowledge, cost, or other factors.

### **A Unified Message from Cambridge Nonprofits**

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Cambridge nonprofit leadership is ready to build strong partnerships--with each other and with other sectors--in order to meet changing needs, close the opportunity gap and improve the quality of life for the community.

### **Nonprofit collaboration can help meet unfilled needs.**

There is an untapped potential for nonprofits to work together. Cambridge constituents can benefit if nonprofits disseminate information about what services exist, align services with needs, provide referrals, and partner together for group purchasing or other collaborative projects.

### **Cross-sector partnerships can also be central to serving Cambridge residents.**

Nonprofits can benefit not only from collaborating with one another, but also by working with public and private partners. For example, private investment can be instrumental in sparking social change, or nonprofits and schools can align afterschool programming for maximum student benefit.

### **The Community Benefit Process**

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Cambridge City Council is currently working to formalize a process for distributing community benefit money collected from upzoning and development. The goal is to create a procedure that mitigates the impact of the development on the community, and is fair to both nonprofits and developers.

# Nonprofit Criteria for the Community Benefit Process

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Attendees of the summit determined that the following aspects should be considered in determining a fair and reasonable community benefit process (*see appendix for more details*):

- Ongoing community- and data-driven needs assessment
- Funding targets that are based on the outcomes of the needs assessment
- Inclusion of nonprofits in the needs assessment, process oversight and decision making
- Transparent process: simple, clear, responsive to assessed needs, and values-driven
- Funding criteria that values collaboration
- Informed design process based on best-practices
- Inclusion of non-monetary resources (*i.e. common space, technology, skill sharing*)
- A decision making body with term limits that is inclusive and represents Cambridge diversity

## Results

Moving forward, Cambridge nonprofits will meet in work groups, addressing the following agendas:

1. **Addressing City Council Regarding the Community Benefits Process:** This group will summarize the proceedings from this summit and address City Council with recommendations for allocating community benefit funds.
2. **Forming the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition:** In order to continue the work of nonprofit collaboration in Cambridge, this group will synthesize a vision and action plan for a coalition.
3. **Needs Assessment and Best Practice Research:** This data-driven group will work towards facilitating a community needs assessment and identifying best practices for nonprofit and cross-sector collaboration.

## About the Summit

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This summit came about through the conversations of ten nonprofit executives. The group first convened around concerns for a lack of transparency in the community benefits process, but members soon discovered that the value of nonprofit collaboration offered long-term benefits for serving the community.

**The organizations included in this planning include:**

Agassiz Baldwin Community  
Cambridge Community Center  
Cambridge Economic  
Opportunity Committee

Community Art Center  
Community Legal Services &  
Counseling Center  
East End House

Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House  
Transition House  
Tutoring Plus of Cambridge, Inc.  
YWCA Cambridge

# Appendix

## Summit Overview

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Nancy Jackson, Principal and Founder of Gammy Bird Consulting, facilitated a Cambridge Nonprofit Summit to which over one hundred leaders from Cambridge nonprofit and faith-based organizations were invited. An advanced survey was sent to all potential attendees and the results were used to shape the meeting design. Technologies of Participation<sup>1</sup> facilitation methods were used throughout the Summit design and execution phases.

The Summit was held on June 11, 2013 at Cambridge College and was primarily funded by the Cambridge Community Foundation. The meeting focused on three main questions:

- **What's going on in the Cambridge nonprofit sector?**
- **What's our united message?**
- **What is a fair and reasonable community benefit process?**

## Participating Organizations

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Agassiz Baldwin Community	Cambridge School Volunteers	Green Streets Initiative
Beyond the 4th Wall	Cambridge Youth Dance Program	Home Energy Efficiency Team
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center	Central Square Theater	Homeowner's Rehab
Boys and Girls Club of Middlesex County	Charles River Conservancy	Just-A-Start Corporation
Breakthrough Greater Boston	City Sprouts	Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House
Cambridge Camping Association	Community Art Center	Norfolk Street Congregate Housing
Cambridge Children and Family Services	Community Dispute Settlement Center	Parents Forum
Cambridge Community Center	Community Legal Services and Counseling Center	Possible Project
Cambridge Community Services	East End House	St. Paul AME Church
Cambridge Community TV	First Parish Church	Transition House
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee	Food for Free Committee	Tutoring Plus of Cambridge
	Friends of CRLS	Young People's Project
		YWCA Cambridge

## Also in Attendance as Observers

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Dennis Benzan <i>Candidate for City Council</i>	Penny Peters <i>Assistant to Mayor of Cambridge</i>	Nancy Tauber <i>Cambridge Kids Council</i>
Leland Cheung <i>Cambridge City Council</i>	Leo Gayne <i>City of Cambridge</i>	Khari Milner <i>Cambridge Public Schools</i>
Lilly Benham <i>Aide to Councilor Decker</i>	David Maher <i>Cambridge City Council</i>	Susan Richards <i>Cambridge Agenda for Children</i>
Ken Reeves <i>Cambridge City Council</i>	Henrietta Davis <i>Mayor of Cambridge</i>	Craig Kelly <i>Cambridge City Council</i>
Minka VanBeuzekom <i>Cambridge City Council</i>	Denise Simmons <i>Vice Mayor of Cambridge</i>	

<sup>1</sup> Technologies of Participation (ToP) are group facilitation methods developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs ([www.ica-usa.org](http://www.ica-usa.org)) that have wide applicability and consist of methods that enable groups to (1) engage in thoughtful and productive conversations, (2) develop common ground for working together, and (3) build effective short and long-range plans. ToP teaches team members how to collaborate on projects and teaches group facilitators how to effectively lead their teams.

# Table of Benefit Process Considerations

The following table outlines the aspects that Cambridge nonprofits put forth as important considerations in formalizing the community benefit process in Cambridge.

## What should be considered in a fair and reasonable benefit process?

<b>Ongoing community and data-driven needs assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research the opportunity gap regularly</li> <li>• Whole community quality of life (<i>library, accessible, green space</i>)</li> <li>• Needs assessment and impact plan</li> <li>• Annual summit for NPOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input from the community (<i>survey priorities, share info re: nonprofit services, resource mapping</i>)</li> <li>• Criteria prioritized by the community</li> <li>• Measure impact by polling community</li> </ul>
<b>NPO involvement in needs assessment, process oversight, and decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NPO role in decision process and identifying need</li> <li>• NPO involvement should be strong and central</li> <li>• NPOs primary in oversight process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community culture that values NPO sector</li> <li>• Nonprofit reps involved in development of the process and entity</li> </ul>
<b>Transparent process: simple, clear, responsive to assessed needs, and values-driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent (<i>eligibility criteria, process, evaluation criteria, where project intersects with benefit</i>)</li> <li>• Explicit, simple, accessible, open process</li> <li>• Establish a clear mission and guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values and guiding principles drive process</li> <li>• Clear standards for request, clear expectations</li> <li>• Use standard, streamlined application</li> <li>• Clear guidelines on grant amounts and frequency</li> </ul>
<b>Funding targets based on outcomes of a needs assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits Cambridge residents</li> <li>• Funding for all sectors</li> <li>• Leveraging resources for jobs and education in the community</li> <li>• Fund pathways out of poverty</li> </ul>	
<b>Collaboration that strengthens NPO sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes collaboration between nonprofits</li> <li>• Process requires collaboration across sectors</li> <li>• Points awarded for collaboration and partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider minimizing detrimental competition</li> <li>• Priority for collaborations</li> <li>• Deepen partnerships for greatest impact</li> </ul>
<b>Informed design process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep it simple</li> <li>• Knowledgeable and reflective of best practices in other communities</li> <li>• Learning from past CB process examples</li> <li>• Values and guiding principles drive process</li> <li>• Professional organization to help design guidelines</li> <li>• Managed by existing org. CCF? With rotating panels</li> <li>• Equitable distribution among multiple needs and constituencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more discussion of operation, program, infrastructure</li> <li>• Tiered awards small – large, crisis prevention, multi-year, single year</li> <li>• Varied strategies (<i>RFP, Resource Center, Long-term community improvement</i>)</li> <li>• Establish priorities—shelter, food, education</li> <li>• Sustainable, direct services, lasting impact</li> </ul>
<b>Includes non-monetary resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and leveraging space for NPOs to share with each other and other sectors</li> <li>• Event/exhibit space (<i>temporary, permanent, pop up</i>)</li> <li>• High speed internet for the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big, collaborative fundraising event</li> <li>• Skill sharing, knowledge training</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century communication systems</li> <li>• Back-end support staff</li> </ul>
<b>A decision making body with term limits that is inclusive &amp; represents Cambridge diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative decision making body with term limits</li> <li>• Diverse composition for decision-making body</li> </ul>	