

**Ready or Not, Here it Comes:
Preparing for Success in Rapidly Changing Times**

Cohort I 18-month Evaluation Report

Prepared for the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part I. Ready or Not Overview

Developed and funded by the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York (Foundation), *Ready or Not* was designed to build organizational and community capacity for health improvement. From November 2012 through June 2014, *Ready or Not* provided selected organizations with financial and expert assistance to strengthen the core of their organizations and improve capacity. The Foundation believes that support for capacity building will enable organizations to provide more effective programs and supports to those they serve and, in the long term, improve health outcomes for children in poverty and frail elders in western and central New York.

In November 2012, *Ready or Not* grants were awarded to nine organizations (all awards were for \$50,000 over 18 months except for Amherst Meals on Wheels which received \$13,000):

- **Allegany/Western Steuben Rural Health Network (AWSRHN)**, in Wellsville, NY – new name as of 2014 is **Ardent Solutions (Ardent)**
- **Amherst Meals on Wheels (AMOW)**, Amherst, NY
- **Catholic Charities of Buffalo (CCOB)**, Buffalo, NY
- **Complete Senior Care (CSC)**, Niagara Falls, NY
- **ElderLife/Parkway Senior Care (Parkway)**, Utica, NY – new name as of Q4 2013 is **Parkway Center**
- **Erie County Department of Senior Services (Erie County)**, Buffalo, NY
- **Jericho Road Ministries (JRM)**, Buffalo, NY – new name as of Q3 2013 is **Jericho Road Community Health Center (JRCHC)**
- **Madison County Department of Health**, Wampsville, NY – incorporated **Madison County Rural Health Council (MCRHC)** in 2013
- **The Home Care Center at St. Camillus (St. Camillus)**, Syracuse, NY

The *Ready or Not* program launched in December 2012 with an in-person strategy session facilitated by organizational development (OD) consultant and *Ready or Not* program lead, Theresa Flynn. During the first few months, Flynn provided grantees with expert assistance in organizational needs assessment and planning for capacity building. During this time, Flynn completed site visits and strategy sessions with grantees to jointly determine their greatest needs and goals for capacity building. The organizational self-assessment model introduced and applied by Flynn in *Ready or Not* was *Nonprofit Lifecycles – Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*, developed by Susan Kenny Stevens.¹

Informed by organizational assessment findings, grantees developed *Ready or Not* work plans that included key activities, outputs and deliverables, due dates, assignment of responsibility, and measures of impact. Consultant Lisa Payne Simon worked with grantees during this time to identify measures of capacity building impact, collect baseline data and conduct evaluation interviews. *Ready or Not* impact measures served a dual purpose of helping grantees monitor the impact of their capacity building activities, and informing the *Ready or Not* evaluation conducted by Simon for the Foundation (described below).

Table 1 below summarizes grantee's specific areas of capacity building activity in *Ready or Not*. As illustrated in Table 1, grantee's goals and activities focused primarily on organizational and

financial strengthening, strategic planning, and organizational response to change in business, policy or reimbursement environments. Grantee's specific goals and activities for capacity building in *Ready or Not* are illustrated in their respective work plans (completed early in 2013).

Table 1. Summary of Organizational Capacity Building Activity in *Ready or Not*

| Organizational Needs Addressed | Ardent | CCOB | Erie Cty | JR CHC | MC RHC | Parkway Center | St. Camillus | CSC | AMOW |
|--------------------------------|--------|------|----------|--------|--------|----------------|--------------|-----|------|
| Strategic planning | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Board development | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Financial development | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Expand/improve services | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Marketing; External perception | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Internal/staff perception | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| Organization infrastructure | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Data/EHR use management | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Internal process improvement | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Merger support | | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| Create new organization | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Expand collaboration | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | |

During the 18 month *Ready or Not* program, grantees convened in-person at a mid-project Learning Session in October 2013; remained in contact with consultant Terry Flynn to monitor their progress and support capacity building as needed; gathered for a final in-person Learning Session in June 2014; and - as a final program deliverable - prepared a draft prospectus for investors. *Ready or Not* officially ended in June 2014.

Part II. The *Ready or Not* Evaluation

The *Ready or Not* evaluation is a mixed method design that applies both quantitative and qualitative inputs to examine the impact of *Ready or Not* on participating organizations, staff and their capacity building goals. Evaluation data sources include:

1. Semi-structured telephone interviews with leads/CEOs from participating organizations and faculty conducted at four points in time (baseline, half-way through *Ready or Not*, at the end of *Ready or Not*, and one year later).

2. Organizational performance and impact measures selected in collaboration with participants and collected at four points in time (same timeline as above).

The framework for evaluating *Ready or Not* is a theory of change according to which grantees develop knowledge and awareness of capacity building needs; gain skills, tools, outside expertise, confidence and resources for capacity building; and take action to achieve short-term milestones for *Ready or Not* and longer-term outcomes and goals for organizational capacity building. Evaluation data will be analyzed over time to determine organizational development and impact resulting from *Ready or Not*.

Evaluation interviews at the end of *Ready or Not* were conducted with lead participants from every grantee organization (including AMOW) during June-July 2014 (a total of 19 interviewees). Grantees also submitted end-of-project data on impact measures to demonstrate progress and inform the evaluation. Other evaluation inputs included grantee final reports (the prospectus deliverable) and input from *Ready or Not* faculty.

This evaluation report summarizes findings from the entire 18 month *Ready or Not* experience, with emphasis on the last six months of the program, final results, and recommendations for future organizational capacity building programming.

Part III. Achievement, Growth and Learning Among *Ready or Not* Grantees

By the end of *Ready or Not*, grantees had learned and achieved so much more than they envisioned 18 months ago! Evaluation findings reveal that every grantee can point to significant achievements, like greater organizational self-awareness, improved systems and infrastructure, improved financial strength, new business and service opportunities, and increased management strength as a result of *Ready or Not* participation. An overview of grantee's key organizational achievements and learning in *Ready or Not* is summarized below.

Achievements in Organizational Capacity Building

- All *Ready or Not* grantees conducted at least some degree of **organizational needs assessment** to inform their capacity building activities. As shown in Table 1, half of the grantees took on formal organizational needs assessment and strategic planning activities with Board level engagement. As a result, every grantee achieved **greater awareness of their organization's strengths, weaknesses, needs and opportunities for capacity building**. This included a few grantees – JRCHC, AMOW and Ardent - who had not envisioned formal needs assessment and strategic planning as *Ready or Not* activities 18 months ago. JRCHC and AMOW ultimately did not proceed with formal strategic planning during *Ready or Not*, however, critical discussions about organizational needs and strategy have begun.
- Several grantees **implemented major changes in organizational structure**, such as a merger, launch of a new organization, or becoming a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). For example, JRCHC underwent a merger and became an FQHC; Madison County created and launched an entirely new organization – a rural health network; and while AMOW did not succeed in achieving organizational independence from the Town of Amherst, critical discussions led to greater clarity about what will be required in order for AMOW to achieve independence.

- All *Ready or Not* grantees **improved the financial strength of their organizations**, achieving growth in services and revenue, diversifying revenue streams, increasing patient census/volume of services, or otherwise improving the organization's capacity to generate revenue. For example, JRCHC, Erie County, St. Camillus, Parkway, CSC, MCRHC and CCOB all increased their capacity to serve a larger number of patients or clients in the region and, as a result, more revenue is coming in to these organizations. Grantees also worked to define and differentiate themselves and their services in regional markets.
- Every grantee **gained a better understanding of their business, including profitability** of their lines of business and of the organization as a whole. Grantees now look more carefully and proactively at their business, asking: Do we have the right portfolio of services for our organization at this time? Grantees also gained a better understanding of market opportunities in a changing health care environment. They are better prepared to respond to opportunities emerging from Health Reform, ACO development, and the growing influence of managed care in older adult services. CCOB and Erie County in particular responded to environmental opportunity arising through growth of managed long term care leading to increased demand for service integration. Enhanced knowledge and preparation has also created new business relationships.
- Several grantees (including MCRHC, Parkway, and Ardent) accomplished **Board and governance development and expanded the role of their Board**. These grantees are working with their Boards to expand the role and input of Board members in management, operations and governance of the organization; to expand Board membership and expertise; increase Board strength; and (in some cases) increase the role and visibility of the Board in fundraising.
- **Leadership development.** Most grantees gained greater awareness of what it means to lead, how to engage their Board in the work of the organization, and the benefits of creating a management team. Many *Ready or Not* project leads also **learned how to become better managers** and work more effectively with their Boards and organization leaders. *Ready or Not* revealed varying degrees of comfort with change and preparedness for leading capacity building among grantees. Most participants embraced the idea that capacity building involves leaders taking risks and being change agents. A few *Ready or Not* leaders grew exponentially in this role. Potential candidates for the Health Foundation Leadership Fellows program also emerged from the *Ready or Not* experience.
- Most *Ready or Not* grantees **succeeded in creating new administrative infrastructures and major process improvements** to support more effective finance, billing and reimbursement operations, and data management systems. Often these achievements were important stepping stones or pre-requisites to achieving larger capacity building goals. This was the case, for example, at JRCHC, CSC, St. Camillus, and MCRHC. Each of these grantee organizations greatly improved capacity in critical administrative areas.
- Several grantees **achieved breakthroughs in organizational branding and identity**. Through *Ready or Not*, several grantees developed and implemented marketing plans to raise the profile of their organizations, their brand and volume of services provided. As a

result of marketing and outreach efforts and new perspectives on collaboration, grantees also gained a more sophisticated understanding of their organizational identity and the difference between a competitor and a potential partner organization. For example, several grantees formed new alliances with other organizations to strengthen applications for grant funding (MCRHC) or to meet emerging managed care and ACO requirements for coordination or bundling of older adult services (Erie County and CCOB). Also, Ardent and Parkway both changed the name of their organization as a result of strategic thinking emerging through *Ready or Not*.

- Grantees **increased the role and value of their organization in the eyes of stakeholders**. This includes both internal recognition (a notable example is St. Camillus), and external recognition through expanded regional collaboration and service integration. Several grantees (both rural health networks, MCRHC and Ardent, Erie County and CCOB) have entered into new market-responsive alliances or collaborations that are enhancing participant's organizational identity, and creating new business and new revenue opportunities.
- Grantees **developed or enhanced their organization's value proposition**. Many of the steps and achievements outlined above were taken to enhance grantee organization's value proposition. In the final months of *Ready or Not*, grantees were challenged to define their organization's value proposition. As a final *Ready or Not* deliverable, grantees created a draft prospectus to attract future clients, funders or investors. Over the next year, grantees will be encouraged to further develop and formally present their prospectus (and value proposition) at a one-year follow-up *Ready or Not* convening.

A summary of individual grantee's capacity building achievements and impact measures is included in Appendix 1. Impact measure data presents a snapshot of performance information tailored to each grantee's capacity building goals.

Achievements in Organizational Learning

As noted above, grantees had many significant achievements in *Ready or Not* and made excellent progress toward capacity building goals - progress they unanimously attribute to *Ready or Not* participation. Summarized below are areas of organizational learning that helped foster grantee's capacity building achievements. In *Ready or Not*, grantees:

- **Acquired a new language or lexicon for organizational development, capacity building and management decisions**. As a result of *Ready or Not*, grantees are now asking and answering fundamental questions about their organizations such as: What's our strategy? What's our value proposition? They look more proactively at their revenue streams and organizational structure. They are much savvier about finding opportunities in challenges and in the rapidly changing health care environments in which they operate.
- **Gained a better understanding of who they are as an organization**. Grantees examined important questions such as: What are our organizational strengths? What are our vulnerabilities? Why do we exist as an organization? Where do we fit in the marketplace? What's our niche for core services? They are also better able to understand and express organizational weakness and vulnerability.

- **Increased knowledge and awareness of capacity building and why it's important.** Grantees report that in the past they focused on developing sustainable programs. In *Ready or Not*, they gained an understanding and appreciation of “the legs of the table”- the critical organizational infrastructures that support programs. For example, increased understanding about the importance of capacity building is illustrated in the following quote: “If we don't do the core work of building our organization, then our programs will falter.”
- **Increased financial awareness.** Through analyses conducted in *Ready or Not*, many grantees gained a clearer understanding of the profitability and cost of their services or lines of business. As noted above, many examined and defined their organizational value proposition - answering questions like: Why do clients come to us? What are our key differentiators in a crowded market? Why should funders fund us? And, what shouldn't we do as an organization?
- **Gained a better understanding of changing health and social service markets.** As a result of *Ready or Not* participation, grantee's see their role in local markets much more clearly. This includes greater understanding of their organization's business opportunities and vulnerabilities in the changing health care landscape, and positioning their organization to function more proactively in new market contexts. For example, grantees working to integrate health and social service delivery in the region recognized the need to differentiate their services and work together to integrate services and support a community.
- Grantees gained a better understanding of **how, why and when to use consultants** to achieve organizational development and change. This occurred through formal training provided in *Ready or Not* and through the *Ready or Not* experience working with consultants.
- **Changed views on organizational vulnerability.** Every grantee now believes (as a result of *Ready or Not*) their organization is less vulnerable. Grantees are also more aware of organizational vulnerabilities and how to reduce them. Views on organizational vulnerabilities are evolving as capacity building helps organizations evolve.
- **Changed view of the Health Foundation.** As a result of *Ready or Not*, all grantees view the Foundation as a capacity building partner and advisor – “much more than just a funder”.

Part IV. How Did *Ready or Not* Support Capacity Building?

Throughout the program, participants rated the benefit and impact of *Ready or Not* on their organizations (using a rating scale where zero is not at all impactful and ten is highly impactful). Overall, participant ratings were high and increased dramatically throughout the program: In July 2014, the average rating of *Ready or Not* impact on participating organizations was 9.3 (compared to 6.1 at Q1 2013). Also in July, the average rating of the benefit of *Ready or Not* on organizations was 9.4 (compared to 7.4 at Q1 2013).

Evaluation findings highlight powerful (specific) influences on grantee achievement in *Ready or Not*, including:

- **Grant funding and the grant imperative.** Grantees report that grant funding has been critically important in accomplishing *Ready or Not* capacity building goals. A number of grantees, including JRCHC, St. Camillus, CSC, Ardent and MCRHC, said grant funding was necessary to build infrastructure needed as a first step toward achieving larger capacity building goals. Most grantees said they could not have achieved their capacity building goals without the *Ready or Not* grant funding.

Another perspective on grant funding in *Ready or Not* is the important role it played in giving project leaders a reason, permission or imperative to make change in their organizations. For example, JRCHC and St. Camillus observed, “The grant money was the carrot that kept the project going”, and the deeper capacity building work and realizations came later. A related benefit of *Ready or Not* was, “It gives grantees permission to try new things”. Some grantees created new organizations, merged, or adopted new business models or strategies that involve significant organizational change and risk. *Ready or Not* provided “a grant imperative”, necessary funding and expertise to help grantees take risks and be successful change agents.

Some grantees like MCRHC also described the grant funding as “legitimizing and galvanizing”. “Having grant money has been (politically) very important to getting the work done.” Evaluation findings strongly suggest that one of *Ready or Not*’s strengths was the combination of grant funding together with OD consultant and technical support for grantees. These factors helped drive the significant impact of *Ready or Not* in grantee organizations and increased the profile of non-profit organizational capacity building in the region.

- **Consulting and technical assistance.** Every grantee highlighted Terry Flynn’s role as OD consultant (Terry’s advice and ‘pep talks’) as a critically valuable component and influence on their organizations in *Ready or Not*. Grantees also identified “Terry’s book on capacity building” (Non-Profit Lifecycles) as a powerful resource that changed the way they view capacity building and their organizations. Grantees reported that initial diagnostic conversations with Flynn about “who we are and who we could be” and organizational needs assessment activities completed were “very transformative” – leading in all cases to a deeper set of goals for strengthening the organization than they had originally envisioned for *Ready or Not*. Many also noted that the *Ready or Not* work plan format (developed in consultation with Terry Flynn and Lisa Payne Simon) was a useful planning tool and structure that helped keep their efforts on track.

In addition to OD consulting support provided by Flynn, other consultants hired through *Ready or Not* grant funds (including other OD consultants and experts in reimbursement, marketing, finance, information technology, efficiency and operations) were also seen as “invaluable” resources - providing technical expertise and an outside expert voice for how and why organizational change is necessary. Most *Ready or Not* grantees benefited from additional outside consultant support.

- **Direct involvement of CEOs and Boards.** All grantees described how CEOs/EDs in their organizations (in many cases, themselves) were directly involved in capacity building planning and implementation. Many also described how – as a consequence of *Ready or Not* - CEOs and Board members became more actively involved in their organization’s governance and management – leading strategic planning, fundraising and other areas of

building capacity. Direct CEO and Board involvement helped prioritize capacity building, obtain resources, and get the work done.

- **Organizational needs assessment.** Grantees benefitted from the *Ready or Not* requirement that they increase organizational self-awareness and formulate a more disciplined assessment of who they are, what they do, their branding and revenue streams, and role in the marketplace. Grantees accomplished this through needs assessment, strategic planning (or sharpening), and efforts to position or differentiate their organization in the marketplace. Grantees report - as a result of *Ready or Not* - they are much more aware of market/policy opportunities and unmet needs their organizations could potentially fill.
- **Market and environmental context.** Health care market and policy forces shaped (and in some cases, defined) capacity building activities for *Ready or Not* grantees. As noted above, *Ready or Not* required grantees to examine their organization's capacity building needs in the context of changing market and policy forces. As was demonstrated in grantee's prospectuses, most are still working to define their role and services in a rapidly changing landscape, and all are working to position or align their organizations more proactively in the context of changing policy, market requirements and opportunities.
- **Peer learning.** In evaluation interviews, grantees noted the benefits of learning from one another and from knowing they were not alone in capacity building. Grantees reported that they really enjoyed and "got so much out of" peer learning opportunities in *Ready or Not*, such as the Learning Sessions.
- **Measuring capacity building.** Use of tailored impact measures for the *Ready or Not* evaluation provided grantees (and the Foundation) with data to help monitor and inform program impact. Grantees and consultants reported that identification of *Ready or Not* impact measures helped them focus their work plans and develop a strategy for measuring and demonstrating the impact of their work (both for the Foundation and internally). Collection and monitoring of *Ready or Not* impact measures also provided "good modeling" of how organizations can be more data driven and accountable.
- **Foundation support and flexibility.** *Ready or Not* grantees also recognized how much they benefited from the Foundation's willingness to be open and flexible to changes they had made over time to capacity building goals or plans for use of grant funds.

Participants unanimously concluded that *Ready or Not* provided them the structure, expertise, resources and a timeline to help them succeed in capacity building. A few also noted that continued support from *Ready or Not* peers and the Foundation would help them continue their work after the program ends.

Part V. Recommendations and Next Steps

In evaluation interviews, grantees and faculty were asked whether anything about *Ready or Not* could be changed or done differently to improve the capacity building program, results or experience. A wide range of constructive feedback was provided including, "Don't do anything different – just do more of the same!" Other feedback and recommendations are summarized by content area below. Some of these recommendations have already been incorporated into *Ready or Not* and *GetSet* programming. Others are design or structural recommendations for future programs.

1) Recommendations for capacity building program structure, start-up and design

Recommendations for capacity building program structure and design include retaining the strengths of the *Ready or Not* program, also, a few recommended changes the Foundation could make in future programs, including:

- **Increase the availability of OD consultant time and support for grantees.** In future capacity building programs, more resources allocated to OD consulting is recommended, either by increasing a lead OD consultant's time to strengthen the consultant-grantee relationship, or by adding other OD consultants to support grantee's. Alternatively, a reserve fund could be created so that grantees could access additional OD consultant support as needed. A related recommendation is to **strengthen or formalize grantee requirements for regular contact with OD consultants** - build in a more formal check-in requirement for grantees rather than consultant contact at grantee's discretion (the model generally applied in *Ready or Not*). If multiple OD consultants will be involved in future cycles, another recommendation is to bring the OD consultants together on a regular basis to share strategy and learnings, inform programming, and to help make connections for grantees.
- **Continue grant funding to support capacity building.** As noted above, *Ready or Not* grantees viewed the Foundation grant funding they received as "essential", "motivating", a useful carrot that (in some cases) motivated senior management to engage in capacity building. Evaluation findings strongly suggest continuation of grant funding for participating organizations in future capacity building programs.
- **Build in an organizational self-assessment and planning period before developing work plans for capacity building.** Stakeholders recommended that the Lifecycles organizational assessment activity be conducted during a planning or pre-proposal period, followed by consultant-supported development and implementation of grantee's capacity building plans. In other words, "Complete the organizational needs assessment before the capacity building work plan." A related recommendation is to award Foundation grants for capacity building only *after* candidate organizations have successfully completed a needs assessment and work plan for capacity building. A small amount of funding (stipend or planning grant) could be provided to support staff time during an assessment and planning period.
- **A longer grant period.** Many participants observed that an **18 month grant period is too short** a time (or, an "awkward" amount of time) to assess, plan and achieve significant capacity building goals. Many felt they would have benefitted from more time to complete their goals with consultant supervision and the structure of the *Ready or Not* program to support them. More time for implementation would also increase the likelihood of success in achieving capacity building goals during the grant period.
- Several *Ready or Not* **grantees expressed interest in serving as mentors** to other organizations interested in or embarking on their own capacity building activity. Mentorship could be a component of future capacity building program efforts.

- A few participants noted that government agencies did not (at times) fit the *Ready or Not* capacity building methodology (for example, content on Board development and governance was deemed not applicable). It was recommended that focused attention (or a different approach in some areas) be taken with government, town or county agencies working on capacity building.
- A final structural consideration for future capacity building programs is whether to include (through the grantee selection process) **greater homogeneity of grantees by organization type or by capacity building needs and goals**. In *Ready or Not*, a wide range of non-profit grantee organizations worked together on a wide range of capacity building topics. It is possible that in the future, program focus, peer learning opportunities, and program results might be enhanced with a more homogeneous cohort of grantees.
- **Recommendations for capacity building program Request for Proposals (RFPs)**
 - In Foundation RFPs, provide more information on capacity building program process; what grantees should expect and what requirements to anticipate during the program. Grantees in *Ready or Not* felt this information could have been more clearly articulated in the RFP/during the RFP period and in Foundation grant agreements.
 - Also in Foundation RFPs, highlight and describe the need for dedicated project time so that organizations will understand and agree to the commitment of staff time and attention that is required for effective, long-term capacity building.

2) Recommendations for capacity building program implementation

- **Provide additional training, tools and orientation for grantees.** Grantees noted: “It would have been helpful if training and orientation on capacity building had been provided upfront (prior to or at the beginning of the program).” Faculty and participants recommend creation of a toolkit or knowledge resource for capacity building in non-profits. A toolkit might include information on what is capacity building; model(s) for capacity building; “how to” support on key topics such as organizational self-assessment, Board development, and strategic planning; information on OD tools (by topic area); case studies and best practice information; an annotated list of consultants and technical resources and other content that could increase participants’ knowledge and readiness for capacity building. This resource could be expanded over time and shared through the Foundation web site and other distribution channels.
- A few grantees observed that the importance of capacity building work did not always translate into prioritization or carve-out time in their organizations to get the work done. As noted above, **more frequent and brief phone or skype check-in calls with faculty** were recommended to help maintain the priority of capacity building over day to day work in organizations.
- **Continued focus on prospectus development.** A number of suggestions for improving the prospectus activity were provided:

- Introduce this activity earlier in the capacity building program (4-6 months earlier was recommended), and provide more training and orientation to better prepare grantees for the task. Grantees noted that more time for discussion within their organization and with the Board about the prospectus would have improved the writing experience and results. In *Ready or Not*, prospectus writing at 18 months served (in many cases) as a diagnostic tool - adding value by exposing gaps in grantee's ability to demonstrate organizational strengths or a value proposition. In the future, draft prospectus writing could be followed by additional OD consultant support focused on needs identified in prospectus development.
- Provide examples of an effective, well written prospectus for grantees to model.
- In evaluation interviews, grantees asked for follow-up OD consultation and feedback to strengthen their prospectuses. Several recommended (as a follow-up to *Ready or Not*) a regional conference on capacity building that would include a focus on how to create a strong(er) prospectus.
- **Build in and promote (earlier in the program) more grantee collaboration, peer learning and exchange.** Several *Ready or Not* agencies ultimately worked together over time, but more emphasis from the Foundation and faculty on fostering shared learning among grantees with similar goals was recommended and, in the future, might enhance grantee's program experience and outcomes. Grantees indicated they would have liked more opportunity for peer learning and exchange. Recommendations and comments included:
 - Provide grantees (early on) with a directory of participating organizations. "This would provide us the ability to reach out."
 - "Promote any opportunity to share similar project objectives and resources (consultants, contacts, information) between grantees."
 - "Support more networking capability amongst grantees throughout the program - more peer to peer interaction as a key component of learning and capacity building."
 - Use a Google site or email strategy for virtual communication (in addition to face to face opportunities) to support a grantee peer learning community. An email or web-based community could help "keep the connections", particularly now that *Ready or Not* has ended.

Additional comments and recommendations from grantees on program implementation included the following:

- Provide training on "How to use Consultants" at the beginning of *Ready or Not* rather than in the middle."
- "Keep the one day kick-off session and in-person Learning Sessions. The time away and the chance to immerse in the topic is good for team and capacity building."
- "More training for grantees on capacity building is needed. Looking back, I didn't know what I didn't know."
- Include a group presentation (like *Hitting the Mark*) for grantees struggling with change requirements related to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid re-design, managed care, and other components of Health Reform.

These and other program recommendations are addressed in Part V of this report (page 32).

Next steps for Grantees and the Foundation

Another focus of recommendations is next steps for grantees and for the Foundation as a follow-up to *Ready or Not*. These include the following:

Recommended next steps for grantees:

- **Most grantees still need to work on defining their organizational value proposition.** Prospectuses reveal that *Ready or Not* grantees still need to work on defining who they are, what they do, and the impact of their services. Grantees would likely benefit from continued OD guidance to help them convincingly define their organizational value proposition and answer the question, “Why fund me?”
- **Most grantees cited financial vulnerability as an ongoing concern.** Financing and sustaining organizational growth remains a priority for *Ready or Not* grantees. Continued guidance on fundraising strategies and related support for prospectus development (following *Ready or Not*) would be welcomed by many grantees.
- **Branding** is another area of vulnerability for several grantees and another area of need for further work identified in this evaluation. Branding success is important for development of revenue streams and for fundraising (particularly for discretionary funding for activities like capacity building). Branding is related to the two bullets above, because more successful branding will help define an organization’s value proposition and reduce its financial vulnerability.

Recommended next steps for the Foundation:

- **Provide another year of support, feedback and technical assistance to *Ready or Not* grantees (as needed) to strengthen and develop their prospectus.**
- Several grantees (including MCRHC, Ardent, and potentially JRCHC) are better positioned now (after *Ready to Not*) to launch or complete strategic planning. **OD consultant support for strategic planning in 2014-15 for selected grantees** could help them sustain benefits and lessons learned from *Ready or Not*.
- **Provide continued opportunities for *Ready or Not* grantees to convene as a group.** The Foundation has already committed to a one-year follow-up meeting for *Ready or Not* grantees in June/July 2015. Additional opportunities for community building could be fostered, such as creating a peer network (like the Fellows Action Network) to support ongoing capacity building activity and discussion among *Ready or Not* grantees and others. In addition to providing a continued source of consultation and support, a peer network could also be a strategy for expanding capacity building work and mentoring activity in the region. A Capacity Building Action Network could extend *Ready or Not* and *Get Set* grantee’s knowledge, support and experience to other organizations. Like the Fellows Action Network, the Foundation could choose to provide nominal support for peer network operations, faculty or activities.

- **Leadership development.** Targeted professional development support could help create stronger leaders or ‘change teams’ within grantee organizations. OD consultants believe that *Ready or Not* leaders in a few organizations could benefit from professional development to strengthen their leadership capacity. A leadership development support opportunity could be a beneficial phase two or exit strategy for selected *Ready or Not* grantees to reinforce capacity building gains and long-term potential.
- **Create a dissemination plan** for *Ready or Not* results, experience and lessons learned.
- **Analyze comparative capacity building program structure, learning and impact.** By 2015, the Foundation will have program and evaluation data to examine the comparative approach, experience and impact of three capacity building programs it has funded since 2012: *Ready or Not*, *Get Set*, and a Southern Finger Lakes Fund program conducted by the Institute for Human Services, Inc. that reached 23 non-profit organizations in 2013. Analysis of comparative capacity building program structures, learning and impact could help inform future Foundation programs and other funders’ efforts in capacity building for non-profits.