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Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Building Public/Private Collaborations and Partnerships
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Moderator: **John Kyle**, Program Director for Outreach and Strategic Planning
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National League of Cities (NLC)

Speakers:

Albert Balagso, Assistant Director for the Department of Recreation, San Jose, California
Margaret Morton, Executive Director of the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement,
Sylacauga, Alabama
Bonnie Politz, Co-Director of the Academy for Educational Development Center for Youth
Development and Policy Research, Washington, D.C.

KYLE: Good afternoon. My name is John Kyle. I'm a program director at the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families. We are having, I think, about our 26th audioconference over the past couple of years, and we welcome you all to this call. We are focused today on building public/private partnerships. How can municipalities and local governments and communities engage in various relationships that help enhance, expand, extend services and strategies that promote positive outcomes for children, youth and families?

We have a distinguished panel of speakers joining us today. First of all, welcome Albert Balagso from San Jose, California.

BALAGSO: Hello.

KYLE: Margaret Morton, who is the Executive Director at the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement in Sylacauga, Alabama.

MORTON: Hello.

KYLE: And Bonnie Politz, who is a vice-president with the Academy for Educational Development and Co-Director of the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research here in Washington, D.C.

POLITZ: Hello.

KYLE: Albert, I want to come back to you and start. I neglected to say you are the Assistant

Director for the Department of Recreation there in San Jose.

BALAGSO: Yes, I am.

KYLE: I'm going to ask each of the panelists, starting with Albert, to give a brief, few word definition of what you think collaboration and partnership is. What are the highlights of collaboration and partnership, as you see it?

BALAGSO: I think collaboration is more than just talking to each other, or even putting money on the table. It's the agreement to take the things that you do and integrate your systems that make an effective change, and a partnership is that agreement, the staying power that keeps you at the table.

KYLE: Margaret, what would you add, or how would you view collaboration?

MORTON: Well, I agree with what Albert said -- to make collaboration as investment. And again, it may be not the investment of dollars per se, but it's an investment in working together and finding solutions. And sometimes I like to compare it to what we call in the South as "dinner on the grounds." Everybody brings what their resource is to the table.

KYLE: Bonnie, what can you add? You've been working with communities all over the country. What would you think are some of the hallmarks of collaboration and partnership?

POLITZ: Language is very important. And we've looked over time at some various forms, we say, of collaboration. There are opportunities for people to cooperate, and that's at a very basic level where maybe they just agree to work on some things specific and cooperate with each other. They may want to coordinate things. But the highest form would be collaboration. And as we talk about it, it's a mutually beneficial and defined relationship, and it's usually entered into by two or more organizations. And I think one of the most important things -- it's about achieving common goals. So having work done up front to make sure that people do understand why they're at the table and what they hope to get out of this so that there isn't misunderstanding becomes a sort of essential ingredient of building a collaboration.

KYLE: Margaret and Albert, you both are actively involved in particular collaborations and partnerships in your communities. Could you help us out, Margaret first, with a little bit of description of what, in your case, the Alliance is? And I think in Albert's case, it's a task force, to give a name. But Margaret, first, what is going on with the Alliance that you view as a collaborative effort?

MORTON: Actually, what we are doing in this community is centered around the development of resources for families and youth. And so the Alliance is virtually a coalition of partners from across the county. It might be social service providers. It might be healthcare providers. It is government. It is private citizens, industry, business -- all of those entities coming together to address issues of vulnerable youth initially, and then to expand that whole initiative into a family resource -- family support system here in the county. And the collaborative actually began back

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in 1997. We've expanded that collaborative as well to include the America's Promise Alliance for Youth initiative, and that has helped to drive further interest in the collaborative as well as to focus on specific issues of our youth in the community.

KYLE: A point of information -- Sylacauga is how large? The county is how large? Can you give a couple words of description of where you are geographically?

MORTON: Right -- we are an extremely rural county in rural Alabama. And our city is comprised of about 13,000 citizens. Our county is in excess of 80,000 residents. Thirty-seven percent of our population is below the poverty level. We have lots of issues of education -- 33% of our adults are at Level 1 literacy. So we have huge healthcare issues -- all of those issues associated with education and economic deprivation.

KYLE: Albert, what's going on with the collaboration that you're involved with? Describe it a little bit for us.

BALAGSO: We call it the San Jose Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force. It's been in existence from about 1991. It was originally established on the evening that the new mayor at the time said, "We have gangs in our city, and we're not going to tolerate that" -- the flash point that united all the key stakeholders together to come to the table and find a way to deal with the problem. I think the problem we had with previous administrations was that we never acknowledged the problem, so we never did anything about it. And what it's done, I think, over the course of the last decade is bring all the resources together that everybody has to wield and unite it under one strategic objective, and that's to reduce violence in the City of San Jose and make it a safer place to live. I think we key off of it that we're the safest large city in the United States, and we intend to keep that designation, and we feel this is one of the primary reasons that we're able to do that.

KYLE: Bonnie, is there another kind of collaboration or different set of partners? Is there a community collaboration that you'd like to throw into the mix, just to give us an array of possibilities?

POLITZ: Well, I think there are lots of examples of things going on in communities around the country. We've done work over time in various cities, and they may even be on the phone -- I'm not sure. Hampton, Virginia is one where there has been an incredibly vibrant process over time to really build a youth development infrastructure, we would call it, which grew from more of an anti-drug approach into really a youth development approach, where city government has taken a very active role. The school system, community organizations, youth really have a very critical and essential piece of the pie, having their voice as a part of thinking about new agendas and what priorities are around youth and community building in Hampton.

San Francisco is another place that's very exciting over time. And as we looked at it and worked with various different aspects of people in the city, you sort of see that it is what we call "the three-legged stool." There is an essential piece of government -- there is the Mayor's Office of Children, Youth and Families. There is a very active advocacy group, which we don't see as much of in communities as we used to in the 60s and early 70s -- Coleman

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Advocates for Children and Youth -- which has very much got their agenda and willing to come out and willing to bring people to City Hall and willing to demonstrate and get the messages out. And then there is the capacity building intermediary, the Community Network for Youth Development [<http://www.cnyd.org>], which does a lot of things around training and bringing people together about the research about youth and families and communities, and trying to therefore impact policy. And we found that when places have some of those three elements in place and that they are working together, that we're seeing more evidence of positive change. And then plus in San Francisco, there is a very active philanthropy community that sees itself as a partner in all of this. So those are just a couple examples from a smaller to a larger community.

KYLE: Albert, I'll come back to you -- who are some of the partners that you're working with in the task force? What kinds of roles are they playing? And are there partners that were really easy to get? Were there partners that were more difficult to bring along? And are there partners still out there that you view as potential partners that haven't yet signed up to be part of the task force? Could you kind of describe some of your partners and what kinds of relationships you have with some of them?

BALAGSO: Sure. We're divided into two groups -- one which we call the policy group, and the other one is the tactical group. We use military terms -- the policy does strategy, and tactics are done by the other group. The policy group is led by the Mayor, and the Mayor has brought together the major policymakers within the city and the county. So it's the Chief of Police, the County Sheriff, the Chief Probation Officer, some elected officials, school superintendents, key members of our community-based non-profit community. And everyone who has oversight of policies and resources that can contribute towards addressing the issues that we have at hand.

The other group, the technical team, has a similar makeup, but it's more of the managers who wield the direct services. So it's kind of a circle that can start from the bottom up and say, "Here is an issue." We do the policy change and turn it over to the tactics -- so it can start with the policy and goes into tactics. It can come from any direction.

We have worked over time to try to get the best folks to the table. Some of the key players that we have gotten to the table that were a bit difficult was in the early stages, we didn't have the key expertise. Everybody did something -- outside of law enforcement, there was really nothing around intervention components that we could bring to the table because nobody acknowledged the problem exists. So the key players we had to get to the table were the evangelical church ministries that were basically saving souls, but they were doing intervention on the streets. And we pulled them in, so we had church and state issues that we had to deal with. And I think still today we have not pulled in some of the traditional churches into being part of the staying power of this organization, because they have a lot of services that are offered in other churches that we don't access. It's basically the local parishes -- we have not really accessed that point. But we've got schools. We've got government. We've got community members, and everyone else is at the table.

KYLE: Talk about your partners a bit, Margaret, and the roles they play. Who are the most vital and committed and involved, and ones you're still struggling to bring along as well?

MORTON: I think that we virtually have representatives from every sector of the community,

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whether it's faith-based, education, social services, the library, healthcare providers -- really across the spectrum of community people and community partners, including private citizens, attorneys, industry, local business. And I think probably the most difficult when you're looking at issues of vulnerable youth, which as I mentioned before is how we actually began, addressing those youth violence, drugs, alcohol -- all those issues were sort of the focal point that we grabbed a hold of initially. It was expanded much beyond that over the last seven years.

But I think the most difficult group to bring along was probably your business individuals -- your people in business and industry because sometimes there is not that connection. At least back seven years ago, it was difficult to make that connection between, for example, an early intervention program and economic development. And what we have seen happen is that they have come along and are very much committed to our initiatives. And ours is primarily driven by a board of directors -- we are private non-profit -- we have evolved into a private non-profit. So our board of directors is representative of the entire community. The social service providers, education and those were probably the easiest partners to bring on board when you're talking about issues of youth and families.

But we continue to work -- I think collaboratives don't stand still. I think what we have learned in our community is that you have got to continue to work on those relationships and to bring people in. And that's a day-to-day proposition.

KYLE: For folks that would be thinking of starting a collaboration and haven't really thought of who they would approach, I think the usual suspects come readily to mind and I think have been mentioned by one or another of the three of you. Who are the unlikely participants that maybe even you when you were getting started wouldn't have thought would have ever come along, but have turned out to be really important and useful parts of a partnership? Or that you think that even though you may or may not have successfully included them, you think they're on the cutting edge, that these are the people that if you were starting a new collaborative somewhere today, that you would be going after them? Do any of you have an idea? I think the usual list of suspects is too short, and I think that you have been running successful things for six, ten, twelve years, and you have some ideas of who to go after. Who might those be?

MORTON: I think sometimes we forget the people that we're serving, that we tend to bring together the people in the community such as provider individuals -- business, that type of thing. And I think that we forget about the people that we are going to serve, and that's the consumer. And I think that is a critical piece to drive your collaborative and to really get investment at the grassroots level. You must include those.

BALAGSO: I agree with that. We tend to prescribe as professionals what people need as opposed to including them in the process at the onset. Instead of doing it to them, do it with them.

MORTON: Right.

BALAGSO: And I think you really have to take that approach. The other thing for us is -- Margaret had mentioned the business community. But how do you weave it into the economic development of your community? If you're gang infested, your schools aren't safe and other

things -- all these things that are attractions for business and the strongest economic environment -- you have to look at how these contribute towards that factor. And eventually those are all drawn in. The key for us was, just as if you have a substance abuse problem, you have to acknowledge you have a problem before you can deal with the cure.

POLITZ: One of the things that we've learned over time from working with so many different locales is the importance of relationship building as part of building a collaborative that work. You all described, both from San Jose and Sylacauga, that these are not easy processes to manage and to keep going over a period of time and to try and get the voices of the people who are eventually going to be affected as part of it. But it's critical, and there are ways to do it. We've done things and we've facilitated these processes where we've had sort of ongoing discussion groups between youth and adults who are part of the collaborative where they get a chance to really sit down at least once every six weeks with young people and talk to them about what they see as the strengths? What are the things that are going well in the community for them? Where do they see the weaknesses, and what could they do together? And just getting to know each other -- it seems so basic and it may seem too touchy-feely. But actually what happens is if people begin to create the relationships, it isn't generalizations that come out so much, but more specific things, saying, well, this is something we can take back and talk to with that group, whether it's family members or it's youth, to get their voices as part of it.

And some of the more unusual, maybe unnatural allies that I think we have to think about are the media. How are the media a part of these collaborations? They have to understand they are the ones getting the messages out and having the headlines that upset so much of us when we know there are other things going on. Well, at some level, some of them may be need to be involved in the process along the way so they begin to understand what the real issues are.

Also older adolescents, older adults who could be our greatest allies in building a youth agenda -- the older adolescents who have been through some of the systems and maybe had some negative experiences, but now are around to say, "This is how I came through it. These are the places, these are the people, these are the opportunities that really made the difference for me." And have them as spokespeople for what the collaborative is really trying to grow over time.

MORTON: I think you're right about that. I think one of the things that we really spent, and continue to spend, a great deal of time in is engaging those people that we -- I think, like Albert said, we tend to prescribe for. Ours is a new way of doing business. We don't do it that way any more. And one of the things that we did that I think was pretty successful is we realized early on that one size does not fit all. And as they say in *Field of Dreams*, you don't build it and they necessarily will come. And so we have found that we have to go where they are, where that family is or where that youth is, and address it at that level. Of course, in a small, rural community, we have many challenges, but some of the advantages are we have tremendous media support because we know each other and we trust each other. And that has not been -- that was one of our partners early on was the media.

KYLE: Let me ask about some of the issues and opportunities that occur in collaborations. How are you dealing with communication among collaboration partners? My understanding in some

communities, in some partnerships that sharing information and communicating across these sectors so that everyone is included, standardization of what terms mean so that they mean the same thing to all parties, use of data, avoiding duplications of programs so that you don't have one partner running the same kind of program that some other partner is running, when actually you need two kinds of programs. Talk about communication with and among your partners. Albert, can you start us off?

BALAGSO: Yeah, I think one of the key things for us was eliminating the hierarchy. If you're talking about, especially city and county or any of those between schools or other agencies, that the communication is moving over through the executive director, running down the silos. And it was getting the permission from that policy level to do more of a horizontal communication at a lower level around some standard goals that we have established within the task force structure. And even once you get that okay, you still have the inbred type of culture that works at both levels of working with both people. And yes, we have that in bureaucracy all the time.

So we looked at ways that we could bring the groups together outside of the work environment. We have several retreats that we have done in strategic planning, but we mixed in a lot of social and team building things to build camaraderie. And we did this on an annual basis. My first meeting with the entities -- and I had some funding mechanisms to all of them -- was I threatened to cut their funding if they didn't show up. The first one was a "fear of God." The second one was that I couldn't stop them from coming. And we built on that relationship that we could move on systemic changes that actually changed -- I think if any of you have ever worked with schools and school districts, you understand the challenges of sharing confidential information. And one of our programs deals with doing crisis responses on the school sites of outside entities, which include the police, law enforcement and other social service entities. And we found a clause in the California Welfare Institution Code that allowed us to do that. So we do a whole process of engaging the partners that we have built into actually executing memorandums of agreement that have put us under this Section 801.2 of the California Welfare Institution Code.

So we systematically reduced the barriers that stopped us from talking to each other. And I've got a hundred stories of different examples. But I think the key thing is that you've got to break down the old culture, and whatever works. I'm not saying this is the only way to do it. But there are cultural barriers between different agencies, different entities that stop you out of the gate, and I think that's the first thing you have to attack.

KYLE: In smaller communities or rural communities, do you have similar communication issues, or are they different?

MORTON: Well, I think, yes, we do have communication issues, and because of the way our county is spread out geographically, it becomes even more and more of an issue. But we have over the last four years been involved in developing a single point of entry model for a shared information system that links providers across the county and allows us to share -- you were talking about the confidentiality issues. This is a secured system. It allows us to share information and to really address the issues of duplication of services. Because what it allows an individual to do is when they enter the system, wherever they wind up, wherever they go, whatever programs they access, they do not have to tell their story over and over and over again.

Plus being a shared information system, we're able to look at what services have already been provided so that we don't duplicate services. That is a very simplistic way of describing the system here in Talladega County and Sylacauga. But it is a single point of entry model that I think -- in fact, the State of Alabama is looking at this very model because it does allow for that communication across entities. And it is a secured system, so the issues of Department of Human Resources and Education and whoever, then that those are not issues because it is a secured system. So that's not an issue. And that's something that we've been able to put together. In fact, we're getting ready to expand to merge our databases with Montgomery County, which is the state capital. So we're pretty excited about that possibility. But this is what we have done to encourage that communication.

KYLE: Other things, Bonnie, to add?

POLITZ: Yes, I think that the issue of communication needs to be an intentional part of the collaboration agenda. It's not something that should be considered, "Oh, it'll just happen." But it needs to be intentionally dealt with. As everybody has described so far, there needs to be open and frequent communication. There need to be informal and formal communication links. One size doesn't fit all. People have different communication styles. How both at the policy level, but also there is the whole interpersonal level of people coming together in a group who don't necessarily work together on a daily basis. And paying attention to the fact that to build a trusting environment where people are going to feel comfortable to be able to say things and not bury disagreements and not bury crises that come along and to handle conflict. It needs to be just an intentional piece. And sometimes there is either a person who is a part of that collaboration or sometimes a part-time consultant who maybe could really work with the group to do enjoyable things, but to build that sense of camaraderie. Because it's going to take you through a lot when hard times come, about hard issues that come up.

KYLE: This conversation about communication -- take us through the conversation I might have asked about -- turf issues and who should be in the lead -- does effective communication mitigate those and make those less? Or does it still come out in different ways -- guarding turf and "I'm responsible for this and you're not. And I want to be in charge"? Do good communication strategies solve those kinds of things? Or what kinds of things do solve those kinds of things?

BALAGSO: I think it's helpful with good communication that if people feel they're being heard and the things that are working well, there is not a need to be in the driver's seat constantly. When they feel that things fall on deaf ears or there is no reaction to what you've laid out on the table, that you walk away from the table, or there is a power move to take over it. So I think you've got to keep everybody focused on, as everybody has said, we're not duplicating stuff. There are enough problems in our communities for all of us to share. So let's see how we can divvy it up and do it the best. And create the mechanisms for everybody to have, as Bonnie said earlier, the formal and informal methods of getting together, because it's not always around a crisis that you get together and discuss things. A lot of things, there are informal bases --.

I'll give you an example. Our new Chief of Police, when I started working with him, he was a lieutenant back in the mid-90s, and he was in charge of the gang unit. And he went through a lot of the communication and team building processes that we did. And part of

what he was proud of as being a part of the Gang Task Force when he became Chief is that he still uses the same communication contacts, the CBO [Community-Based Organization] contacts that he established back in '95 by virtue of that process and maintaining that open communication with everybody he has worked with. It's not a one-stop thing. It's not a one-fix-all. It is constant communication. Collaboration is like a relationship. You have good times and bad times, and you work your way through the bad times and you roll with it. It's not a science.

MORTON: I agree with Albert on that, particularly the turf issues. I think that that's not something that is stagnant. I think it's something that is constantly -- and through communication and through the work that is being accomplished, I think is a big deterrent for that. But that is just like any relationship. You don't stand still. You either go forward or you go backward. And communication, of course, is a tremendous key, and that working together and being successful and outcomes and the impacts that you're having as a result of that collaborative I think is a learning experience for those that are involved. And many times, it's been our experience, it has really silenced that sense of "This is mine and you can't have it and I'm not going to share it."

POLITZ: I think that everybody has a need to be recognized positively. And there are opportunities as part of the collaboration experience to gain people's trust over time because there are some times even during the meetings where people take the time to say, "Isn't it great what happened at this particular CBA [Cost-Benefit Analysis?] two weeks ago?" or "There was a really positive thing related to what we've been working on at the police department or in the school." So that people who have been sitting around say, "Gee, my colleagues understand." It's nice to be recognized. We can focus on the positive. I think building that kind of climate as part of the collaboration -- and then everyone has self-interest. I mean, everybody is bringing something that they -- they want to believe that being a part of this collaboration is going to help them back in their own organization. So that the more that they can see the added value to their participation as part of this is just another level. So that's why these are not easy processes -- because there are so many levels of things that need to happen to make it really work.

KYLE: We've been talking about a collaboration in San Jose and a collaboration in Sylacauga. Are there other collaborations in your communities that either cut across or run parallel, perhaps dealing with other kinds of issues? I'm sure there are. I'm just thinking of our listeners who are thinking, "Well, that's fine and good for that kind of collaboration, but what about others?" Dealing with the partners you are, Albert, and being with the Department of Recreation, what other kinds of collaborations? Do they all function in a similar way? Are there ones that are more challenging than others? Why or why not? And even in a smaller community, are there other collaborative partnerships that are underway that either cut across your work or that you work in tandem with? Or are they all parallel?

BALAGSO: I think we try to weave them all together. We look at the things that we do -- we call it continuous services from 0 to about 24. And everything that we do within that area kind of weaves together. So we think it's important to tie the left hand to the right hand so that we know what we're doing and we maximize resources that we have. For example, these that I've talked to you about have been revolving around "Stop the Violence," "Stop the Recruitment."

But really that's addressing the symptom of what we're dealing with. And what we've really got to talk about are where kids start growing up and where they start making the wrong decisions and taking the wrong directions. So we have a collaboration of early childhood development because we believe that preschool is a start. So we've been developing a network of preschool facilities under what we call a "Family Smart Start" standard, which is doing both social and cognitive skills and getting them learning-ready to enter kindergarten.

Beyond that point, then we have a whole component we call "Family Afterschool" that unites the majority of our community-based organizations and our 19 school districts that we serve and provide a full network of approximately 236 afterschool sites throughout the city. Beyond that, then we have another collaboration -- we have a Workforce Investment Act, and it starts tying our youth component into how to take at-risk or high-risk young people into either a job or a skill development or into a more productive field. And the "Stop the Violence" transcends the whole gamut through all ages.

So we have a lot of them going on. But it's very risky to let them operate independent of each other without at least having some coordination because that's where the danger of duplication, turfism and spending the same money twice comes in.

POLITZ: Albert, is that your rule? Is there a sort of "collaboration of collaborations"? Is there oversight of all these different collaborative processes going on where --?

BALAGSO: At one point in time, I had them all. And I was about four inches taller and had more hair. I had to offload some of these things and we kind of restructured. So the early childhood development went off to the Library. Literacy and education is part of the objective that they have. I think we have 17 branch libraries throughout the city. We continue to do the afterschool program. We nurtured the WIA -- Workforce Investment Act -- components, and now they're off with our Office of Economic Development. And then the time factor in this whole thing is the majority of the funding of special funds comes through our department. And we grant out through the Federal Tobacco Settlement dollars and other general fund appropriations as well as our Community Development Block Grant -- our department is the major funder in this county. We fund about \$30 million a year to different entities. We've also partnered with our United Way, who is the second highest funder in the community.

And working together, we're trying to find some mechanism of working with all our entities to keep them united around doing the right things and working towards outcomes. What we want to do is fund outcomes. And if we get them all towards defining what those things are, we can do a better job of it. And it keeps everybody at the table. I hate to say that money is the only thing that does it, because there are many other good things we do without money. But it's a pretty good magnet to help. So we try to drive that as far as we can.

Our city is also broken down into what we call "service areas." We're an individual department, but we're clustered with the Library and some other departments and cross-referenced with PD [Police Department] and the Office of Economic Development. So that presents itself to stay connected at the hip.

So we use different mechanisms, but I think the constant is our key people. I'm one of them. I've got two deputy directors, a superintendent who are all part of the nucleus that works with these other entities or the counterparts in other departments. So starting at the system or structure, I think, also helps. We're so big out here. We're just under a million in population,

and we're divided by ten council districts who operate like ten independent cities, and then they're divided into about 270 neighborhoods and 19 school districts. So it's creating a district function that we can break these down into more bite-sized pieces. So communication is key to that.

KYLE: You brought up something that I wanted to get into, which is what it costs -- what it saves, what it costs. Is there financing involved? And I want to perhaps go back to Margaret to tie some of these things together from her point of view to add into that. Margaret, what does it take to do the work you're doing in Sylacauga? Especially as advice to other people -- "Well, I don't have the money to put this together."

MORTON: Well, I think that that is the key to the collaboration piece of all this. I mean, as I mentioned, our collaborative addressed issues of vulnerable youth back in 1996. And this initiative has spread -- as Albert was talking theirs has, ours includes literally issues of residents of the community birth to death -- or prenatal to death -- through early intervention all the way to issues of at-risk youth and education and employment and WIA [Workforce Investment Act] and the whole gamut.

I think the beauty of the collaborative that exists in our community is that, yes, it does require dollars. And the City of Sylacauga contributes to this collaborative, as does the County Commission. And some other governmental entities contribute to it. But we do have to pursue other sources of income. Now we have other entities in our partners and our collaboration coalition that actually provide -- the reason I likened it to "dinner on the grounds" earlier is they provide whatever they're good at, so it doesn't cost anyone the total cost of the initiative or the meal, or whatever you want to say about it. But we have a budget right now of a little over a million dollars. And we operate various programs out of this private non-profit organization. Probably around 17 different programs that address specific needs in the community. Again, we don't duplicate services, so there you go again, you're not responsible for providing all the programs. We also have support from the health community and the faith-based community. So ours is more of a putting together the resources so that we don't have to have a tremendous budget to operate what already exists in the community, but to really set up an integrated system of care for the residents of our community. And that means that we of course have to all work together in the collaborative framework. And that has been successful.

KYLE: One of the questions that we got in advance of the audioconference that I want to come back to -- and maybe Bonnie can help us -- is that collaborations often need help in getting their work done. What models or best practices or experiences in providing technical assistance to collaboratives can you discuss? I think, Bonnie, you may have aided various collaboratives across the country. What kinds of models and experiences do you use to help folks build common agendas and incorporate youth voice, etc.? And then Margaret and Albert might talk about resources that they may have used themselves to strengthen their collaborative in terms of an assistance viewpoint.

POLITZ: Well, I think it's important for the meeting -- sometimes, you know, the group that's in Washington, D.C., sometimes people holler at us to come in to help start off a process because they want an agenda about youth development on the table. They want that perspective about a

developmental approach and who youth are. And so we'll come in for a day or two and really work with a collaboration to sort of set the basis for the kinds of questions they may want to answer. We want to listen a lot to what they have to say and build from their own experience. We've been in places where we've been a national facilitator, but we've had a partner of a local facilitator who in between the times we're there -- which in one case is like every other month for two days -- that local facilitator was the one working with the ad hoc groups and the subgroups to make sure that things were happening so that when we came together as a big group, there has been work done in between.

There is no question that the convening process of a collaboration is important. People have to spend time thinking about what's going to happen that day. I mean, everybody can have some kind of input, and with our new forms of technology and with listservs, there are opportunities to put out draft agendas. But whose job is it to do that? Then somebody else needs to facilitate the meeting. And in some places, we've seen it where it rotates among different agencies, sometimes we've seen wonderful program managers and directors not be great facilitators. So there is a loss of interest sometimes when that happens. Some communities really thought if we have to use money for certain things, it is going to be about having a skilled convener who can make sure that the hour and a half or two hours we have together is really moving along the way it should, that we're clear about what our goals were for the day, that we're accomplishing what we want, that at least the majority of people leave feeling satisfied.

But I think that listening, asking questions -- I think having the opportunities -- is it focused on family? Is it focused on youth -- the collaboration? To have opportunities for the adults who are part of that, like I said earlier, to have the interaction during various sessions, or to have young people as a meaningful advisory group. They may not be able to come to every meeting. But there can be a certain number of the adults who have more time or different kinds of times where they are able to meet with the young people and keep something going over time. So that there is either a buddy system set up, they're considered a subcommittee or an executive committee of young people who are advising -- or of family members -- so that they have a meaningful voice. And that's really the key word, I think.

KYLE: Margaret or Albert, do you want to add things that you've seen as being good models or good practices in terms of supporting your collaborative that you would recommend that other collaboratives use, if they have not thought about them?

MORTON: There is a model that we utilized throughout our process. Of course, our mayor convened the people to come together. And then we did hire a facilitator from the University of Alabama for a short period of time. But we utilized the model Together We Can, and basically followed that process of the getting together and the building of trust and ownership and the strategic planning and taking action. So we've utilized that model, and it has been very successful for us.

BALAGSO: We've put in a nucleus together of shakers and movers, and that has allowed us to have a lot of staying power. In the last year, I think we had a run -- I think Bonnie had mentioned sometimes you get a manager who doesn't quite have the motivating factor to keep people moving in the right direction of the strategic vision. And you have a tendency to sometimes lose your energy and your momentum. So we went through a whole process of

reengineering in the last year. And the key for me was finding a key visionary to put in the lead role. I had done it for about a decade. It was finding someone else that could take that role. And we did to have that individual, but we had to start from a new rite of passage and say, "What we have isn't working and we need to reconstitute it." So we reengineered, reviewed all the membership, went from the ground up, and we established a new strategic planning process.

And this individual has had a lot of different experiences in leadership and strategic planning. And we've had all along, I think, for several years a great evaluator called Crime Prevention Associates here in the Bay Area. And they started off a long time ago with a great framework that we could always go back to, and we still measure a lot of the same things. We changed it a little bit. It was a great foundation to always go back to if we felt ourselves veering in the wrong direction. It's not anything that's canned or unique I think on any national level, but it's the basic grassroots skills that we've been able to establish around the Bay Area that we've been able to draw into. And that was also part of I think of the expertise that we used several years ago. We were a national "Weed and Seed" training city for the Department of Justice and that built a lot of capacity, I think, within our city of having that ability to be the convener and the organizer and bring stuff together. So that's been very helpful for us. And we still maintain some of that expertise today.

KYLE: Operator, is there anybody online for a question?

FACILITATOR: Your first question comes from the line of Wilbur Higgins from Newburgh, New York.

QUESTIONER: We're starting our first major collaborative effort through the method of a youth summit. Has anyone had any experience from that type of program?

BALAGSO: Yes, we've done several here in San Jose, depending on which group you're looking at. We did one years ago that we asked the schools to send kids, and of course, they sent us the best kids. So we learned about the basic social issues and needs that youth had, and we tried to create a handful of things that we would focus on in the years to come. And we had a youth commission, and the youth commission is really utilized now to write and revamp our Youth Services Master Plan about every four years. So it's very youth driven at that level.

Now at a different level with the kids who aren't doing as well, we have done things in local neighborhoods -- basically "Stop the Violence" type of summits. And we bring different community-based organizations, as well as the stuff that we have, to bridge that together. But we found that if you go into any type of "Stop the Violence" localized in any neighborhood, you have to engage the parents as well. Because we found in many of our neighborhoods that the culture was generational and getting the kid to change when the parent wouldn't change was working against us. So that occurred actually last year that we did that one.

MORTON: We have not had a "youth summit," but what we did is we engaged in focus groups across the community in the communities where youth live in terms of addressing their needs -- you know, hearing their voice. And that has seemed to be a working kind of -- has assisted the coalition in looking at where the problems are going to be driven, particularly under our

Sylacauga Promise -- the America's Promise model -- we have engaged youth as well in volunteer efforts and such.

POLITZ: The one thing that I've seen around the country is that in isolation, youth summits don't work. Youth summits are great publicity sometimes for a mayor and city council members -- you know, the adults -- and a small crew of young people who get interviewed by the press. But if there is not a strategy in place -- you know, at least an outline of one -- that can even be promoted at the summit, but then used as part of the agenda to say, "Now what's going to happen next week? What's going to happen in the next two months? What's going to happen?" -- maybe not to have four summits a year because they're very expensive and all that. But what's the plan to keep young people engaged at their neighborhood level, in the community that's connected back to what happened at the summit? Because then next year when you have the next summit, you therefore are building the agenda from what they're doing throughout the year, and they help to create the next agenda.

BALAGSO: I agree with Bonnie. That's why our master plan process ensued after the summit. Because if one time they go away, "Did you do anything?" But the youth commission is an appointed body of the council, which meets on a regular basis, and the document they produce is a guiding document that we use to direct our funding. So there is something that comes out of what they do, and they do indeed present at the council themselves.

KYLE: There is additional information about youth summits on the NLC website -- www.nlc.org/iyef. And if you go to that particular section, there is a publication section, there is an audioconferences section, there is a youth development section. And in each of those -- in one or more of those is a newsletter about youth summits. We did an audioconference last fall on youth summits. So those of you who are looking for more information on youth summits, there is another way to get it, and e-mailing us back at NLC if those particular links don't work for you. Is there another question, Operator?

FACILITATOR: Not at this time, sir.

KYLE: Okay, we're getting close to the end of our time anyway. So I want to give an advertisement for some things we're doing, and give my speakers a chance to figure out what their closing comment is. Is there one more point that you were wanting to make that we haven't gotten to yet? And secondly, is there a resource or a website or any kind of item, place, person or thing that you can refer our listeners to?

As I said at the beginning of the call, we have been doing a series of audioconferences. Our next audioconference is February 24 about building assets for the residents in a community. It will also be held at 2:30 Eastern time on March 24. Our topic will be Preventing Youth and Childhood Obesity, and it will be at 12:30 Eastern time. April 21, the topic will be What to Do When Youth Say There's Nothing to Do, and that will be held at 4 p.m. Eastern time. And there is one on May 19 and one on June 16 as well. We hope you will join us in one or another of our upcoming audioconferences. Or perhaps you will join us with our summit on Your City's Families, which will be held in San Antonio September 25 to 28. And again, information about that is at our website -- www.nlc.org/iyef. Including the information,

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that now through January 31, just on Monday, the lowest registration fee we will offer is available.

I'd like to come back to our speakers, and start with Albert, please. What's a parting comment, and perhaps an additional resource that you would want to give to our listeners as we close out today?

BALAGSO: The key thing that I would like to say is whatever you engage in creating the collaboration, that it's something that's tangible that people can feel makes a difference. It's easy to rally people around crisis. It's hard to keep them engaged when there isn't anything to keep them there.

And the other thing -- I think we mentioned this earlier -- the idea of celebration, and celebrating the success that you do. Because one thing that we found is that in celebration of giving away the accolades, the power comes back tenfold. The same way of honoring other people for what they've done instead of yourselves really helps to keep your group together.

So the folks in New York or anybody, if you would like a copy of the Youth Services Master Plan or the new strategic plan that we're putting together on the Gang Task Force, I would be happy to e-mail you if you would just contact us.

KYLE: And do you want to give that out? Or do you want them to contact to me, and I'll forward it to you.

BALAGSO: Just forward to me. Contact John. John, you can forward that to me.

KYLE: Okay, so you can e-mail me at rpd1@nlc.org, and I'll make sure that Albert gets it. Margaret, any closing comments or resources?

MORTON: Yes, I'd just like to comment -- and I have mentioned before the America's Promise Alliance for Youth is a wonderful model to rally people around issues for youth in your community. And it has certainly been a standard bearer for us in Sylacauga. We are one of 13 communities that are considered demonstration sites for America's Promise, and that has really brought people together.

And in reference to celebration, we celebrate our victories here in the community and through Sylacauga Promise Day annually as well as our Breakfast of Champions, where we do recognize individuals in the community and entities in the community that have made significant contributions to this initiative.

I also would encourage anyone who is interested in looking at best practices for collaboration and partnership and community development to go to the website for "Together We Can" initiative, a community collaborative wellness tool. We utilize that, and although it appears very simplistic, it has all the best practices for community collaborative efforts, and it gives you a starting point of how you can pursue it. So I would encourage you to do that. Anyone is welcome to contact me, and I'd be glad to share any information that I have.

We have found one of the most successful ways of actually looking at collaboration and partnership is to go and see one in action. I think sometimes we have to see it to really understand how it works. And we have entities that come to our community to see what we are doing to accomplish these goals and objectives for our alliance. And I think it's helpful a

lot of times to actually see that firsthand.

KYLE: Do you have direct contact information or website for Together We Can?

MORTON: I do. Would you like me to give it to you now?

KYLE: Yes.

MORTON: It's www.togetherwecan.org.

KYLE: Very simple. Bonnie, closing comments or resources?

POLITZ: I think one of the things the communities can do when you asked before about examples of other kinds of collaboration is to look around your community before maybe -- or even as you're engaging them. Were there other kinds of collaborations that were going on around an issue not even related to children, youth, families, whatever? And were they successful, and why? Was it an economic development collaboration? Was it about a stadium? Was it about something else? What made that successful? And sometimes there are certain things that are out of our control that will never be a part of the agendas that we care about. But there could be some lessons to be learned to say, well, gee, if that process, that strategy, their approach -- is it really the people that were involved there -- whatever it may have been, are there some lessons for our community that we can then transfer over to make sure that this collaboration becomes successful.

We've done work over time around what we call the seven elements of a youth development infrastructure, which focuses in on everything from strategic planning to the other end of that -- research, documentation and evaluation. And the other five strategies include information collection and dissemination, actually thinking about space in a community and how space is used, how money is used, thinking about capacity building and building an informed and organized constituency. And we've used this and created this with communities around the country who helped us to sort of see that maybe these were the essential elements that collaborations and collaborative bodies can use, from a developmental perspective, that we know what the strengths are of communities. We know what the strengths of young people and families are. And how do we build on those so that we get more of it.

If people are interested in that, you can come to the website, which is on www.aed.org and then look under "Youth Programs", and our center comes up, the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research. And you can also contact me at Bpolitz@aed.org.

KYLE: It's been a great call. I still have questions on my list, and I'm sure that there are additional things that we can reap from these three speakers, but our time is ending. Bonnie Politz, thank you very much for joining us. Margaret from Sylacauga, we appreciate that you were able to talk to us today. And Albert from San Jose, thanks again for joining us. We appreciate hearing everything you had to say. To our listeners, thanks for joining us, and we hope to be with you again.