

No Community Left Behind (NCLB) Strategy

Overview

No Community Left Behind (NCLB) is a strategy development process for strategic action vis-à-vis community development, community partners engagement, exploring opportunities and adopting new ways to building stronger, healthier and safer communities.

This document presents a community-based, multi-agency approach to putting a neighbourhood level, strategy development process in place for both social development and neighbourhood restoration.

In the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, usually, crime and fear of crime have been observed to be the predominant concerns. The NCLB addresses social determinants of health through a collaborative approach to integration of services. If crime is a matter of concern for residents in a given neighbourhood, the NCLB approach helps to work towards crime prevention as well.

The goal of the NCLB approach is to engage residents in neighbourhood assessment and local level planning, implementation and evaluation process.

The NCLB strategy brings together communities, community associations, community houses, local Health and Resource Centers, City, other service providers and concerned business owners around the shared goal of addressing neighbourhood level problems, ranging from installing play structures for children and beautification to preventing crime and gang activity through curative measures, depending on the needs and priorities of each individual neighbourhoods.

In the neighbourhoods where crime prevention is not the primary concern, a normal process of setting up a local Steering Committee, followed by engaging the community in the rest of the planning and implementation phases, takes place.

If the community is at risk and fear of crime is a major hurdle in the way of effective community engagement, the NCLB strategy takes a two-pronged approach to crime control and prevention:

- a) Law enforcement agencies build trust relationships with residents and cooperate with other partners in removing criminals from the community.
- b) Program activities bring prevention, intervention and neighbourhood revitalization services to the area to restore a sense of safety.

By eliminating the fear factor, the two-pronged approach paves the way for maximum community participation in setting up broader community development priorities and plans.

The NCLB strategy is based on the key principles of collaboration, coordination, community participation and resources leveraging. NCLB sites (leading organizations implementing the NCLB approach in one or more neighbourhoods) maximize the impact of existing programs and resources by coordinating and integrating existing local, city, provincial, federal and private sector initiatives, criminal justice efforts and social services.

The NCLB strategy places heavy emphasis on resident engagement and community participation. The approach actually empowers 'individuals' to be involved in community development – i.e. they do not have to be part of an organization or group. Residents of the neighbourhoods are actively involved in local level planning and problem solving in their community. The vision of *No Community Left Behind* is to keep people well; to enable them to live, work, and raise their families in a safe and prosperous environment.

This vision is achieved through:

- Developing a comprehensive community-based strategy and neighbourhood plans to address social determinants of health, while working to address major risk factors that lead to fear, isolation and crime;
- Mobilizing community members and police services to assist one another in identifying and removing criminal elements from the neighbourhoods where crime is a prime issue;
- Assisting concerned service agencies to identify and respond to social/community/health service needs; and
- Engaging and supporting community members to participate more fully in neighbourhood planning and decision-making processes.

Determinants of health are addressed at the neighbourhood level. The positive outcomes of this initiative highlight the impact of holistic community-based projects that include multiple partnerships and a balance between broad-based and neighbourhood-specific planning.

Fundamental principles

The NCLB strategy is based on four fundamental principles: collaboration, coordination, community participation and resources leveraging. These principles set NCLB apart from traditional approaches of the past and are a key to the success of the strategy at the neighbourhood level.

Adaptability is a fundamental principle to the NCLB strategy which can be used in urban or rural settings and can be applied to address various socio-economic demographic challenges and issues faced by communities. The principle of adaptability encourages absolute contextualization of the strategy and recognizes that there is no one model for community development. The strategy helps to shape the 'model' of development for each community.

Collaboration

A host of government departments, social service agencies, community organizations, private sector businesses and residents play an important role in community development. The NCLB approach is to bring all stakeholders investing in the same neighbourhood/s in various ways around a single table. This facilitates sharing information, jointly reviewing local level plans and taking strategic actions, alone or in partnership, for maximizing the return on their investment.

All service providers have a responsibility to the community and a stake in its future. Often, these stakeholders do not have opportunities to coordinate and share information, let alone do strategic planning and pool their resources to jointly address the roots of community problems. The NCLB approach requires communities to establish a collaborative process to capitalize on the full potential that the formal and intentional interaction of stakeholders can provide.

Collaboration leads to permanent channels of communications among stakeholders, partnerships among organizations with similar goals, a strategic approach to addressing local level problems, a broader support for the NCLB strategy and additional resources and support.

Coordination

A number of government agencies and community organizations provide extraordinary services to the community. Most community members may not even know many service providers in their area and the goals, objectives and services offered by these organizations. Moreover, the service providers may not know exactly where overlapping or duplication of services is taking place at the grassroots level.

The NCLB strategic approach brings together the officials who represent these organizations and assist in coordinating their activities. Both **coordination across disciplines** - such as law

enforcement, social services and economic development - and **coordination across levels of government and municipal services** are critical to the NCLB strategy.

Coordination enables effective allocation and concentration of resources in designated neighbourhoods, a better match of services with identified community needs, elimination of overlap and duplication, and maximum benefit from existing services and programs.

Community participation

Residents' engagement is key. NCLB provides residents with an opportunity and power for input into community development planning and action processes. Communities that are engaged in their own local level assessment and planning to solve their own problems function more effectively than communities which depend on services provided by "outsiders." The NCLB's approach involves residents in assessment and decision-making processes and encourages broad citizen involvement, which is more effective than the programs designed to simply provide services to people or dependent clients. Therefore, community participation through social mobilization activities is one of the core components of the NCLB strategy.

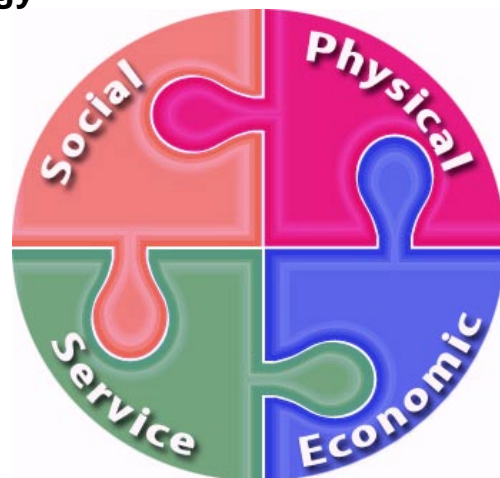
Resources leveraging

Funding to meet the entire scope of needs, which may be required to transform and revitalize a neighbourhood experiencing a multitude of problems - ranging from high crime, and social and economic decay - is limited. The NCLB strategy is an opportunity for a community to leverage the available resources to support strategic planning and organizational structures, which would enable it to tap into additional resources from local and provincial governments, foundations, corporations and other funding organizations. The fact that the community problems come to the fore from the community's collective voice is powerful. It is not some outside agency that comes to assess, prioritize and plan for the concerned communities. Although a front line staff from a local agency may facilitate the community in the implementation of the various phases of the NCLB process, it is, in fact, the community which identifies and prioritizes problems and concerns, and suggests local solutions to the rest of the stakeholders for possible support.

Other local development initiatives in the concerned neighbourhoods get seamlessly integrated under the NCLB's broader umbrella. The NCLB sites are well placed to capitalize on all available funding sources in both the public and private sectors. In fact, NCLB sites are expected to leverage all available resources in order to fully fund their strategies for local development. By the end of the NCLB initial process, the community has a plan with various components and activities that need to be undertaken.

Key components of the NCLB strategy

NCLB is a comprehensive response to putting a strategy development process in place at the grassroots level. Communities are diverse and dynamic. No two communities are alike, nor will any community stay the same forever. There is no universal solution to community development that could be used as a blueprint for all communities. It is thus necessary to put a strategy development process in place that looks into key areas and help the community members identify, prioritize and address their problems on a regular basis.



The *No Community Left Behind* (NCLB) approach provides an enhanced focus on neighbourhood means

improving the community's voice, giving local residents more say over what happens where they live. The four key factors that impact their lives and community's health are their social environment, physical condition and the infrastructure, their economic status and the services that they receive from various agencies, different levels of government and other service providers. Based on this, the four key interconnected components of the NCLB approach and assessment, planning and progress monitoring are: **Social, Physical, Economic and Service.**

Social: The well-known concept of “social capital” is key to understanding how the social environment can affect a community’s health. Weak social and political networks make it difficult for communities to organize and work for the collective good. A community with strong social networks is better able to advocate for itself, its residents better able to control their individual and collective futures.

Since **social mobilization** and community engagement is key to effecting changes to any of the four identified areas, it is recognized as the encompassing component of the NCLB approach.

Physical: The physical features, infrastructure, facilities, and housing conditions of a community influence the health of residents in many ways. The link between health and the “built environment”—streets, housing, businesses, schools, parks, and patterns of regional growth and change—has become a new focus for public health and planning officials. Hence it is one of the core components of the NCLB strategy.

Service: The inequitable distribution of health, education, law enforcement, sanitation and recreation opportunities and services in some neighbourhoods can negatively affect the health of a community. The community assessment phase of the NCLB process focuses on identifying risk and protective factors regarding service provision in the designated communities. Different types of risk factors the NCLB planning process takes into account are: Lack of access to necessary healthcare services, culturally inappropriate and poor quality services, prevalence of violence, isolation, reluctance to seek needed services, and unavailability of some basic services.

Economic: The economic environment, economic status of residents, employment opportunities and working conditions in a community have a critical impact on health. Independent of the impact of each individual’s income on his or her health, the economic environment of a neighbourhood has its own physical and psychological impact. Community Economic development is the key to neighbourhood revitalization. That’s why the NCLB approach considers community economic development (CED) as one of the core areas of the overall strategy. See the neighbourhood restoration component in the following section which addresses the economic health of the community in greater detail.

When the NCLB approach is implemented in any neighbourhood, the situation is thoroughly assessed from a social, physical environment, service provision and economic status perspective. Different communities are at different levels, facing exclusive issues with diverse influencing factors. When the community enters into the strategic planning process, it identifies core areas for its Community Action Plan.

The following is an example from the Banff, Russell Heights, Confederation Court and Heatherington communities in South East Ottawa. Due to similar ownership and almost similar issues and concerns, the core areas identified for interventions were the following: Social and physical environment in these communities were mostly affected by crime, violence and drug issues. In conjunction with this was the need for service alignment according to the most prioritized needs and concerns. Therefore, law enforcement, community policing prevention and empowerment, and neighbourhood restoration were selected as the core components for action in these communities. Social Mobilization remained the encompassing component.

Law enforcement and community policing represent the **correctional** aspect of the strategy. Intervention, empowerment and neighbourhood restoration represent the **preventive** phase. Community policing would

be involved in both corrective and preventive activities and would serve as a bridge between the two components.

Experience shows that in most vulnerable communities, neighbourhood deterioration, low income and fear of crime, or existence of criminal elements, are usually the major concerns. These issues prevent the community from mobilization and organization in the first place. In such situations, the community crime and neighbourhood deterioration problems cannot be fully addressed with piecemeal solutions. Therefore, the NCLB strategy for such neighbourhoods is a multi-level strategic plan that would include four basic components besides the encompassing component of social mobilization:

- Law enforcement;
- Community policing;
- Prevention, intervention and neighbourhood restoration;
- Neighbourhood restoration.

Law enforcement and community policing represent the “**curative**” or correctional aspect of the strategy. The focus of community policing is to improve the relationship and accountability between law enforcement and residents. It builds bridges and establishes trust between the community and Ottawa Police Service. Prevention, intervention, treatment and neighbourhood restoration represent the “**preventive**” components.

Law Enforcement: Law enforcement goals are the identification, arrest, prosecution, conviction and incarceration of violent criminals and drug traffickers operating in the partner communities. Some of the law enforcement initiatives in the NCLB sites focus on special enforcement operations such as assigning special neighbourhood officers, offenders-focused approach, intensified drug and gang watch and elimination of gang activities in these areas. City by-law plays an effective role in problems such as nuisances, noise, graffiti removal etc.

Community Policing: The goal of community policing is to establish mutual trust between Ottawa Police and community members. It aims to raise the level of community involvement in crime prevention and intervention activities to solve gangs and drug-related problems (to name a few), in neighbourhoods and enhance the level of community security. Activities focus on increasing community and police informal interaction, police visibility in the neighbourhood and developing cooperative relationships between the police and residents in the target areas.

Foot patrols, cooperative problem solving discussions, victim referrals to support services, police formal presentations, interaction with youth and nuisance abatement activities increase positive interaction between the police and the community. Community-orientated policing bridges the curative and preventive strategies. OPS officers obtain helpful information from area residents for curative efforts while they help the community members with community revitalization and prevention resources.

Prevention, Intervention, and Neighbourhood restoration: The prevention, intervention, and neighbourhood component of the NCLB strategy would address the needs of the community and help prevent crime and violence by addressing the risk and protective factors associated with drug abuse, violence, and crime. The coordinated efforts of law enforcement, social service agencies, private sector businesses and residents help improve provision of services. Prevention, intervention and neighbourhood restoration include youth services, after school programs and Youth Council activities. Youth Councils can be established and linked to other councils in adjacent communities for coordinated activities and supported from youth service agencies and the city.

A meeting place, such as a community house in the Ottawa Community housing (OCH) communities or a community centre is the best place to organize and deliver an array of youth and

adult-oriented services in a multi-service centre setting. Every NCLB site needs to have access to at least one such meeting/activities and activities space.

Neighbourhood Restoration: The neighbourhood restoration component of the NCLB strategy is part of the Economic development strategy. It is designed to revitalize distressed neighbourhoods and improve the quality of life through economic development and a revitalization of the community's health and wellness. Neighbourhood restoration programs help to improve living conditions, enhance home security, allow for low-cost physical improvements, develop long-term efforts to renovate and maintain housing, and provide educational, economic, social, recreational and other opportunities. The neighbourhood restoration component also looks into the possibilities of community economic development (CED) opportunities for the residents.

Key elements of the NCLB strategy

The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the primary work force in the NCLB strategy. Each NCLB site needs to have a local Steering Committee, closely overseeing and guiding progress in one or more neighbourhoods.

The Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from all social service agencies providing services to the residents in the concerned NCLB site, is responsible for establishing NCLB goals and objectives, supporting community action plans, designing and developing new programs, providing guidance on implementation and assessing the progress.

Each local NCLB Committee is linked to the City community development services and provides it with information on the neighbourhood level plans.

The Strategic Plan

Each neighbourhood in the NCLB Site is directed by its local neighbourhood development plan, approved and supported by the Steering Committee through a community problems and needs assessment process; developing sound resolutions and responses; and securing necessary resources and participation.

In preparation for developing the strategic plan, the community engages a wide range of people from their neighbourhoods and organizations to plan this strategic approach, starting with neighbourhood assessment, developing neighbourhood profile, preparing an inventory of resources, and moving on to identifying the gaps, analyzing the problems and proposing solutions. A local community health or resource centre (CHRC) acts as the main facilitating and coordinating agency in this process for the NCLB site.

NCLB in the context of the Community Development Framework (CDF)

NCLB is now used as an approach to social mobilization in the City of Ottawa's Community Development Framework (CDF). NCLB's strategy is used at the community level for community engagement in the strategy development process, giving selected neighbourhoods an opportunity to systematically articulate their needs and find solutions through a collaboration of all concerned service agencies.

The Community Development Framework (CDF) is intended to move the city to an approach that supports a focused, coordinated and strategic effort to align services and resources addressing community needs in neighbourhoods. The Framework brings together funders, community organizations, residents, researchers and city services to share information and leverage opportunities to support targeted neighbourhood-based initiatives in a strategic and coordinated fashion.

Specifically, the CDF is designed to:

- Build a common vision and commitment to targeting service interventions and resources to high need neighbourhoods;
- Create a common understanding of neighbourhood boundaries;
- Use social indicators of health as objective measures upon which to select the neighbourhoods of greatest need;
- Bring together community leaders, funders, researchers, community organizations and municipal services to mobilize and leverage resources and coordinate services;
- Create a mandate to work with partners to clear roadblocks and leverage resources;
- Align resource priorities and service personnel towards the targeted neighbourhoods with greatest needs;
- Create a community-based evaluation framework in order to monitor progress;
- Provide neighbourhoods with research-based practices, tools and approaches to facilitate community problem solving.

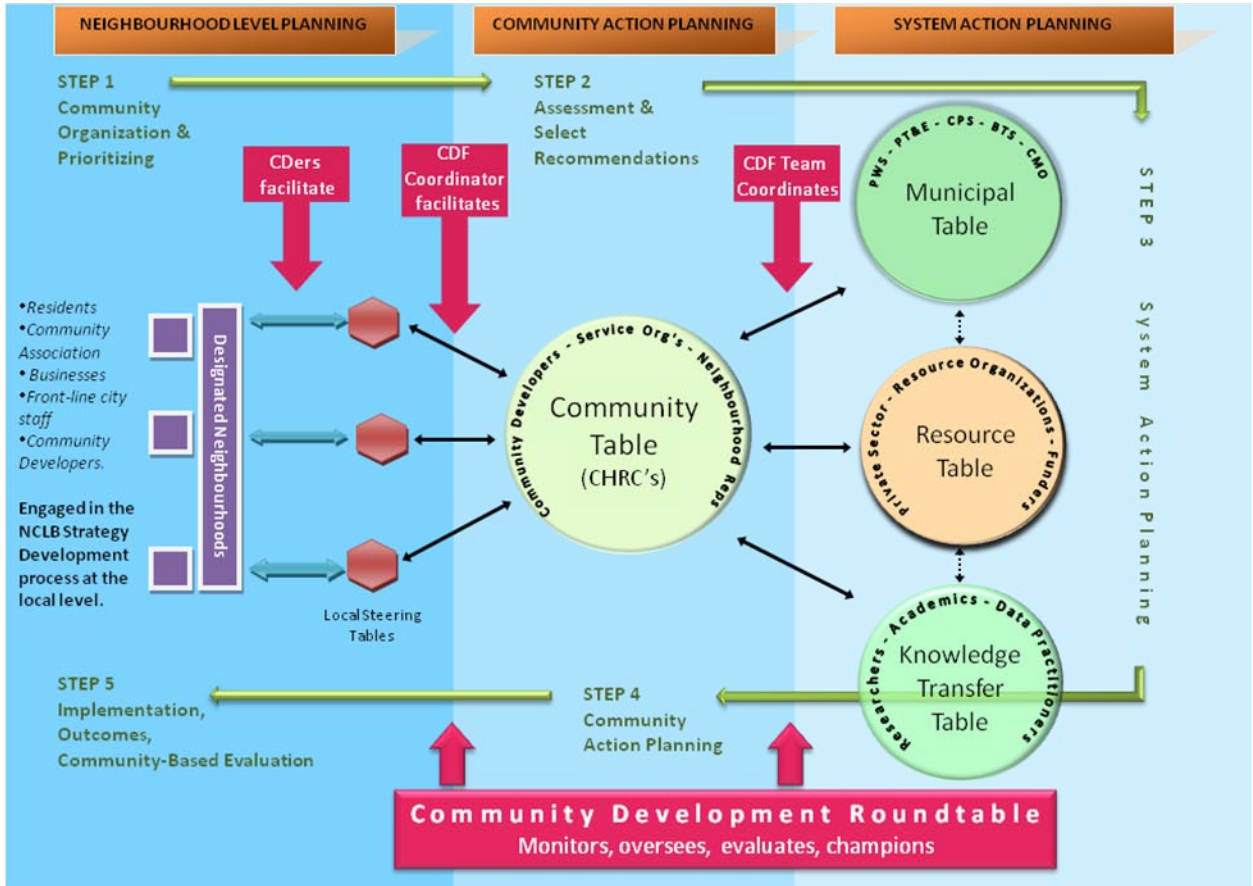
System Level:

In order to accomplish this, the structure will include the following multiple components as a system support, working together to meet the above-stated goals:

- A Community Table (shared experience);
- A Community Development Roundtable (shared leadership);
- A Knowledge Transfer Table (shared knowledge);
- A Resource Table (collaborative processes);
- A Municipal Services Table (coordinated services).

As we can see in the following figure, Community Health and Resource Centres in Ottawa would play a key role in establishing local Steering Committees and engaging residents in their neighbourhoods in the strategic planning process. Accordingly, any lead agency (CHRC) coordinates and supports the initial contact with community members and partnering agencies by providing meeting space, mailing resources, planning assistance, and other necessary support. Later on, the same CHRC assumes the responsibility for implementing the strategy development process and coordinating among the stakeholders.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (CDF) IN ACTION



Community level:

Other partners include the councillor's office which has a key role to play in the designated neighbourhoods along with management of the many agencies and organizations. Commitment and dedication from the community at the grassroots level and decision makers in lead agencies and municipal service departments are critical to the success of the collaborative approach.

The Community Developer/NCLB Coordinator in each CHRC manages the Steering Committee, organizes day-to-day program activities, and oversees progress on the community action plans.

Community members' consistent engagement is a critical component. The community is involved from the beginning in identifying concerns and priorities and formulating local solutions. NCLB builds communities capacity to solve their own problems. Citizen involvement, whether through community meetings, local projects, marches, rallies, involvement on the Steering Committee, or other activities, is a key to the success of local level planning and implementation.

Business partners can help sites build and leverage resources to create positive change for the community. To create a comprehensive strategy, business leaders are involved in activities such as sponsoring community festivals and events. If the emphasis is on crime in a given neighbourhood, The OPS play an essential role for the curative activities.

Faith-based organizations are often the heart of communities. Churches and other faith-based groups have resources and the unique ability to facilitate change and increase community involvement in strategy development process at the neighbourhood level.

Youth-serving organizations are important members in this comprehensive community effort. As prevention and intervention are important components of the strategic process, it would be important not to duplicate efforts. Sites would work in close collaboration with other youth-focused organizations to ensure that youth in the designated areas receive the needed resources and services.

The way to go

The development process of a neighbourhood level plan requires significant commitment by the community to engage in strategic planning, collaborate with key stakeholders and coordinate programs and services. The basic characteristics of the strategic planning process would be:

- A focused process that concentrates on selected issues;
- Assessment of community assets;
- Assessment of community problems and needs;
- An action-orientation with a strong emphasis on practical results;
- An emphasis on innovative approaches to problem solving.

The basic planning stages involved in developing the NCLB strategy would be:

- Organization and convening of a NCLB Steering Committee;
- Selection or confirmation of the designated neighbourhoods;
- Conduct of a community assessment in the designated neighbourhood;
- Selection of priorities and strategies to address neighbourhood challenges;
- Identification of goals, objectives, and major tasks;
- Development of an implementation plan;
- Implementation;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Readjustment.