

Working Paper 2003-07

**An Exploratory Study of Participatory Evaluation
and HOPE VI Community Supportive Services**

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This report was completed with partial financial backing from the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California, Berkeley. My many thanks go out to the staff, service providers, and residents of Easter Hill who shared with me hours of their time and a wealth of insight. I hope this report proves useful for them in return. Judith Innes and Karen Christensen provided invaluable feedback and support for this report. Many others offered ideas and inspiration along the way, including Jane Rongerude, Kelsey Crowe, and Tony Hebert. To Mom, Dad, and Greg, I am always grateful for your presence and to Morgan for your love and patience.

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Executive Summary

By recommendation of Congress, the Department of Housing and Urban Development chartered the HOPE VI program in 1993 to put a new face to America's public housing. With HOPE VI grants, public housing authorities either demolish and rebuild or refurbish their most "physically distressed" housing over a 3–5 year period. HOPE VI grants are designed to improve the quality of life for public housing residents through physical revitalization, a decrease in the concentration of low-income families, and the building of sustainable communities. All HOPE VI programs are required to institute a "Community Supportive Services Plan" to ensure that residents at HOPE VI sites receive comprehensive social services.

HUD did not require evaluations of HOPE VI programs until 2000, and in-depth information about residents' experiences with the program is lacking. This report proposes a participatory evaluation approach for filling in such information gaps. Based upon literature reviews and interviews with key stakeholders in a local HOPE VI program at Easter Hill Village in Richmond, California, this report introduces the practice of participatory evaluation and presents the strengths and challenges that participatory evaluation (PE) might bring to HOPE VI. This report suggests direction, methods, and strategies for current and future HOPE VI evaluations.

PE is a process of implementing an evaluation that is guided by certain beliefs, principles, and theories. This process is collaborative and includes multiple realities and experiences. Like all forms of evaluation, PE requires an evaluation design, clear questions, goals and objectives, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The main difference between participatory evaluation and other forms of evaluation is that a variety of people affected by the program, not the professional evaluator alone, are responsible for designing those questions and goals and interpreting the data.

There is, on the face, a strong connection between the observed goals and outcomes of the PE process and the purported community building goals of HOPE VI social services. PE has the potential to strengthen HOPE VI services by increasing the amount of available information regarding the impacts of HOPE VI on residents' lives and

bringing truth and power to HUD's claims of resident participation and leadership in program planning.

Residents, social service providers, and HOPE VI staff involved with the Easter Hill HOPE VI program suggest that increased participation in evaluation would afford them leadership opportunities and would improve the effectiveness of social services by further integrating the evaluation with the program. These stakeholders indicate that an active and transparent program as well as on-going communication amongst stakeholders would facilitate their interest and ability to participate in both program and evaluation activities.

In order to create an environment conducive to PE, HOPE VI stakeholders' initial focus will be on building relationships and increasing communication. PE and HOPE VI services already share common goals, and PE has been shown to produce useful and rich qualitative information about program functioning. National HUD staff, local housing authority HOPE VI staff, and professional evaluators should begin sharing information about participatory methods and begin implementing such methods in HOPE VI programs by first establishing forums in which stakeholders can collaborate, and then building a devoted and participatory evaluation team.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background and Context

Following the highly publicized demolition of Pruitt-Igoe and other large-scale public housing sites in the 1970s, policy makers and the public in the United States began to realize that the design and management of public housing contributed to the challenges faced by low-income people. In 1989, Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing to identify the most “severely distressed” public housing and to assess various strategies for improving living conditions in such housing. The commission estimated that 86,000 units of the existing 1.3 million units qualified as severely distressed and concluded that the situation warranted a new and comprehensive approach to public housing.

In response to the dilapidated physical structures, increasing violence, and dense concentration of very low income families that the Commission found, the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) began the HOPE VI Program in 1993. Since the inception of the HOPE VI program, public housing authorities (PHAs) have used HOPE VI grants to either demolish and rebuild or refurbish their most “severely distressed” housing. HOPE VI grants are designed to improve the living environment of public housing residents, revitalize sites and surrounding neighborhoods, avoid or decrease the concentration of very low income families, and build sustainable communities. The program funded an increasing number of grantees between 1993 and 2002. By 2001, 98 cities had received 165 HOPE VI grants nationwide (including 9 in the Bay Area) for a total of \$4.55 billion in awards. Public housing administrators leveraged an additional \$8.4 billion with these grants (HUD, 2001).

Before demolition begins under the HOPE VI program, PHAs relocate residents to other public housing sites or supply residents with Section 8¹ vouchers and relocation assistance. Residents may also find their own market-rate housing. PHAs relocate residents all at one time or in phases throughout demolition and reconstruction. Original residents (those living in the housing before demolition) may return to the revitalized HOPE VI site if they meet certain requirements laid out by the PHA. Requirements can include no use of drugs or participation in other illegal activities, or no more than one or two late rent payments a year. It

¹ Section 8 is a HUD-administered program for very-low- and low-income individuals and families. Section 8 recipients can apply the vouchers toward rent, lease, or mortgage payments in privately-owned, market-rate housing.

is unclear what percentage of original residents return to the revitalized HOPE VI sites, although estimates from the last 10 years of HOPE VI put the figure between 11% and 30% (National Housing Law Project, 2002).

With the increasing interest of PHAs in using HOPE VI funding to address social, economic, and physical distress, HUD found itself being held accountable for massive reconstruction projects and the relocation of thousands of residents. In 2000, HUD began requiring evaluations of all HOPE VI projects, although many had been conducting formal evaluations all along. In 2001, Richmond Housing Authority (RHA) in Richmond, California, received its first HOPE VI grant, a grant to demolish and rebuild Easter Hill Village. The Easter Hill site is notorious for experiencing the most violence, racial tensions, and severe poverty of all of RHA's housing sites. RHA hired University of California at Berkeley's Institute of Urban and Regional Development (IURD) to conduct a 5-year comprehensive evaluation of their "Community & Supportive Services Plan" (CSS) for their new HOPE VI program at Easter Hill.

Several Richmond social service agencies have contracted with RHA to help implement the CSS plan. IURD's evaluation will assist this process by documenting the effectiveness of Community Supportive Services in meeting residents' needs and offering recommendations of how to strengthen the plan and the implementation of the plan. Feedback from the evaluation will primarily serve to guide decisions made by RHA and their partners regarding which services to augment or trim throughout the HOPE VI program.

The CSS plan is a required project in all HOPE VI programs and must outline how the unique needs of all original residents will be met through the establishment of a social services network. The majority of evaluators currently contracted to evaluate an individual HOPE VI program focus solely on the effectiveness of the implementation of the CSS plan in meeting original residents' needs, rather than the impacts of the physical redevelopment or relocation of residents. As with IURD, PHAs typically contract out the evaluation to a local university or other outside consultant. CSS plans outline goals for social service providers hired by the PHA to address the needs of residents. Typically, the goals in the CSS plan are based upon an extensive needs assessment of all original residents. CSS plans are composed of multiple specific goals and their corresponding objectives that relate to the employment, education, child and health care, safety, and housing needs of residents. A typical goal outlines a numerical target for service providers, such as "75 residents will graduate from job club by December 2003."

The Importance of Evaluation

With HOPE VI, people's quality of life is the target of intervention. Therefore, the importance of asking the right questions in a HOPE VI evaluation is especially crucial. As the evaluation requirement is quite new, HUD does not yet offer formal guidance to HOPE VI grantees concerning which questions to ask or how to form or focus an evaluation. HOPE VI grantees must, however, meet certain standards set forth by HUD such as hiring an outside evaluator and demonstrating attainment of the specific goals and objectives outlined in the CSS Plan (HUD, 2000). The challenge for evaluators is then to construct an evaluation that meets HUD requirements, strengthens the HOPE VI program, and offers critical feedback to PHAs concerning the efficacy of their social services and experiences of relocated residents.

This is a lofty goal on many counts. The HOPE VI program passes its 10th anniversary this year. The program continues to relocate thousands of residents a year while attempting to improve these residents' lives with extensive and expensive social service programs. It is crucial that HUD administrators and residents alike understand the national implications of this project. Recently, housing advocates and academics have begun to critique the HOPE VI program for not including residents in decision making and not adequately tracking the long-term effects of services on original residents' lives.

We currently know some of the theoretical critique of HOPE VI, but very little about how residents are experiencing the program. Both HUD staff as well as HOPE VI critics recognize the need for additional qualitative research to explain how the CSS program impacts residents. The need is great for extensive evaluation at the local and national level. It is important that evaluation results be used to help guide the course of HOPE VI services to better meet residents' needs. Evaluation is, at its root, about values and judging the worth of a program, which becomes difficult with a program as large and complex as HOPE VI. For example, with HOPE VI many different values are at play and even the client is not easily identified.

In an effort to meet these many challenges, HOPE VI evaluators could learn from evaluations that seek out and include the perspectives of the many people involved in or affected by a program. Such evaluations are becoming increasingly popular and well-respected, especially in the arena of community-based work. An example of such an approach is that of Participatory Evaluation (PE), an approach that could be well-suited to a HOPE VI evaluation. The underlying principles of the PE process parallel HUD's own goals of community-building, strengthening

residents' capacity, and resident involvement in the CSS Plan (Estrella, 2000; HUD, 2001).

Participatory evaluation openly addresses the place for values in evaluation by attempting to incorporate a wide variety of perspectives into the process so that the end result does not reflect a single stakeholder's bias or narrow interpretation. PE has also been shown to be a highly effective form of qualitative research as it offers evaluators a strong sense of what stakeholders' questions and needs are, and increases use of evaluation results when compared to more traditional evaluation methods (Cousins and Whitmore, 1998). Although many other alternative evaluation methods exist, such as Empowerment and Collaborative Evaluation, the principles of PE are flexible enough to be used at diverse HOPE VI programs across the country and can be implemented at several points in an evaluation which is restricted by outside funding or criteria. More of the theoretical background and current applications of participatory evaluation will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this report.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to introduce the idea of participatory evaluation to HOPE VI program stakeholders and to present the strengths and the challenges that PE might bring to HOPE VI. This report is in itself a type of evaluation; it is an exploration and assessment of the potential for using participatory methods in the evaluation of HOPE VI social services. This report will use and expand upon information already gathered in the evaluation of the Easter Hill HOPE VI site that IURD began in 2001. The ideas and observations included here should help guide not only those involved at Easter Hill but at HOPE VI sites elsewhere as they explore ways to fulfill HUD requirements, improve program planning, and design valid, useful evaluations that reflect beneficiaries' true experiences. This report suggests direction and strategies for the remainder of IURD's Easter Hill HOPE VI evaluation as well as for future evaluations of other HOPE VI programs. This report highlights the need for employing new methods of evaluation. It ultimately finds, through literature review and focused interviews, that participatory evaluation may not yet be appropriate in places such as Easter Hill where stakeholders have not built the trusting and open relationships necessary to sustain meaningful participation.

Research Approach

This report will present practical applications of participatory evaluation as well as a clear rationale of the opportunities and constraints

of implementing PE. In order to accomplish this, three sets of questions need to be addressed:²

- 1. What have people’s experiences been with using a participatory approach?** To demonstrate the legitimacy and viability of conducting PE, this report summarizes the recent literature concerning PE approaches. A focus is placed on the strengths and challenges PE brings to the evaluation process, and the impacts of PE on the program as well as on those participating in the evaluation. Although the practice of PE is fairly new to the United States, this report attempts to discuss examples of PE as used with populations similar to those at Easter Hill.
- 2. What is the current institutional context of the HOPE VI program?** There must be a clear understanding of how this exploration of participatory evaluation relates to HUD’s research needs and its goals for HOPE VI. A crucial beginning to this exploration is finding out what aspects of this report will be the most helpful and useful to HUD and other PHAs, in light of the political and economic atmosphere surrounding HOPE VI and other housing programs. This also requires a familiarity with the underlying theory of the HOPE VI program and thus the context within which HOPE VI sites are developing. This report calls attention to and assesses the correlation between the principles of PE and those of HOPE VI as well as the potential for PE to improve the functioning of the HOPE VI program.
- 3. Would a participatory approach work at Easter Hill?** This report explores the motivation, interest, and overall feasibility of implementing PE at Easter Hill. In order to devise a clear direction for the future of IURD’s evaluation, it is important to examine various stakeholders’ goals and hopes for HOPE VI, their ideas of what is most helpful from an evaluation, and their perceived opportunities and barriers to involvement in that evaluation.

Research Methods

Primary methods used to address the above questions include a literature review of alternative and conventional methods of evaluation, interviews with those experienced with using participatory evaluation, interviews with key HUD and HOPE VI staff, and focus groups with HOPE VI residents and service providers.

² It is important to mention here that stakeholders at the Easter Hill HOPE VI program, HUD staff, and PE practitioners all participated as much as possible in the exploration and analysis of these questions, as is consistent with the principles of PE.

Literature Review. An extensive literature review of the history and current context of the HOPE VI program as well as both conventional and unconventional methods of evaluation laid the foundation for this report. Specifically, this paper includes information published by HUD and the Housing Research Foundation that pertain to the history, mission, and current direction of HOPE VI. These include HOPE VI regulations, reports to Congress, HOPE VI mission statements, HOPE VI “Best Practices” and guidance documents for grantees, and the 2000 NOFA that first required HOPE VI evaluations. This paper also contains critiques of the HOPE VI program published by housing advocacy and reform groups. Literature describing the development, current applications, benefits, and challenges of participatory evaluation and other unconventional methods also informed this report. This includes critiques of participatory methods.³

Interviews. This report assesses the potential for adopting participatory evaluation methods at the local HOPE VI program at Easter Hill and at HOPE VI programs across the country. To do so, the report contains feedback gathered from both local and national HOPE VI stakeholders. Those interviewed for this report include: HUD-HOPE VI Community Supportive Services (CSS) Specialists, other HOPE VI evaluators, practitioners experienced with using participatory methods, Easter Hill HOPE VI staff, Easter Hill residents, and Easter Hill HOPE VI service providers.⁴ Appendix A includes lists of interviewees and interview questions for each stakeholder group.

All those who participated in these interviews received either a written or verbal description of the purpose and future application of the interviews. All participants either signed a consent form or gave taped verbal consent to have their responses recorded by hand and on tape. Participants were informed that they would not be identified in this report. Willingness to participate and strict confidentiality were central aspects of all interviews and focus groups. These interviews began with HUD CSS Specialists (staff who offer guidance and enforce requirements of CSS plans nationwide) followed by interviews with Easter Hill HOPE VI staff so that the goals and expectations of the HOPE VI program in general

³ This report does not delineate between literature concerning “participatory evaluation” and “participatory monitoring and evaluation” (PM&E). PM&E is an expanded form of PE typically used by international agencies and when on-going monitoring or reflection is crucial. PM&E and PE are often used synonymously. Similar strengths and challenges exist for the two approaches.

⁴ For this report, “stakeholders” were restricted to those that had already been identified by IURD and Richmond Housing Authority for the current evaluation: service providers, residents, HOPE VI staff, and IURD. In a typical PE process, there would be more extensive discussion of who the stakeholders would be.

could be established. Assessing the interest and receptiveness of these staff members preceded all other discussions. Once an interest and potential support from funders and administrative staff had been established, other stakeholders such as Easter Hill residents and service providers were interviewed.

This paper presents the analysis of phone interviews with three HUD staff members employed as CSS Specialists. During these interviews, HUD staff discussed their goals and expectations for HOPE VI evaluations, the ways in which HUD uses or will use HOPE VI evaluations, and the potential opportunities and barriers to implementing participatory evaluations of HOPE VI. This paper also presents feedback from three current HOPE VI evaluators who were identified with the help of HUD staff. During phone or email interviews, evaluators discussed their thoughts about the most important aspects of a HOPE VI evaluation, opportunities for improving HOPE VI evaluations, and the kind of support and guidance that would most help improve the effectiveness of their evaluations.⁵

Five practitioners experienced with domestic applications of PE were also interviewed over email and telephone for this report. These practitioners were identified locally or through professional electronic listservs such as that of the American Evaluation Association and Community Research Network and from directories of the American Evaluation Association. Interview questions for PE practitioners focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the PE approach, methods used to begin the PE process, and recommendations for other practitioners.

Feedback and ideas gathered from stakeholders at Easter Hill held the most weight in guiding the conclusions and recommendations put forth in this report. The use of both private interviews and focus groups helped assess the potential and appropriateness of applying participatory methods to the evaluation at Easter Hill. The three primary HOPE VI staff at Richmond Housing Authority provided individual answers during hour-long interviews.

Focus groups. As a follow-up to individual interviews conducted earlier in the evaluation, representatives from the four service providers contracted to serve HOPE VI residents attended a focus group as well. Six residents also came together in a focus group to discuss their views of the HOPE VI program and the potential for increasing resident

⁵ Due to difficulties in contacting residents from HOPE VI sites, this report only includes feedback gathered from HOPE VI professional evaluation staff, although residents' perspectives would enrich this report.

involvement. Five different residents attended a pre-planning meeting for this focus group. A translator was present at each of these meetings. The idea for the focus group was announced at a community-wide HOPE VI meeting. All residents who expressed interest at this meeting as well as all Resident Leaders⁶ were invited to participate in the focus groups.

Each of these stakeholder interviews and focus groups used similar questions to explore the potential for using participatory evaluation methods. Common questions addressed the following: what the stakeholders' motivation and interest might be in using a participatory approach; their goals and hopes for the overall program; their views on evaluation and how it could benefit them; their perceived barriers or opportunities to participating in an evaluation; and, their ideas on how PE could take shape with a HOPE VI program. It was made clear that these discussions were exploratory and that RHA was not yet intending to adopt a PE approach.

These interviews reveal a wealth of baseline information about how people perceive the HOPE VI program and how they hope to see it work. The findings in this paper are only preliminary, however. These conversations are meant to be a beginning to what will need to be a much longer, more representative process of exploring the potential for participatory evaluation, yet the findings do provide direction for those currently involved in the HOPE VI program.

Administrators at Easter Hill received summaries of their own interviews and preliminary findings from other stakeholder interviews, and they will receive this report.

Overview of the Report

Chapter 2 of this report covers a brief history, current applications, and trends of participatory evaluation. The chapter also reviews the goals and outcomes of a participatory evaluation, while Chapter 3 assesses the fit between these goals and outcomes and those of a HOPE VI Community Supportive Services program. Chapter 4 explores this fit between PE and a specific HOPE VI site, Easter Hill. The chapter provides more details of Easter Hill, the people that live there, and other key stakeholders in this HOPE VI project such as IURD, Richmond Housing Authority, and local service providers. Most importantly, Chapter 4 presents these stakeholders' feedback about conducting participatory evaluation. Chapter

⁶ RHA recently abolished Easter Hill's Resident Council due to inactivity and in preparation for the changes to come with HOPE VI. In its place, RHA asked for volunteers to act as "Resident Leaders" to act as liaisons between residents and RHA. Currently, there are 7 Resident Leaders.

5 draws conclusions based upon the information in this report concerning PE, HOPE VI, and Easter Hill in particular, and recommends steps for further action.

CHAPTER 2

Participatory Evaluation: A Developing Process

“Participatory evaluation is people-centered: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation”

(United Nations Development Programme, 1997)

“The core premise of practical participatory evaluation is that stakeholder participation in evaluation will enhance evaluation relevance, ownership, and thus utilization”

(Whitmore & Cousins, 1998)

Although the phrase “participatory evaluation” may seem self-explanatory, most professional evaluators agree that there is no strict definition for it. It is a *process* of implementing an evaluation that is guided by certain beliefs, principles, and theories. The process is a collaborative one that seeks out and includes multiple realities and experiences. As a result, the process can be a powerful agent for change in both people and program.

This chapter does not deeply explore the various forms of Participatory Evaluation (PE), as researchers have written entire books on that subject. This chapter does discuss aspects of PE that are important in understanding its potential for use with HOPE VI. To that end, it includes an overview of participatory evaluation, goals for increasing participation in evaluation, current applications of PE, strengths and challenges of the participatory approach, and the future of PE. Appendix B lists resources and contacts for those interested in exploring PE more in-depth.

An Overview of Participatory Evaluation

Background of participatory approaches. Participatory evaluation is a fairly recent development in the world of research. PE finds its roots in international community development work, the citizen participation programs that emerged in the United States in the 1960s, and a growing awareness of the importance of representing multiple perspectives in political decision-making. Primary precursors to PE include the research methodologies that focused on emancipatory and action-oriented research, communicative learning, and popular education that international aid agencies and international community groups developed beginning in the 1970s⁷. Today, an increasing number of

⁷ For a more extensive overview of the background of PE, see the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) “Who Are the Question-Makers?” (www.undp.org/eo/documents/who.htm), 1997), and “New Directions for Evaluation: Understanding and Practicing Participatory Evaluation” (Cousins and Whitmore, eds., 1998).

mainstream researchers in the United States are exploring evaluation methods that incorporate diverse stakeholders' perspectives and experiences. The sheer number and diversity of non-traditional evaluation methods that have developed over the past two decades reveal the growing push for new ways of defining and measuring success.⁸

In addition to PE, unconventional practices that are becoming increasingly popular in the United States include Empowerment Evaluation and Deliberative Democratic Evaluation. Such unconventional approaches share many characteristics with PE, yet this report focuses solely on PE as the purposes of these other approaches may be too narrowly focused for HOPE VI. Empowerment Evaluation begins with a high intensity of participation and carries a greater focus on political self-determination than participatory evaluation. PE is more often used when a program is held accountable to not only program beneficiaries, but to several other players as well. (Dugan, 1996). The process of Deliberative Democratic Evaluation actually carries less of an empowerment focus than PE. This methodology centers around expanding dialogue and increasing equity amongst existing stakeholders, and places less emphasis on ensuring that all of the affected stakeholders make it to the table in the first place (House and Howe, 2000).

Other evaluation approaches such as Collaborative Evaluation represent a less intense form of PE. Collaborative Evaluation falls along the broad spectrum of PE applications, but requires the presence of a strong outside facilitator with considerable guidance over the process (Whitmore, 1998). PE allows the flexibility that a nation-wide program would require, does not necessarily entail political action, can involve and empower all key stakeholders, and yet still maintains a focus on program improvement, an attribute that HUD would like to see from HOPE VI evaluations.⁹

Underlying principles of PE. Central to the theory behind PE is the belief that when those affected by a program hold leadership and decision-making roles in the evaluation, the process can have a profound and positive affect on the people involved, the evaluation, and the policy

⁸ For a discussion of the development of alternative evaluation approaches, see "Fourth Generation Evaluation" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), or "Utilization-Focused Evaluation" (Quinn-Patton, 1997).

⁹ For more discussion on alternative forms of evaluation, see the WK Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook, www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf; or, the American Evaluation Association's website, <http://www.eval.org/TIGs/tig.html>.

driving the program. Many researchers claim that the lack of strict definition is one of the strengths of PE. This freedom from textbook definition allows community members and program beneficiaries to define for themselves what are the most important questions to ask and methods to use in an evaluation (Stevahn, 1/21/03). Table 1 highlights key principles inherent to any PE process, as outlined in the United Nations Development Programme's "*Who are the Question-makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook*" (1997).

Table 1. Key Characteristics of a Participatory Evaluation

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draws on local resources and capacities• Recognizes the innate wisdom and knowledge of end-users• Demonstrates that end-users are creative and knowledgeable about their environment• Ensures that stakeholders are part of the decision-making process• Uses facilitators who act as catalysts and who assist stakeholders in asking key questions

PE is often applied not instead of conventional methods, but as a way to enrich those methods. Like all forms of evaluation, PE requires an evaluation design, the establishment of questions, goals, and objectives, and data collection, analysis and reporting. The main difference between PE and other forms of evaluation is that a variety of people affected by the program, not the professional evaluator alone, are responsible for designing those questions and goals and interpreting the data. In PE, stakeholders are typically involved in constructing the logic model or other evaluation framework, defining evaluation questions, deciding when to evaluate and who to involve, selecting methods, collecting and analyzing data, and consolidating and presenting findings (Burke, 1998; Coupal, 2001; Rempert, 1/6/03).

Other differences exist as well that an on-going reflection, feedback, and action in PE as compared to conventional evaluations. Discussions during the goal-setting stages of PE address *who* will participate to *what degree*, and who the evaluation will serve and why. As one practitioner reported, "What importantly distinguishes one evaluation methodology from another is not the methods, but rather whose questions are addressed and which values are promoted" (Greene, 1994). Practitioners believe it is crucial to PE that program beneficiaries and

community members, as well as program staff, are able to define the key stakeholders (Seitz, 1/15/03). Stakeholders then participate in extensive trainings in communication and evaluation skills. Methods used throughout the evaluation processes include conventional methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and the collection of hard data as well as mapping, drawing, photography, group reflection, and other unconventional methods of evaluation. Participatory evaluations conclude with reports of findings that are culturally appropriate and easy to understand for all stakeholders.

Who the stakeholders are in a participatory evaluation and to what degree these stakeholders are involved varies greatly across applications of PE. There is a continuum of the intensity of participation. Some evaluations rest solely on community members and program beneficiaries to design the evaluation, collect the data, and even analyze the data themselves. Others rely heavily on outside evaluators to facilitate the process with strong input from program beneficiaries in key steps such as data collection, but with less input in more technical steps such as data analysis. For example, a professional evaluator in Minneapolis began working with all of the social workers within a local school district to assess the use of one of their programs. After designing a logic model as a group, they decided to write and administer surveys for each school with feedback from administrators, students, and teachers. Helping to write and administer the survey increased the social workers' stake in the process and return rates for the survey were uncommonly high. Outside evaluators, however, analyzed the quantitative responses and reviewed the outcomes with the social workers (Rempert, 2/11/03).

Goals for Increasing Participation in Evaluation

Researchers who have studied both domestic and international applications of PE highlight three main purposes of using a participatory approach to evaluation. These three primary goals are: 1) to improve program planning and functioning; 2) to promote learning and to strengthen the capacities of both participants and organizations; and, 3) to affect larger policy (Estrella, 2000; Morrissey, 2000; UNDP, 1997). Other goals include increasing the accountability of program administrators, building upon existing community strengths (Coupal, 2001), enhancing self-sufficiency, and understanding social phenomena and program theory (Dugan, 1996). One, two, or all of these goals can drive the establishment

of a PE process, but the primary purpose will dictate to what degree and in what fashion stakeholders are involved.¹⁰

Depending upon the primary goal, PE can take either a “practical” or “empowering” approach, representing both ends of the participation spectrum. Participatory approaches can either focus on participation as the objective in itself, or as an effective means to achieve an outside objective (Cummings, 1997). The “practical” approach focuses on the usefulness and relevance of the evaluation outcomes to program participants. This type of PE is based on the belief that the program participants hold an intimate understanding of the program that outsiders do not. When they are allowed to participate in the construction of an evaluation, the evaluation results will be heeded and applied more often (Whitmore, 1998). Programs will employ such a “practical” approach when the primary purpose of the evaluation is to improve program functioning. Such instrumental approaches in particular make PE a highly effective form of qualitative research, which attempts to answer questions about people’s experiences and the meanings they ascribe those experiences (El-Askari, 10/29/02; Quinn-Patton, 2002).

In developing countries more often than in the United States, evaluators use the empowerment-oriented approach to PE, which focuses largely on fundamental values of democracy and self-determination (Schafft and Greenwood, 2002). This type of evaluation is in itself a form of community development as it intends to affect social change and redistribute power relations amongst stakeholders. Decision-making power is placed squarely in the hands of program beneficiaries. Communities will use such a form of PE when the project focuses primarily on building stakeholder capacity. Although “empowering” approaches can produce useful results, and “practical” approaches can empower participants in many ways, these two applications demonstrate the diversity of uses of participatory evaluations (Whitmore, 1998).

Current Participatory Evaluation Practice

Examples of participatory evaluations in the United States are becoming increasingly common. Participatory evaluations conducted in the United States tend to be local, small-scale projects, yet this is also changing recently. Practitioners in the international community development, education, public health, and social service fields most often use PE. One example from the education field is the use of participatory

¹⁰ For a good examination of the various purposes driving PE or other evaluation approaches see Estrella, 2000, Ch. 1; Whitmore, 1998, Ch. 1; Quinn-Patton, 1997, Ch.6; and UNDP handbook.

methods in a college course evaluation. At the end of a semester-long community organizing course at a local university, students decided to evaluate their progress and the overall class with a drawing exercise. In pairs, students took turns drawing pictures of what they viewed as community organizing before the course, and how they viewed it afterwards. While one partner drew, the other partner prompted with open-ended questions such as “Has this course come up in other aspects of your life?” and “Where do you see yourself applying your learning?” After both had drawn, the class put all the drawings up on the wall, and together with the professor and teaching assistant they looked for patterns, asked each other more questions, and began to analyze what expectations were or were not met by the course and why. Students agreed that at least one of them should record the conversation and summarize their findings in a report they could circulate (Moschetti, 12/07/02).

An example from the Public Health field occurred in San Francisco. Organizers of an HIV-prevention agency wanted to know if their program was effective in reducing HIV. Together with HIV-infected individuals and other organizations, they formed an evaluation team. The team began the process by writing narratives of what it meant to experience or work with HIV. When the team reviewed annual data of services used and cases reported, the group also re-read their original narratives to help them assess the degree of progress being made (Minkler, 1998).

The United Nations Development Programme has conducted several participatory evaluations in their international community development work. Evaluation of water and sewage systems in Eland began with a group discussion about evaluation questions. At the first meeting, Rural Water & Sanitation Department staff, UNDP staff, and local village residents worked in small groups to create a list of evaluation concerns and questions. The UNDP facilitator then wrote up these concerns and brought them to a later meeting. UNDP facilitators enacted a skit for the group that demonstrated ways the group could collect data. Working in small groups again, stakeholders then brainstormed ways to collect data to answer the evaluation questions on the lists. Stakeholders then split into project teams and collected data together (UNDP, 1997).

Additional recent examples in the United States include a 10-site evaluation of rural Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities by community members and a resident-conducted evaluation of lead hazards at 10 public housing sites across the country. The results and overall effectiveness of these evaluations is still being examined. These examples demonstrate, however, the potential applicability of PE to large-scale and federally funded projects (Morrissey, 2000; Tamiko-Anders, 10/02/03).

Each of these evaluations used a diverse mix of conventional and unconventional research methods and defined “stakeholder” very broadly. Generally, as is typical with PE, stakeholders in these processes included program beneficiaries, neighbors, staff, and administrators. The initial process for selecting groups of stakeholders has varied across applications of PE, however. Whereas some projects began with a pool of diverse and experienced leaders, other projects began by designating leadership roles to those most powerless in the community. Which tactic is used will again depend upon the overall purpose of the evaluation - to be more practical in its search for information, or to be an avenue for empowerment for those who are oppressed.

Strengths of a Participatory Approach

The major strengths that emerge from using a participatory approach to evaluation relate to the primary goals that drive this type of evaluation: to have a positive and lasting influence on people, program, and policy. Researchers and PE participants observe many profound affects on the people who participate, the program being evaluated, and the policy guiding the program.

1. Primary outcomes for people. Practitioners most often take note of the profound increases in skills and capacity as well as feelings of self-worth and confidence in those participating in the evaluation. Participants report developing a wide range of skills and capacities, from learning video and other technical skills to refreshing their college-level knowledge of research methods and statistics (Rempert, 1/6/03). Practitioners often hear comments from participants about how surprised they were to learn they too could do research. Enthused community members serve as the most effective motivator for others in the community to participate in both program and evaluation activities (Rutherford, 2000; Dugan, 1996)

Often, the use of PE is empowering in that it acts as a leveler of power amongst stakeholders. All participants alike have increased access to information and a deeper understanding of the program in question than they typically would in a conventional evaluation (Rempert, 1/6/03). The structure of PE requires participants to come together and share information. Participants tend to experience an enhanced sense of community, improved communication skills with peers and program staff, a heightened sense of cultural sensitivity, and partnerships and networks that last well beyond the life of the evaluation (Dugan, 1996; Morrissey, 2000). Developing this cohesion and the ability to work within a complex group is a crucial beginning to the PE process (Seitz, 1/15/03). PE is as

much of a discovery process as a capacity-building one in that people discover skills they never knew they had and develop partnerships they would not have made otherwise (El-Askari, 10/29/02).

2. Effects of PE on programming. Practitioners see PE as a capacity-building process for the program as well. Researchers believe that PE bolsters program effectiveness because the results from participatory evaluations are more often used to make changes in program functioning than results from conventional evaluations (Whitmore, 1998; Dugan, 1996; Rutherford, 2000). This shift in organizational thinking, and the resulting program improvements, stems from what practitioners see as the “collective intelligence” created in the PE process (Dugan, 1996; Rempert, 1/6/03, Stevahn, 1/21/03). Although those who criticize PE methods claim that bias can leak in to the evaluation, supporters of participatory approaches feel that true objectivity equates to the integration of balanced and complete views in to the assessment. Bias, some feel, only emerges when the researcher is too far removed from the program and cannot fully understand the dynamics inherent to the program and the people. (Mertens, 2003; El-Askari, 10/29/02).

The quality, breadth, and depth of feedback to the program from people who truly know the program well are seen as chief benefits of using participatory approaches. This qualitative data that is rich and meaningful tends to be well-used and tends to garner broad-based community support for a program (El-Askari, 10/29/02; Rutherford, 2000). It is often not the numbers, but the detailed description of program functioning that is difficult for evaluations to obtain, and PE facilitates this process. One practitioner summed up the effects of PE on programming in this way:

“I think doing PE also makes planning and implementation easier because it makes the program logical and relevant. People have much more buy-in and are empowered by the role they have in deciding how to gauge success” (El-Askari, 10/29/02)

3. Effects of PE on policy. Although few people have studied the effects of PE and other unconventional methods on policy, those experienced with PE believe the process holds policy-makers and funders more accountable than with other research methods. Some evaluators also see the influence of PE cascading up, so that when programs adjust due to the evaluation results, the theory driving the program adjusts accordingly. Some feel that, given the array of current social injustices, it is the evaluator’s duty to challenge the status quo. By revealing these injustices

through evaluations that embrace multiple perspectives, it is believed that evaluators can attempt to influence entrenched policy (Mertens, 2003).

Weaknesses and Challenges for Participatory Approaches

Just as people find a multitude of strengths from using participatory research methods, researchers have identified many challenges to implementing participatory methods and several concerns about the use of participation in research. Challenges to PE fall into three categories: 1) technical concerns about the quality and efficacy of methods; 2) assertions that the real and intended impacts of participatory approaches can negatively affect or even disempower participants; and 3) critiques concerning the need for meta-evaluations of PE processes.

1. Technical & Logistical Concerns. Most evaluators who question the efficacy of PE have what some label “validity anxiety”. These evaluators claim that using inexperienced people to conduct research results in a lack of scientific standards and therefore a loss of rigor and precision in the data (Rutherford, 2000). Stakeholders invested in the success of a program may bias the evaluation results in their favor, and the compromise that comes from working with diverse perspectives may water down results (Campilan, 2000). Others feel that stakeholders who are given ownership over the evaluation process will inevitably fall into “contracts” with one another to promote the other’s position in hopes of promotion in return (Scriven, 1991).

Programs, and their reputations, may also suffer when evaluations rely too heavily on participation rather than sound research practices to carry the project. Some PE projects may end up measuring success based upon the degree of participation while ignoring the efficacy of the program altogether (Schafft and Greenwood, 2002). Program participants may also be facing hardships in their daily lives, so the credibility of methods used may come in to question if participants are often distracted or undependable (Quinn-Patton, 2002). More importantly, if there is a high turnover of program participants, as is likely with social service programs, there is nothing practical about PE as the users are constantly changing (Quinn-Patton, 1997). Other key barriers to an effective PE process include clarifying and selecting key stakeholders from large communities, a lack of shared expectations amongst diverse participants, the difficulties of working through technical principles as a group (Estrella, 2000), and, outside pressure to produce quantifiable results that can be better understood by investors (El-Askari, 10/29/02).

2. Challenges to the underlying rhetoric. Both PE and conventional evaluation practitioners are principally concerned about the

dissonance between the powerful rhetoric of participation and the reality of people's day-to-day lives (King, 1/10/03). Whether practitioners feel that encouraging people to participate in the first place is a challenge or not, all seem to agree that the long hours required to train and collaborate with participants can place incredible demands on participants. A challenge for the PE process is to focus on what participants want out of their involvement rather than extracting information from participants (Guijt, 2000; King, 1/10/03; Morrissey, 2000; Rempert, 1/6/03; Seitz, 1/15/03). A threat exists to any community work when operational costs are transferred to program beneficiaries in the form of labor, in-kind services, or even cash for program materials (Cooke and Kothari, 2002).

Participatory projects can have adverse affects on community members that raise ethical questions as well. Greatest of the ethical dilemmas facing participatory research is the potential for organizations to use "participation" to rally support for a project (by placing a few token community leaders on advisory boards, for example) without sharing decision-making power and leadership with diverse program beneficiaries. At times, these "participatory" projects create negative externalities that other, conventional research methods do not create. Already vulnerable communities may feel betrayed, disempowered, and highly distrustful of any outside aid after a "participatory" project is used to steamroll local objections.

Some researchers feel that the participation ideology, as applied to any context, is inherently flawed. The theory behind participation may rest on assumptions of homogeneity within communities (believing a few community members represent the interests of all community members), and can draw artificial boundaries between those who are willing to participate and those who are not. Such methods may also ascribe participatory methods to communities where participation and active involvement in decision making are not culturally appropriate or are ineffective when real institutional change can only occur with outside pressure (Cooke and Kothari, 2002; Kothari, 2002; Mohan, 2002).

Community development programs often fail to recognize institutionalized power dynamics within communities, even low-income communities with little leverage in the greater political context. Therefore, some have questioned if participatory processes are representative of authentic "local knowledge," or if they simply serve to re-assert the power and control of dominant groups or people within the community. Participation alone cannot lead to empowerment. Clear communication, opportunities for growth, and equitable power distributions are seen as just as crucial, and yet harder to structure than simple attendance at meetings and discussions (Guijt, 2000). Highly participatory projects that function

within an institutional or political context that demands certain outcomes or gives preferences to certain participants will be counter-productive, whereas less participatory methods in an open, democratic setting could be very representative of citizen's needs (Cooke and Kothari, 2002).

3. A need for meta-evaluation. Some of the concerns listed above may be addressed in intimate, small-scale projects, where facilitators can easily reach out to and connect with all program participants. It is less clear, however, if the utility of PE is transferable to large-scale programs where oversight and management is dispersed (Estrella, 2000; Guijt, 2000). Conventional evaluators claim that there has yet to be “proof” other than personal stories that participation builds long-term capacities in program and people (King, 1/10/03; Stevahn, 1/21/03). Most PE and conventional evaluators agree that there is a lack of research that has clearly distinguished between the positive effects of participation in evaluation and the positive effects of the program's services alone on program participants (Morrissey, 2000).

Many researchers feel that the greatest challenge facing PE is this inability to legitimize itself on a large scale. It is not yet clear if PE can be used in any setting outside of small, local organizations without becoming a “mechanical and extractive” process (Guijt, 2000). Others feel that the problem results from a scant body of knowledge, the lack of a common language about participatory research, and notably missing documents concerning professional ethics, core principles, and best practices (Campilan, 2000). It is difficult to measure and assess “participation”, and thus far few researchers have attempted to do so (Morrissey, 2000). Without a strong theoretical underpinning to the rhetoric of participation, participatory approaches may continue to expose inequalities in certain programs, but will be limited in their ability to change those recognized inequalities (Schafft and Greenwood, 2002). Current PE practitioners are aware of the many challenges to conducting effective participatory projects. Researchers, therefore, have spent a considerable amount of time outlining the characteristics that allow for and encourage robust participatory evaluations. Table 2 summarizes these key findings.

The Future of Participatory Work

“We are entering an era of participation culture”
(Campilan, 2000)

Some researchers still believe the growing focus in American research on empowerment, participation, and exposing alternate realities is simply a “politically correct” trend. However, many researchers who both support and criticize the inclusion of community members as research

partners feel that some level of participation in research is becoming more and more the norm in community development work. PE practitioners note the increase in acceptance of their participatory methods and the ease with which they can now find other applications of PE as it matures in the United States (Seitz, 1/15/03; Estrella, 2000). Evaluators have produced an overwhelming amount of literature discussing alternatives to conventional research since the early 1990s. Now, even national funding agencies such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation are producing evaluation handbooks that eagerly promote the values of participation, redistribution of power, and collective intelligence (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998). These developments demonstrate the growing popularity of PE and other unconventional forms of evaluation.

How effectively PE continues to take shape and enter into the mainstream without compromising key principles or becoming “mechanical and extractive” remains to be seen, however. Elements in the PE process that accentuate self-determination or altering power dynamics are at risk of compromise as PE expands into larger agencies heavily burdened with bureaucracy and responsibilities to statistically prove program efficiency. Most PE practitioners are well aware of the task in front of them and agree that the most important next step is to strengthen the powerful rhetoric behind PE by further clarifying and documenting specific examples of participation’s long-term impacts on program and people. Practitioners recognize the need to create working networks of PE evaluators, clearly defined and well-supported principles and ethics, strong philosophical partnerships with outside funders and federal agencies, and research that clearly documents the effects of participation on program efficiency, evaluation results, and long-term and relevant skill development in participants. Such work may help develop a widely accepted and articulate answer to the question of why participation is so important.

Table 2. Characteristics that Enable Participatory Evaluation

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	EVALUATION STRUCTURE & DESIGN	LEAD EVALUATOR / FACILITATOR	PROGRAM PARTICIPANT
Institutional, political, & financial support exists for the project	The focus & primary tasks of evaluation are clear to all participants	Believes that program participants are capable of creating & using unique & appropriate assessment methods	Holds a deep commitment to the project & evaluation
Program participants, project staff, & funders agree on project goals and funding	The focus represents a deeply felt issue & primary activities are culturally relevant	Has a wealth of evaluation experience & the ability to set a working pace that is comfortable to all participants	Has the time & energy to act on that commitment
Those involved internally & externally to the project have similar expectations about evaluation results, & have experience with effective evaluation methods	The role of participation as a means, and end, or both, is clear to all participants	Has the ability to assess skill & commitment levels of diverse participants	Can physically participate, holds the power to make decisions, & has access to financial & physical resources
	Program & evaluation are closely linked & the program encourages participation in planning as well	Is affable, flexible, & accessible, & has strong communication skills	Understands the required skills & terminology, is flexible & patient, & understands how the evaluation will benefit them
	Activities are allowed sufficient time to build participation & skills, but schedules are adhered to	Offers several training opportunities for participants	Has a history of speaking out and being listened to & trusts program administrators
	Includes diverse participants from the very beginning		Is connected to existing community groups or action committees with built-in social networks
	Activities occur at places & times that are respectful of participants' lives		Holds bargaining power relative to that of other participants
	Activities include incentives, monetary or intangible		

Sources: Estrella, 2000; El-Asarki, 10/29/02; Morrisey, 2000; King, 1/10/03; Whitmore, 1998; Campilan, 2000; Rutherford, 2000; Guijt, 2000; Cummings, 1997; Mohan, 2002.

CHAPTER 3

The Applicability of Participatory Evaluation to the HOPE VI Program

Participatory evaluation, although still developing as a methodology, carries with it many strengths and promises for increasing participants' quality of life and improving the programs meant to serve them. Would such a participatory approach strengthen HOPE VI Community Supportive Services programs? Would it help empower HOPE VI residents? These are the questions this report addresses through an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of PE above, and, here, of the ways in which PE might complement and strengthen HOPE VI services. To do so, this chapter presents information from both literature and interviews with HUD staff and HOPE VI evaluators.

Although this report will hopefully aid HOPE VI sites across the county, its primary goal is to assist a specific HOPE VI grantee, Easter Hill in Richmond CA, and the program's evaluator, the Institute of Urban & Regional Development at UC-Berkeley (IURD), in developing an effective evaluation. As IURD's evaluation focuses solely on the effectiveness of the Community Supportive Service (CSS) Plan at Easter Hill, the focus here is on how PE could be used in an evaluation of a HOPE VI CSS Plan rather than the relocation or physical development. According to HUD staff and current HOPE VI evaluators, the majority of evaluations also focus on the effectiveness of the CSS plan in meeting residents' needs, so this report could be relevant for many HOPE VI sites.

Background of HOPE VI Community Supportive Service Plans and Evaluation

Every HOPE VI program is required to develop a CSS Plan to serve all original residents living at the site. Grantees are encouraged to use up to 15% of every HOPE VI grant for the development of a CSS program ("FY 2002 HOPE VI Application Kit"). CSS plans are meant to serve original residents while the housing site is demolished and rebuilt. Public housing grantees must develop and launch the CSS program before the relocation of residents and demolition of homes begin. According to HUD documents, the CSS plan must address the individual needs of all original residents through the use of a case management approach. Case managers are to assess the situation of individual families and help them access a holistic set of services to improve their overall quality of life. The primary task of every CSS plan, however, is to increase "self-sufficiency" of residents by assisting them in securing employment.

When asked about the most important aspects of CSS programs to evaluate, CSS Specialists at HUD's national office mentioned the need to show quantifiable proof of self-sufficiency¹¹. *How many people got jobs? What jobs? For how long?* Such proof is necessary to demonstrate to Congress that the estimated \$500 million spent on HOPE VI services since the beginning of the program has been well spent. However, all three of the HUD CSS staff went on to discuss the importance of showing how residents got those jobs, which residents got them, and what services were most effective at helping residents improve their quality of life or encouraging them to return to the revitalized site. HUD staff report that they do have access to quantitative information such as how many residents are using which services at which rate. However, they note that they are missing qualitative information to give them a well-developed sense of what HOPE VI is doing for whom. The three current HOPE VI evaluators interviewed for this report concur that there is a lack of information about how residents experience HOPE VI social services and what role services play, if any, in dissuading or encouraging residents to return to the revitalized site, since only a minority of relocated residents return to the revitalized housing.

HUD-HOPE VI staff report that they are interested in reviewing CSS evaluations, and see the systematic review of such evaluations as crucial to the program's success. Although many HOPE VI grantees conducted evaluations independently throughout the 1990s, HUD did not implement the HOPE VI evaluation requirement until 2000. Staff, therefore, do not yet have a formal process for accepting, reviewing, or sharing HOPE VI evaluations. HUD staff and current HOPE VI evaluators themselves acknowledge that evaluations are undertaken strictly for the use and benefit of the particular Public Housing Authority being evaluated, and that little sharing of ideas, methodologies, or results occurs amongst HOPE VI sites or between HUD and HOPE VI sites. This report attempts to help begin a local and national dialogue about the importance of conducting and sharing HOPE VI evaluations. This report will help disseminate information about a specific approach - participatory evaluation - that has the potential to provide the rich qualitative data about the effects of the HOPE VI program that is currently lacking.

¹¹ Again, three CSS Specialists at HUD's national office were interviewed for this report. These staff are responsible for offering guidance and outlining requirements concerning the development of CSS plans.

The Importance of Participatory Methods to the HOPE VI Program

As a large, federal program that affects the lives of thousands of low-income families, it is not surprising that HOPE VI has drawn much criticism from academics and housing advocates. Critics of the HOPE VI program put forward two major claims: 1) There is not enough public information regarding the impacts of both HOPE VI social services and the relocation process on residents' lives, as HUD staff themselves recognize, and 2) HUD's claims of resident participation and leadership lack credibility as there is little proof that original residents of revitalized sites have played any sort of formative role in deciding the course of action for the CSS program. These two critiques highlight why it is crucial to explore new ways of integrating residents' experiences into HOPE VI CSS evaluations. Adopting a participatory evaluation approach could help HOPE VI address these critiques.

1. A lack of public information. HUD publishes quite a bit of information concerning HOPE VI expenditures, but very little to no public information about original residents' and service providers' perceptions of HOPE VI services. Additionally, no agency has yet published information on a national scale that describes the paths of relocated residents or their views of the relocation process. HUD has published qualitative reports, such as their "Best Practices" manual, but this focuses only on redeveloped HOPE VI sites and does not include stories of residents before or during the revitalization. HUD documents even label the HOPE VI program an "experiment," yet there is scant information about how this "experiment" is being played out with people's lives. Fortunately, internal HUD staff and external critics seem to realize this and see the need to increase qualitative data that exposes the stories of original HOPE VI residents throughout the implementation of the CSS program and throughout relocation as well. Typically, it is qualitative research methods that bring a depth and detail into an evaluation. As discussed above, PE has been shown to be especially effective at bringing forth participants' experiences and realities and could help provide CSS programs with the depth of information currently missing.

HUD secures funding for most CSS programs only during the 3–5 year life of the HOPE VI grant, which requires an evaluation to access information about program functioning that is both readily available and rich with data – two attributes commonly mentioned about information gathered with PE. CSS plans are also supposed to design a set of services for each unique individual; they do not blanket the entire community with one intervention. It is likely, then, that residents experience the program in very different ways. Again, embedding diverse stakeholders into the

evaluation process might reveal more about a program with such diverse interventions.

2. Unsupported claims of resident participation.

According to both current staff and official documents, HUD's hope is to improve residents' quality of life and empower residents to make changes in their lives through the HOPE VI CSS program. They refer often to the importance of involving residents in program planning before and throughout the life of a HOPE VI grant. A major critique of the HOPE VI program, however, is that there has been little action taken to back up HUD's powerful rhetoric. The very act of relocation and dispersion of original residents may sever existing bonds between neighbors and counteract the purported community building goals of HOPE VI if HOPE VI grantees are not assertive about maintaining community forums and on-going communication with all relocated residents. Public housing advocacy groups such as ENPHRONT,¹² the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and The Center for Community Change observe that housing authorities have rarely if ever put forth proof that residents, service providers, or other community members have actually played significant roles in designing HOPE VI programs, although HUD often promotes such action in their guidance sheets (National Housing Law Project, 2002; ENPHRONT, 2002).

The application of participatory evaluation could provide the means for stakeholders to become leaders in the process and could help bring truth and power to the ostensible HOPE VI goals of resident participation and overall community building. The previous chapter discussed many different ways PE enhances program functioning. Through the employment of HOPE VI residents in designing evaluation questions, collecting feedback from other HOPE VI residents, and interpreting program results, a wealth of information about residents' experiences of the HOPE VI services could be brought to light while offering stakeholders powerful roles in the evaluation process. PE, if adopted early enough in the HOPE VI process, could provide grantees with an opportunity to establish connections with residents before relocation, maintain a transparent relocation process, and increase residents' information about and access to the revitalized HOPE VI housing. A participatory evaluation could precede the HOPE VI application entirely by providing a mechanism for residents to assess their own strengths and challenges and generate unique strategies for improving their living situation. This process is therefore applicable for a variety of different public housing programs.

¹² "Everywhere and Now Public Housing Residents Organizing Nationally Together"

Assessing the Possibility for Establishing Participatory Evaluation

As one PE practitioner put it, “You *can* conduct a participatory evaluation of any program, but only under certain conditions” (Seitz, 1/15/03). There are several reasons, as discussed above, why it might be important for HOPE VI sites to explore participatory approaches. The ability for HOPE VI stakeholders to adopt PE approaches, however, may depend more on an environment that nurtures and supports participation by HOPE VI stakeholders than on any of these reasons. Before promoting the adoption of participatory approaches to evaluating HOPE VI social services, it must be established that the goals and principles of PE and those of the CSS program would complement each other. As many PE practitioners have noted, the efficacy of any evaluation increases the more the program and evaluation share a common foundation and similar principles. The discussion that follows indicates that there is institutional support for more participatory approaches to HOPE VI.

As mentioned above, HOPE VI is often criticized for failing to back up its stated principles of resident participation and collaboration with stakeholders. It is important, however, to present the powerful language behind the HOPE VI program as there is, on the face, a strong connection between the observed goals and outcomes of the PE process and the purported principles of the entire HOPE VI program and the CSS plan in particular. In 1992, HUD’s mission statement for the Office of Distressed and Troubled Housing Recovery outlined the goals of its newly-funded program in this way: “HOPE VI is intended to foster innovative and comprehensive approaches to the problem of severely distressed public housing developments and their residents, including new ways for public housing authorities and HUD to work together, in collaboration with residents”. HUD has continued to accentuate the importance of collaboration with residents and more recently published “General Guidance on Community and Resident Involvement” that all HOPE VI grantees are to follow. This guidance claims that “Full resident involvement and community input are crucial elements of the HOPE VI program” and states that there are four key principles of the HOPE VI program that relate to residents: collaboration, inclusion, communication, and participation in program planning.

In 2000, HUD published its best practices manual, “HOPE VI: Community Building Makes a Difference” in which it focuses more on the importance of building social capital within HOPE VI communities and enhancing residents’ quality of life through services than on the profound

physical changes the program makes. Again, this document highlights HUD's focus on involvement of all HOPE VI stakeholders as it claims: "The spirit of HOPE VI is one of consultation and collaboration among the housing authority, affected residents, social service providers, and the broader community". The document explicitly discusses the value of involving residents in setting goals for the program: "Experience has shown that top-down solutions imposed on communities do not work because they tend to undermine the spirit of local initiative necessary for long-term success."

Feedback from Community Supportive Service (CSS) Specialists also demonstrates that there is support amongst those in positions of power for an increase in resident participation in the HOPE VI social services program and the evaluation of it. During phone interviews, these staff commented on what they see as an alignment of principles between the process of PE and the empowerment goals of HOPE VI CSS programs. They each remarked on the importance of creating any avenue for residents to take on leadership roles, and felt that the adoption of PE could afford residents more of such opportunities. Staff commented on the value of exploring any means to enhance residents' connections with HOPE VI staff and service providers before relocation begins. They feel that such connections could increase the number of original residents that return to the revitalized site.

HUD CSS staff located several opportunities for increasing participation in the evaluation. They discussed the increase in survey return rates staff could expect when residents play leadership roles in designing and administering surveys. Staff believe that many residents who typically would not respond to an outsider or an outsider's probing questions would more likely respond to another resident who might be seen as more trustworthy and might display more sensitivity in the types and manner of survey questions. HUD staff also noted that they are currently promoting a participatory youth research component of HOPE VI youth programs, and that placing residents in positions to assess as well as plan programming is a direction HUD is exploring deeper with HOPE VI. HUD CSS staff identified the Section 3 program as an opportunity for HOPE VI evaluators to bring other stakeholders on to the evaluation team. Section 3 requires all HOPE VI partners to make their best efforts to employ HOPE VI residents throughout the life of the grant. HUD staff accentuated not only their interest in seeing alternative ways for residents and service providers to help drive the focus of HOPE VI services, but also their belief that residents should be paid with the help of the Section 3 program.

HOPE VI evaluators also express support for increased dialogue about alternative evaluation approaches. In interviews, evaluators have made it clear that research methods should be flexible and should be chosen and designed by the local staff. They also felt that more information about possible evaluation approaches and methods used with other CSS programs would be immensely helpful. This report will help HUD assist HOPE VI grantees in their exploration for appropriate evaluation methods. It will also hopefully push a dialogue forward that addresses some of the unique challenges inherent to HOPE VI projects, and a discussion of how HUD can actively encourage and allow residents the opportunity to experience and make profound change happen.

Conclusions about Participatory Approaches and HOPE VI

HOPE VI continued to be a popular program through 2002. Although some critics may wish to see the program ended altogether, there are currently dozens of HOPE VI projects underway in the United States, each which will last 3–5 years. As HOPE VI marks its 10th anniversary, both critics and proponents of HOPE VI report an immediate need for rich qualitative data that exposes the realities of how the HOPE VI CSS program changes residents' lives, for better or worse. Given the need for useful and powerful data, and given that HOPE VI is a nationwide, federally funded program, the strength of a HOPE VI participatory evaluation will be its practicality and utility. Given the scope of HOPE VI services, a variety of stakeholders will play prominent roles in any evaluation. The technical assistance of HOPE VI evaluators is crucial, especially as HUD staff as well as many critics of the PE process have concerns about the reliability of data collected by residents.

Public Housing residents' intimate knowledge of the challenges they and their neighbors face and the strengths they possess could help the HOPE VI program improve service delivery and increase the awareness of the effects of the program. HOPE VI would benefit from the help of people who have the ability to approach other residents and the wisdom to explain evaluation results based on their knowledge of individuals. It is typical for PE participants to help design evaluation questions, collect data, and interpret that data, but this can be done on teams with other stakeholders with the oversight of the outside evaluator. PE will also look very different from one HOPE VI site to another depending upon the needs and interests of stakeholders and the focus of the CSS program. At some sites, residents have a strong history of participation and they could easily adopt leadership positions in an evaluation. Residents at other sites such as Easter Hill, which the next chapter discusses in detail, feel

distanced from all decision making and their evaluation would initially rely heavily on the outside professional.

Despite the degree of institutional support for new HOPE VI evaluation approaches discussed above, PE as a specific approach faces three unique challenges with the HOPE VI program. First, the deep bureaucracy in which HOPE VI is entrenched and the history of oppressive policies that have emerged from HUD may preclude housing residents from playing powerful roles in PE. Second, public housing residents more than other populations face external pressures and challenges which may limit the time and energy they have to devote to a participatory process. Third, and most importantly, not only is it likely that a great number of residents have no desire to associate themselves with any effort related to public housing, but the relocation of residents makes it difficult to maintain contact with all affected residents. PE has the potential to increase retention rates of original residents for HOPE VI, but it will undoubtedly be more difficult to communicate with residents who do not all live in the same neighborhood. Although resolving such issues is well beyond the scope of this report, Chapter 5 offers recommendations that address some of these challenges. The following chapter explores the potential for PE at a specific site, Easter Hill.

CHAPTER 4

A Case Study of Easter Hill

Given the potential for applying participatory approaches to HOPE VI evaluations discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter examines the possibility of increasing participation in the evaluation of a specific HOPE VI site, Easter Hill Village in Richmond, California.

A Brief History of Easter Hill

Easter Hill is located just off I-580 in a neighborhood surrounded by single-family homes and light industrial development. The closing of factories and shipyards after World War II exacerbated the need for public housing in Richmond, a city that had thrived during the war. The sudden rise of underemployed citizens led the Richmond Housing Authority to construct Easter Hill Village as well as several other public housing projects throughout the 1950s. Although many of the Easter Hill buildings are now in disrepair, when 300 families first moved in in 1954, the site design received accolades for its family-friendly design that provided adequate open space and was responsive to safety and privacy concerns (Cooper, 1975). Easter Hill Village originally housed predominantly White families whose heads of households had worked at the Richmond shipyards and a handful of elderly residents in quaint apartments with white picket fences on curving streets.

Easter Hill & HOPE VI Today

By the 1960s, Easter Hill's population was primarily African-American families and employees at nearby factories in Richmond. With the on-going closing of factories in Richmond and shifts in labor and demographics, Easter Hill began housing more very low-income families and more Latino families. Today, with the exception of one Laotian family, approximately equal numbers of Latino and African-American families comprise the Easter Hill population. Overall, poverty rates at Easter Hill are shockingly high, with 100% of households earning under \$15,000 a year (Urban Institute, 2002). Virtually all residents at Easter Hill live at or below the poverty line. Social relations are strained as well. African-American and Latino families at Easter Hill do not tend to intermingle and residents have reported high degrees of racial tension and perceived disrespect from each other.

Over the last two decades, Easter Hill has become notorious for crime, drug, and gang activity. Due to such activities, as well as physical

dilapidation, the Richmond Housing Authority (RHA) applied for and received its first HOPE VI grant to redevelop its Easter Hill public housing in 2000. Soon after, RHA's HOPE VI staff signed a contract with the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at UC-Berkeley (IURD) to complete a five-year evaluation of the HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services (CSS) Plan at Easter Hill. Although the details of the contract and IURD's scope of work are still being finalized, as of this writing, the initial evaluation plan called for both a process and impact evaluation of the effectiveness of the CSS plan in meeting original residents' needs. The four social service agencies contracted to provide the CSS services to residents are the City of Richmond Employment & Training (responsible for case management services), the Richmond Police Department, Richmond Neighborhood Housing Services, and Ephesians Church Community Development Corporation.

This report assesses the feasibility of increasing stakeholder participation in IURD's evaluation and in CSS evaluations in general. This chapter presents feedback from various stakeholders at Easter Hill concerning the possibilities for doing so. This feedback, more than any other source of information, guided this report's final conclusions and recommendations. Stakeholders here are limited to contracted service providers, current residents, RHA-HOPE VI staff, HUD CSS Specialists, and IURD. The previous chapter reviewed the feedback from HUD staff.

During interviews and focus groups, Easter Hill residents, HOPE VI service providers, and RHA HOPE VI staff, discussed their perceptions of evaluation, reflected on being the subjects of evaluation, and brainstormed ways they could become more involved with the evaluation. They discussed the history of participation at Easter Hill. They also identified potential benefits and opportunities for increasing stakeholder participation, the barriers to doing so, and recommendations for how to do so. This chapter presents the strengths and challenges to increasing participation in evaluation as seen by Easter Hill stakeholders; their recommendations are woven in to the final chapter of this report. Overall, stakeholders see many of the same strengths and challenges to increasing participation, are supportive of the concept, and have many similar ideas about what types of activities could increase participation. The main differences of opinion lay in how various stakeholders believe this change should happen and who is responsible for initiating that change.

Perceived Benefits & Opportunities for Increasing Stakeholder Participation

The stakeholders who participated in interviews and focus groups feel that any opportunity to increase leadership, skills, and independence of residents would strengthen the CSS program. In general, they believe the existing Community Task Force¹³ and its sub-committees provide an appropriate structure for providers and residents to be involved in decision-making, but that stronger communication and outreach could make the Task Force more effective and participatory. Table 3 summarizes the primary strengths and opportunities that Richmond HOPE VI staff, residents, and service providers believe could come from adopting participatory methods in an evaluation of HOPE VI. One Easter Hill stakeholder summed it up this way:

“It’s hard to change someone’s life when they don’t trust you—so building trust is the key for any of this to be successful. Increasing participation in the evaluation would really help us build this trust.”

Richmond Housing Authority HOPE VI staff, in particular, expressed interest in developing creative means for enhancing the roles and responsibilities of residents in both program and evaluation. Staff see this as a means to not only develop role models in the community, but also to bring more truth to the evaluation by providing diverse perspectives of program functioning. Staff also feel that the principles of PE could complement and enrich the community building and resident leadership goals that HUD promotes for the HOPE VI program. Staff regard both the current HOPE VI Youth Leadership Initiative (a HUD-sponsored program that encourages HOPE VI youth to study their community) and HUD’s Section 3 program (which requires and helps fund HOPE VI partners to make their best effort to hire residents) as signs of both institutional support and concrete opportunities for involving residents in the evaluation. Staff promote the idea that residents should be paid employees if they are to take on consistent responsibilities with the evaluation.

Richmond HOPE VI staff report that the foundation already exists for maintaining participation and high levels of interaction throughout the

¹³ RHA established a general Community Task Force and several sub-committees soon after writing their CSS plan. The Task Force and its sub-committees are designed to ensure that all goals of the CSS plan are met and to discuss progress of the plan in general. Sub-committees are each assigned one focus of the CSS Plan such as “health care” or “employment” and are supposed to meet once a month. All service providers are required to participate and RHA invited any resident to sit on a sub-committee when they were first created. At this writing, only 4–5 residents signed on to sit on a committee.

relocation of residents. The church at Easter Hill that is currently used for community meetings will maintain that function throughout relocation, and HOPE VI case managers occupy an office (with meeting rooms) next to Easter Hill that is devoted strictly to original Easter Hill residents throughout relocation. HOPE VI staff report that they first attempt to place relocated residents who do not choose to enter the open housing market in other RHA housing, or provide residents with Section 8 vouchers and assistance to find housing within Richmond.

HOPE VI service providers frequently discussed the importance of incorporating different stakeholders' definitions of program "success" into an evaluation. Service providers, like HOPE VI staff, discussed the biases that they believe are inherent in the evaluation process when one party controls this process. They see designing evaluation questions and interpreting results as subjective, even when professional evaluators complete these tasks. Service providers suggested that establishing a more participatory evaluation would disperse power amongst stakeholders and could strengthen evaluation tools. This type of evaluation, they believe, would encourage more sharing of ideas amongst stakeholders and provide more on-going feedback to providers about their own performances, thereby strengthening the ability of the CSS program to meet residents' needs. The primary opportunity they see to increase their own voice is strengthening the Community Task Force so that they control the agenda, review process, and decisions to be made. Service providers were also quick to identify residents – and their desire to change their lives – as a major strength as Easter Hill.

Residents, more than any other group, commented on the importance of having a voice in making decisions about their lives and analyzing the effects of those decisions. They see such opportunities as a powerful means to build self-esteem and confidence. As one resident put it:

"It [increasing participation for residents] would boost them up— it would really help them. Cuz [sic] we got...well, there's a lot of low self-esteem: 'I'm not going nowhere, I don't want to do nothing; what's the use of it?' — it's that that's going on! And it would really take something positive—to say YES—this is coming to Easter Hill, this is gonna benefit Easter Hill, I am gonna get into this thing!"

Residents also noted the practicality of employing residents as leaders in the evaluation, as residents are the most effective at spreading information throughout the community and motivating others to

participate in evaluation activities such as interviews or surveys. Currently, there are 5–7 designated Residents Leaders at Easter Hill who are responsible for attending monthly meetings to report concerns to RHA and volunteer for community projects at Easter Hill. Residents see these “Leaders” as an appropriate starting point for spreading information about HOPE VI and the evaluation. They feel that these “Leaders” should be asked to take on more responsibilities and could help mobilize residents to be more active on committees.

Table 3. Perceived Benefits and Opportunities for Increasing Participation in Evaluation

<p><i>Increasing stakeholder participation in evaluation could:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induce powerful change through resident leaders & community role models who inspire others to participate • Increase resident’s self-esteem by increasing their knowledge and power • Reveal meaningful and highly valid findings that reflect people’s true experiences • Decrease researcher bias by providing for multiple definitions of “success” and built-in checks & balances • Encourage sharing of research skills and innovative ideas amongst stakeholders • Establish an environment of open communication that helps build trusting relationships • Enhance program efficacy by increasing buy-in and support for the program • Establish an evaluation that complements overall HOPE VI program goals • Create an environment in which evaluation is welcomed, not feared <p><i>Opportunities for increasing stakeholder participation include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing and improving resident and service provider involvement on the Community Task Force • Using existing Resident Leaders to help educate other residents about the evaluation • Using Section 3 hiring funds to help employ residents to work on the evaluation • Involving Easter Hill youth with the HOPE VI Youth Leadership Initiative and using their studies in the evaluation • Tapping into a large population of residents who are eager to make change happen • Taking advantage of the frequent contact case managers have with residents to encourage them to become more involved with evaluation and program activities

Perceived Barriers and Challenges to Increasing Stakeholder Participation

Staff, service providers, and residents also identified several barriers to increasing participation in both the evaluation and the program itself in Easter Hill's HOPE VI CSS program. For most stakeholders, brainstorming existing barriers proved easier than hypothesizing about strengths of increased participation. Table 4 lists the primary barriers they discussed. All stakeholders relayed a strong and clear message focused on two things. First, there have been many program delays. In order to create an environment where stakeholders are empowered and encouraged to take on leadership roles, the program itself needs to move forward to prove that it will affect change. Second, there have been several lapses in communication amongst stakeholders concerning the goals and progress of the CSS program. Relationships must be established between residents, service providers, and staff that are based on consistent communication and respect.

Barriers relating to program delays. All of the stakeholders noticed that meetings were well attended and that staff encouraged residents and service providers to make their voices heard early in the program. Over time, however, residents and service providers began to feel frustrated by what they perceived to be inaction on the part of program staff, including the developers and evaluators. After making their voices heard at meetings, they saw little action or recognition in response. There have been several delays in both the redevelopment and social service plans at Easter Hill. Residents and service providers do not understand the delays and have become skeptical about the efficacy of the entire program. HOPE VI staff and other stakeholders agree that the program must start moving forward so that residents can see that change is coming. HOPE VI staff believe that once relocation and services begin, residents will be reinspired to become more involved in the program.¹⁴

According to residents and service providers, their current lack of faith in change has weakened their interest in playing a larger role in program decision-making, even if the opportunity was afforded them. For their part, HOPE VI staff have made repeated offers to residents to sit on the Community Task Force, write articles for the newsletter, and discuss the physical plans for the new site, but have become frustrated by the lack of response. Staff have also made several attempts to designate chair and co-chair positions on task force sub-committees to service providers, but service providers have been slow to respond due to their own busy schedules and confusion about their responsibilities. HOPE VI staff stated

¹⁴ Note that relocation and social services have recently begun as of this writing.

that they would be more than willing to share some decision-making powers with other stakeholders, but that they would like to see residents and service providers take more initiative to become leaders in this process.

Barriers relating to gaps in information. Given the scope of the HOPE VI project and typical delays, most stakeholders concede that inaction alone has not dampened their interest in being more involved with HOPE VI. What residents and service providers feel has disillusioned them the most is the lack of information they have received about where the program is at and where it is going. As one partner noted during a focus group, “I’m feeling out of the loop, as a partner, about what’s going on. I guess I must be a silent partner, cuz [sic] we don’t know what’s going on.” Service providers especially feel disempowered by their lack of knowledge. Service providers expressed the desire to be partners in making key decisions about both the program and the evaluation, but feel they lack enough knowledge of program goals, their own responsibilities, and other stakeholders’ roles to take on more control of the process. More than simple transfer of information, stakeholders report that consistent dialogue that builds healthy working relationships has been notably missing from the process. Stakeholders, including RHA-HOPE VI staff, recognize the need for more consistent follow-up after meetings or events, as well as the need for everyone to make stronger efforts to establish personal connections with others involved in the program.

During interviews and focus groups, stakeholders highlighted several other fundamental barriers to participation, all of which relate to effective communication and information sharing. These include inconsistent or poor Spanish translation in meetings and flyers, spotty mail delivery to certain homes the mailman fears approaching, little theoretical understanding of what levels of participation would improve the effectiveness of the program, and the lack of any guidance on how to focus and implement a HOPE VI evaluation at all. One focus group attendee expressed frustration over the lack of overall communication in this way:

“I’m tired of it. Myself, I’m tired of it. I put all my time into it. I put all my effort into it. And what happened? Not even one little letter: ‘Hey—we’re starting, we’re moving’—or something. People get tired.”

Additional concerns. Other existing barriers include the multitude of daily challenges that residents face. Public housing residents live with many understandable distractions and concerns that those with secure jobs, childcare, and health insurance do not share. Easter Hill

residents pointed out that drug use or the threat of domestic violence often keep people from attending HOPE VI meetings. However, neither residents nor service providers felt that these concerns were the primary barriers to increasing participation. It would be a mistake to assume that residents do not have the interest or motivation to be real decision makers about the course of their lives simply due to other concerns they have.

Stakeholders also highlighted possible weaknesses to the PE approach and raised questions about the efficacy and appropriateness of PE as a methodology. These, too, are outlined in Table 5. Stakeholders' primary concern seems to be that such an approach would rely too heavily

Table 4. Perceived Barriers and Weaknesses of Increasing Participation in Evaluation

<p><i>Barriers to increasing stakeholder participation in evaluation include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A lack of communication and information about the program as a whole• Weak relationships between stakeholders and Housing Authority staff• Delays that have stalled the perceived progress of the program• Issues affecting residents' lives that take primacy or keep them from participating, such as putting food on the table, lack of citizenship, drug abuse, or domestic violence• A lack of both program and evaluation guidance from HUD• The challenge of encouraging participation for people who are not accustomed to leadership roles• The challenge of maintaining people's motivation to participate especially with tedious or technical tasks• Little understanding about what level of participation would be most effective at Easter Hill• The intimidation caused by taking on more responsibilities• A lack of clarity about service providers' roles and responsibilities as is <p><i>Potential Weaknesses in the participatory approach include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially unsafe or uncomfortable evaluation tasks for residents• The potential for group efforts to foster tension and arguments amongst stakeholders• The possibility that participation is an American ideology that all cultures may not value• An over-reliance on evaluation participants who will move away and/or not sustain involvement

on people that will either move away or quickly lose interest in the additional responsibilities of the evaluation. Stakeholders expressed additional concerns about the safety of residents doing fieldwork such as surveys and the applicability of the participation rhetoric to all cultures.

Lessons Learned from Easter Hill

The feedback from a handful of interviews and focus groups included in this report offers a foundation for further discussions about increasing participation in evaluation. Four key observations emerged repeatedly throughout these preliminary interviews with residents, service providers, and RHA staff. These observations do not directly address the place for PE in HOPE VI. They do address the *potential* for increasing participation in evaluation. They especially address the changes that need to occur in the program itself in order to establish a healthy working environment in which PE could flourish. In summary, the four key points stakeholders attempted to convey state that:

- An evaluation that is highly integrated into program planning with open lines of communication between the evaluators and those involved with the program will most effectively help services to meet residents' needs.
- When the program itself is moving forward, or at least demonstrating a good faith effort to do so, residents and service providers will be more likely to take initiative in program or evaluation decision-making.
- Many stakeholders, service providers primarily, would like more opportunities to fill leadership positions. When they have more information about the goals and expectations of the HOPE VI program, they will be able to do so.
- Residents at Easter Hill want and need to see change happen, and the HOPE VI program could provide that change. When the program recognizes and taps into the skills that the residents possess, the capacity of both the residents and the program will grow.

As Chapter 2 discussed, participation is often used as a token measure that actually disempowers communities. It can be costly as well as time-consuming to increase participation. Increasing stakeholder participation in every aspect of an evaluation is not always necessary, nor appropriate. However, stakeholders at Easter Hill are willing and able to tell the stories of how those most deeply involved are experiencing HOPE VI, if given an environment that supports and nurtures their innovation and skill. Based upon the findings presented throughout this report

concerning the national HOPE VI program and Easter Hill specifically, the following chapter presents and discusses conclusions about the potential for the use of PE with HOPE VI social services as well as strategies for creating an environment for effective participatory evaluation.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

As HOPE VI passes its 10th anniversary, now is the perfect time for HUD to critically assess what HOPE VI has accomplished for whom, and if it has indeed helped build communities and empower public housing residents. We know quite a bit about the academic critique of HOPE VI and not enough about how residents actually experience this program. Residents and others intimately involved with HOPE VI must help reform and strengthen the program based on a personal knowledge of their community's assets and needs. Participatory evaluation could provide the means of integrating such knowledge into HOPE VI programming. This report gives HUD HOPE VI staff, HOPE VI sites across the country, IURD, and local staff in the Easter Hill HOPE VI program a sense of the strengths and challenges of conducting participatory evaluations and the potential for such an approach to be used with the HOPE VI Community Supportive Services program.

In order to explore the possibilities of partnering PE with HOPE VI social service programs, this report has presented a summary of the current body of PE knowledge, an overview of the role for PE in the national HOPE VI program, and feedback from local stakeholders at the Easter Hill HOPE VI program concerning the potential for increasing stakeholder participation in the evaluation of their CSS plan. Easter Hill HOPE VI stakeholders provided feedback that is rich with ideas for overcoming barriers and building upon strengths to enable them to play a more central role in assessing HOPE VI. Similar opportunities and constraints to implementing PE will be found in other HOPE VI programs, programs that could learn from the case study of Easter Hill presented in this report. The comments from Easter Hill stakeholders, combined with the participatory evaluation literature, could help HUD re-think its overall strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of its nation-wide HOPE VI program.

This final chapter offers four general conclusions that emerge from assessing both the situation at Easter Hill and the national context of HOPE VI. The following conclusions indicate both the need and the potential for PE approaches to be used with the HOPE VI program. They also highlight the importance of establishing solid, respectful relationships between players before attempting to develop a participatory evaluation. These four conclusions as well as the recommendations that follow apply to both Easter Hill stakeholders and HOPE VI programs across the country.

Conclusions

1. In order to implement participatory evaluation, particularly in situations where stakeholders have little experience with leadership or collaboration, stakeholders' initial focus should be on building relationships and increasing communication. A strong case can be made for promoting participatory approaches to evaluations of HOPE VI social services programs, as highlighted in this report. More important than any evaluation approach, however, is the need for public housing staff to focus on building relationships with service providers, residents, and community members. Positive interactions are needed to establish a healthy environment in which the program and evaluation can respond to each other and vigorous participatory evaluation can occur. Much of the success of the HOPE VI social services, relocation process, and a participatory evaluation will rest on the people involved - their personalities, communication styles, motivation, and devotion to the project. PE will not flourish if on-going and open communications as well as mutual respect do not exist between residents, staff, outside evaluators, and service providers in a HOPE VI program.

The observations that stakeholders at Easter Hill made about their own experiences with HOPE VI highlight how crucial a history of participation and empowerment is. They all acknowledged the difficulty of increasing participation, especially in something as ambiguous as evaluation, in a community where the Resident Council¹⁵ has not been active and where many of the service providers have only recently been introduced to Easter Hill, with a program that geographically disperses residents during implementation. Repeatedly, residents and service providers claimed that they would be happy to play a more active role in the Community Task Force, if they were better informed of the goals of the group and felt they had the power to set agendas and conduct outreach to expand membership. Whether through a Task Force or another forum, opening up communication and establishing more feedback loops between stakeholders will improve the responsiveness of HOPE VI services to residents' needs and increase transparency about relocation procedures. This process will increase faith and trust amongst stakeholders, even if PE is never adopted as an approach, and help lay the foundations for a truly empowering process.

¹⁵ Resident Councils are the typical mechanism for residents to communicate with housing authority staff at public housing sites. At Easter Hill, the Council was recently abolished and several Resident Leaders were appointed.

As many critics point out, the greatest threat to any participatory approach is the potential for program administrators or certain community members to control the process. In the name of participation and inclusion, some programs reproduce power structures, placate participants, and suppress opposition. This was the case with many of the federal programs from the 1960s on. A challenge for HUD programs such as HOPE VI today is to demonstrate their commitment to effecting real change by creating opportunities for low-income communities to hold decision-making power over the course of their lives. These opportunities must not demand participation of a certain kind but must be culturally appropriate and respectful of local customs. A concerted effort to increase communication and understanding amongst HOPE VI stakeholders would mark a vital first step toward such a course.

2. The foundation exists for a strong fit between PE and HOPE VI social services. The HOPE VI CSS program and participatory evaluation process share several common goals and principles. Many of HUD's claims concerning resident participation and community building in HOPE VI need to be further substantiated, however. A well-organized PE process requires on-going forums and communication amongst stakeholders and therefore has the potential to bring truth to HUD's claims and to help residents maintain a semblance of community and neighborliness throughout relocation. As the use of PE in rural EZ/EC communities presented in Chapter 2 demonstrates, PE can help strengthen communities spread across large geographic areas. More important at this point is that PE and HOPE VI CSS programs share a common language. Stakeholders at Easter Hill cited this parallel as a major reason for their interest in seeing various players participate in the evaluation of their CSS plan. Stakeholders at Easter Hill believe that the principles of PE align with what they see as the philosophy behind HOPE VI.

As Chapter 3 discussed, both the literature and HUD HOPE VI staff emphasize the centrality of participation and involvement to the HOPE VI program. Empowering residents to bring about change in their own lives is a focus of both the PE literature and HOPE VI "best practice" guidance. Both also stress the practicality of encouraging those with first-hand knowledge of life in public housing to be a part of strategizing for public housing reform. HUD staff and HOPE VI evaluators also expressed an interest in seeing new ideas about evaluation promoted and shared across the country. Those who are committed to participatory programs are now turning their attention to strengthening theories that explore the relationships between programs and evaluations, and the ways in which evaluations can best support participatory work.

3. Participatory evaluation produces useful information and leads to practical outcomes. The research presented in this report reveals that the strength of PE is in its utility. One commonly cited example is that PE increases the utility of evaluation results by increasing response rates of surveys. When an evaluation is transparent and familiar to people, and when program beneficiaries are involved with creating survey questions so that they reflect issues of importance in the community, more people tend to respond to surveys. PE also increases utility because there is more direct feedback from program beneficiaries to service providers and therefore more efficient adaptation of services to meet clients' real needs. PE increases utility because it forces stakeholders to communicate constantly, and can therefore prevent the divisiveness and misunderstandings between stakeholders that often lead to program delays and poor information about program functioning. PE is especially useful for programs like HOPE VI because it is a natural arena for job training and skill development.

As useful as increasing participation in evaluation is, it will only be helpful when balanced with the accountability a professional evaluator brings to the process. With a program like HOPE VI that is funded with federal dollars, using defensible evaluation methods must be a primary concern. It is not realistic to expect a program at the scale of HOPE VI to embrace evaluation methodologies that alter power dynamics by placing responsibility entirely into the hands of program beneficiaries. It is, however, important that program beneficiaries participate in both the design and implementation of the evaluation by helping to construct a logic model, define what should be evaluated, brainstorm resources for information, decide what data collection methods could be participatory, and collecting and analyzing that data with the oversight of the professional evaluator and the rest of the group. The intensity of stakeholders' participation in the evaluation will vary between programs, depending upon the history of relationships between residents, service providers, and staff. With HOPE VI, the primary focus of a participatory evaluation will be to protect residents from coercion masked as empowerment, obtain clear answers about program functioning, and employ methods that are culturally appropriate.

4. PE provides rich qualitative information about program functioning and could do so for the HOPE VI CSS program. It is well established that public housing residents, HUD, HOPE VI staff, and housing policy makers across the country are looking for deeper insights into the operations of HOPE VI services. At both local and national levels, not much is known about which CSS services prove to be the most helpful to original residents in terms of finding work and

improving overall quality of life. It is still unclear if the services themselves lead to the greatest changes in residents' lives, or if the process of being relocated does this. It is still unclear if the HOPE VI program improves the employment opportunities and quality of life of the *majority* of original residents. HUD must start filling in the gaps of knowledge concerning *which* services greatly change the lives of *which* public housing residents, in *what manner*. HOPE VI has lasted for 10 years as a demonstration program. Only recently have organizations such as the Urban Institute ("*HOPE VI: Panel Study Baseline Report*", "*HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study*") and HUD's Office of Policy Development & Research (conducting a 10-year review of HOPE VI) begun to look at the long-term effects of HOPE VI on the quality of life of all original residents.

It is difficult to generate qualitative data that includes a broad array of values, reflects people's realities, and tells a story about the overall program. Getting to this rich data is what PE does best as it invests people in the process and opens the door to innovative measures of success. The discussions that took place at Easter Hill demonstrate this. Stakeholders generated—in a short amount of time—a wealth of information about the strengths and weaknesses of involving diverse constituents in an evaluation. An example is the discussion about low resident turn-out to HOPE VI meetings that came up during the resident focus group. Residents revealed that some of their neighbors do not receive all of their mail because the mailman does not want to approach certain homes and that the threat of domestic violence keeps some women home in the evenings. Such issues may be reported in a survey as "didn't get my mail" or "busy with the family," and would remain mysterious without the collective wisdom of residents, service providers, and RHA staff to explain the findings.

This level of understanding of opportunities and constraints facing their community is not unique to Easter Hill residents and service providers, but is typical of any community, public housing or otherwise. This insight enables community members to not only explain why certain aspects of a program are effective or not, but it also means they have the ability to know which questions to ask and which criteria to measure in order to reflect people's true experiences. However, as the frustrations of both residents and service providers at Easter Hill demonstrate, people can quickly tire of meetings and surveys and lose faith in what either produces. Residents and providers at Easter Hill report that RHA and HUD staff do not listen to what they say or act on what they say as much as they would like. This is an appropriate time then to explore

participatory evaluation and the different forms of self-expression and participation that PE fosters.

Increasing participation in CSS evaluations will not only help construct a clear picture of residents' experiences, but it also offers HUD a chance to boldly embrace innovation and strengthen its stated principles of resident leadership. PE will manifest its most profound impacts, however, if adopted by public housing sites before applying for HOPE VI grants. The PE process would be a mechanism for assessing the strengths and challenges facing residents and a means for devising a unique strategy for improving people's quality of life, whether that be through HOPE VI or another redevelopment program.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations that follow provide HUD staff, Public Housing Authority staff, and HOPE VI evaluators with a series of steps for implementing participatory evaluation of the HOPE VI program. These recommendations are informed by the participatory evaluation literature and are largely based on the case study of Easter Hill presented in this report. Much of the feedback gathered from Easter Hill stakeholders can be generalized to other HOPE VI evaluations. These recommendations therefore address all Public Housing Authorities and evaluators currently working on a HOPE VI project.

Recommendations for HUD Community Supportive Services Staff:

1. Disseminate more information about evaluation approaches.
 - a. *Mail or email resources covering participatory methods, including this report and the PE guidance accompanying this report.* HUD should also disseminate other resources, such as those listed in Appendix B, that are good starting points for learning about PE. HUD could disseminate information about a variety of evaluation approaches in the same manner.
 - b. *Create an evaluation site on the HOPE VI website.* This site should include HOPE VI evaluation requirements, any evaluation guidance sheets, current focus areas of HOPE VI evaluations, links to recent evaluations, contact information for current evaluators, and links to evaluation resources as mentioned above and listed in Appendix B.
 - c. *Offer technical assistance for evaluators interested in using alternative evaluation methods.* On the HOPE VI website, HUD could post case studies and resources about how to use or teach

video or radio skills, how to lead a mural-making session, or how to engage youth in a mapping exercise.

2. Offer supportive services for evaluators

- a. *Create an evaluation network.* HUD could create an electronic discussion list for all HOPE VI evaluators and encourage sharing of ideas by holding consistent evaluation training and conferences.
- b. *Increase funding for unconventional evaluation.* HUD's HOPE VI budget could explicitly allocate funds for people hired to do surveys and research. Funds could come through Section 3 or through an increase in the general funds made available for evaluation. HUD could also advertise additional research grants that other agencies, such as the Urban Institute, or some of its own departments offer.
- c. *Include evaluation requirements in the Community Supportive Services (CSS) requirements and the CSS guidance sheet.* HUD should include principles of sound evaluation in the CSS guidance so that the program and the evaluation are seen as inseparable.

Recommendations for Public Housing Authorities (PHA) with HOPE VI Grants:

1. Lay the groundwork for participatory evaluation

- a. *Create written contracts for each stakeholder group that participates in the evaluation.* These documents should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the group in question and should be signed by both the PHA and the stakeholder. Stakeholder groups could include service provider agencies, the evaluator or evaluation team, Resident Councils, and Community Task Force Committees like those at Easter Hill.
- b. *Practice good meeting and communication habits before relocation.* Before relocation begins, PHAs should begin holding meetings at a central and familiar location for residents and one in which meetings can take place throughout relocation. PHAs should advertise meetings or events repeatedly and well in advance, start meetings on time, follow up with those who could not attend, thank people who do attend or participate in an event, hire translators for meetings as needed, assist with transportation needs, and demonstrate in other ways their commitment to the people and the program.

- c. *Host facilitated workshops for all HOPE VI stakeholders.* With the help of a professional facilitator, PHA staff can hold two types of workshops that include residents, evaluators, developers, service providers, and other key stakeholders: one for basic ice-breakers and sharing exercises and another to guide visioning exercises concerning the future of the public housing development. Ideally, workshops would take place before the PHA even applies for a HOPE VI grant. Easter Hill, however, presents an example of where the program and evaluation would benefit from this level of communication and sharing, even well into the life of the grant.
- d. *Build multiple avenues for stakeholders to communicate with the PHA.* Ideas include creating a HOPE VI stakeholder listserve or a group website and creating a bulletin board, drop box, or electronic feedback form at a computer learning or job center where residents could post questions, concerns, and ideas about the CSS program. For example, service providers at Easter Hill established a group email for themselves and expressed interest in hosting focus groups themselves. Easter Hill residents have expressed interest in establishing a resident-run, HOPE VI-specific newsletter for communicating amongst each other.

2. Document the impacts of participation

PHAs will need to document the ripple effects of involving stakeholders in the HOPE VI evaluation process. They will need to focus on what participation helps, what it hinders, and what has changed the most with increased stakeholder participation. PHAs could document the amount and mechanism of feedback they receive from stakeholders throughout the program as well as the numbers and demographics of residents who attend HOPE VI-related meetings. If conducting any surveys, PHAs should note if more surveys are completed and returned when there is more participation in the overall evaluation.

Recommendations for HOPE VI Evaluators:

1. Set the stage for a participatory evaluation

- a. *Research different approaches to PE.* Resources for practitioners interested in developing a participatory evaluation are listed in Appendix B, as mentioned above.
- b. *Assess the readiness of HOPE VI stakeholders to participate in the evaluation.* With the PHA, the evaluator should work to remove any barriers to participation early on in the program,

before relocation and services begin. Easter Hill is an example where building trust and communication skills through workshops and other forums must precede the implementation of PE so that all key stakeholders feel capable of playing a role in the evaluation.

- c. *Introduce the evaluation, and the idea of participatory evaluation, to stakeholders.* Before relocation begins, evaluators should hold at least one lunch and one evening meeting at the housing development to introduce the evaluation to residents and to invite participation in the evaluation. Evaluators should ask HOPE VI case managers, who have frequent contact with residents, to advertise such meetings and evaluators should also introduce themselves in the resident newsletter.

2. Involve stakeholders in the evaluation and set parameters for their participation

- a. *Identify stakeholders who would and should be involved with the evaluation.* For stakeholders who express interest in participating, evaluators will need to assess the skills, willingness, and comfort they have to participate in evaluation activities and will need to locate roles for them throughout the evaluation process. Evaluators could hold a series of focus groups with residents, service providers, PHA staff, and other parties affected by HOPE VI to explore the strengths and weaknesses of PE and the specific tasks different parties could take on. Any evaluation will need to be tailor-made to reflect the unique composition of the HOPE VI community.
- b. *Incorporate existing activities into the evaluation.* At Easter Hill, the most active Community Task Force Committee is the Historical Committee. In this case, the evaluator could work with the Committee to create a written, oral, or graphic history of Easter Hill that could bring detail to the context of HOPE VI. Similarly, Easter Hill residents expressed interest in holding a community-wide celebration of the history and diverse cultures of Easter Hill. Evaluators and PHAs could support such events, take the opportunity to gather information, and connect with residents or service providers who might be interested in documenting the event and assessing such events over the life of the HOPE VI grant.

3. Implement the minimum of what is needed to do participatory evaluation
 - a. *Create an Evaluation Team that includes representatives from all stakeholder groups.* Team members should have similar opportunities to participate, but the outside professional evaluator should remain the lead on the evaluation and will be responsible for making final decisions concerning methodology and analysis. Stakeholders should use an existing structure to house the Team. For example, at Easter Hill, an Evaluation Team could act as a Community Task Force Committee. Membership and leadership should rotate on the team and experienced participants could recruit and help train new participants. Due to relocation, participants must be compensated for or provided with transportation. Participants should also be compensated with the help of the Section 3 program, or with coupons for goods (food, clothing) or services (dinner out, a massage).
 - b. *Work with evaluation participants to create the evaluation framework.* Evaluation participants should actively participate in creating a logic model for the evaluation, defining evaluation questions, and brainstorming possible data collection methods and indicators of success. The outside evaluator will refine and add to the framework, and help participants locate roles for themselves, where appropriate, in the data collection.
 - c. *Work with evaluation participants to write the goals and objectives for the Community Supportive Services Plan.* An Evaluation Team could brainstorm and refine the most important goals for the public housing community. The Team would also need to assign each goal to a specific stakeholder and decide on mechanisms for reporting progress.
 - d. *Designate funds for paying evaluation participants and for the extra time needed for evaluation training.* When negotiating a contract with HOPE VI staff, outside evaluators will need to allocate funds to pay evaluation participants, buy materials, and fund their own time needed to train participants. Again, evaluators should pursue Section 3 funds.
 - e. *Encourage alternative mediums for communication such as video, photography, mapping, drawing, or other graphics.* Such visuals relay information as a satisfaction survey would, and are also forms of communication that shy people, youth, or those who do not speak English might be more comfortable with. Examples include the book *Photovoice*, which describes how rural Chinese

women documented their lives in pictures, and the use of video by youth at a HOPE VI site in Tennessee to interview residents and document the public housing before demolition and reconstruction.

- f. *Work with evaluation participants to create a comprehensive resident survey measuring satisfaction with the CSS program.* During an Evaluation Team meeting, residents and service providers should have the opportunity to brainstorm both questions to ask on the survey and indicators of a successful CSS program. The professional evaluator should finalize and test the survey. The survey should be administered at least annually throughout the life of the HOPE VI grant.
4. In cases where there is a high degree of social capital and self-sufficiency amongst HOPE VI stakeholders, implement a more intensive participatory evaluation
 - a. *Place responsibility for designing the annual resident satisfaction survey with the Evaluation Team.* Train and hire residents to administer the survey. Work with residents, service providers and PHA staff to help analyze the qualitative data gathered in the surveys. If needed, professional evaluators should also help Evaluation Team members understand statistically significant data and connect those who are interested to courses or trainings in quantitative analysis. Participants should be allowed and encouraged to survey satisfaction with relocation and other aspects of HOPE VI as well.
 - b. *Work with the Evaluation Team to construct in-depth interviews and on-going forums for discussion.* Evaluation participants should work together to design interview questions for one-on-one interviews with HOPE VI stakeholders and determine which constituent groups should be represented in the interviews. The Team should also decide on a forum to discuss the progress of the CSS plan throughout the HOPE VI grant. These could be focus groups, panel discussions, study groups, or informal meetings. Whatever the design, members should take turns planning and facilitating the forums.
 - c. *Ensure that each member of the Evaluation Team has the opportunity to help synthesize evaluation findings and contribute to final reports.* This could be through writing a case study of an individual family, designing graphics to support and explain the data, or writing a narrative of overall impressions of the CSS program. Evaluation reports should not be limited to written reports but could include poetry, video, graphics, or anything else

stakeholders use to express the changes they experience with the CSS program.

5. Avoid transferring control of the evaluation to the Evaluation Team or other stakeholders
 - a. *Prioritize the privacy and safety of evaluation participants and other residents over participation.* Participants, especially residents, should not be asked to administer surveys or other tasks that require them to approach people or homes around which they are uncomfortable. Conversely, all residents should be forewarned that other residents may be involved in the evaluation and must have the option of answering interview or survey questions only to outside staff.
 - b. *Conduct more intimate information gathering, such as in-depth interviews, without the help of evaluation participants.* The professional evaluator alone should administer and analyze the results of interviews and other highly personal evaluation tasks.
 - c. *Maintain discretion over all evaluation activities.* The professional evaluator alone will and should be held responsible for the implications of the final evaluation report. The professional evaluator will ensure that all findings are valid and reliable and all recommendations reflect the findings.

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APPENDIX A

List of Interview Participants and Interview Questions

Lists of Interview Participants

HUD Community Supportive Services Staff:

Ron Ashford, Director, HOPE VI Community Supportive Services

Tony Hebert, CSS Specialist

Maria Queen, CSS Specialist

HOPE VI Evaluators:

Noel Poyo, Housing Opportunities Unlimited

Steve Kauffman, Widener University Center for Social Work
Education

Rachel Garshick Kleit, University of Washington Evans School of
Public Affairs

Participatory Evaluation Practitioners:

Tania Rempert, MSW, Private Consultant

Galen El-Askari, MPH, Walton-El-Askari Associates

Ginny Seitz, Director, University of Tennessee Community
Partnership Center

Laurie Stevahn, Seattle University

Jean King, University of Minnesota

Richmond Housing Authority HOPE VI Staff:

LaTanna Jones, HOPE VI Director

Yvette Woods

Sharon Walker

HOPE VI Service Providers:

Richmond Employment & Training

Richmond Neighborhood Housing Services

Richmond Police Department

Ephesians Church—Community Development Corporation

Questions for HUD Community Supportive Services Staff

1. Do you receive evaluations from the HOPE VI sites you work with?
 - a. If so, how have you used evaluations in the past?
 - b. How do you think you might use my report?
 - c. Who else at HUD receives & reviews evaluations?
2. What do you think are the most important questions to answer in an evaluation of a HOPE VI CSS program?
3. What would you like to see more of in evaluations?
4. What do you think are the most important goals of the HOPE VI program overall?
5. What would you like to see HOPE VI accomplish?
6. Are you familiar with PE? (*have script ready*) Hearing that little bit about PE, and knowing HOPE VI so well, can you comment on any strengths you think increased participation might bring to the evaluation?
7. What would demonstrate to you that increased participation was improving and strengthening the overall evaluation?
8. In my final report I will include a brief (2-3 page) guidance about implementing PE at a HOPE VI site that HUD could reproduce for other housing authorities beginning evaluations. What do you think would be helpful for me to include in this guidance?

Questions for Richmond Housing Authority–HOPE VI Staff

1. What about the HOPE VI program do you think is really effective?
What do you think it will accomplish?
2. What would you really like to see HOPE VI accomplish?
3. Do you have any concerns about HOPE VI?
4. Historically, what has the level of involvement been in activities & meetings at Easter Hill?
 - a. Is this something you would like to see increased?
 - b. Why or Why not? What do you see as the value of increasing involvement?
 - c. What are some of the challenges or problems with increasing involvement?
 - d. What facilitates it?
 - e. Have you noticed a difference in *who* tends to participate in activities? Are there any differences across culture, age, or gender?
5. What HOPE VI activities already exist in which all stakeholders are allowed to participate?
 - a. Are there any people/groups of people you would like to see participate more in program decision making?
6. Now, a few questions just about evaluation.
7. What is the most helpful thing an evaluation could do for you?
8. Are you familiar with Participatory Evaluation?
 - a. If no, have brief script ready
 - b. Can you comment on any strengths you think increased participation might bring to the evaluation or the program?
 - c. What might make increasing participation (in evaluation) difficult?
 - d. Much of the literature on PE discusses the “transfer of skills” and “capacity building” for program beneficiaries. Do you think increasing participation could build skills and capacity amongst stakeholders? What types of skills and capacities?

9. Do you think a participatory approach to evaluation would work well with the HOPE VI program? Why/why not?
 - a. If so, what are some ideas you have about how we could proceed, or how we could implement this?
 - b. What would you hope to see or learn from this type of approach?
 - c. What is already in place that might support and facilitate increased involvement?
10. I am going to be talking with residents and service providers, is there anyone else you can think of that I could talk to?
 - a. What might you want to learn from these discussions?
11. How would you like me to present the ideas about participatory evaluation that emerge from my interviews and conversations to you? (discuss examples of report formats)

Questions for Participatory Evaluation Practitioners (non-HOPE VI)

1. Could you briefly describe a program for which you have been involved with a participatory evaluation? (Where was this, who were the key stakeholders, how long did it last, etc)
2. When you have done PE in the past, what led you to use a participatory approach?
 - a. How (if) did you assess the situation, to know that PE was an appropriate model?
 - b. How, if at all, did you introduce it to the various stakeholders?
 - c. What were the first steps you took to begin PE?
3. What were the easiest parts of doing PE?
4. What were your biggest challenges?
5. Where have you seen the greatest impacts of PE, positive or negative?
6. Have you observed that the PE process fosters skills and capacity in participants?
 - a. If so, what types of skills?
7. What advice would you give other practitioners who are just beginning a PE process?
8. What have you found to be the best resources about PE?
9. May I list you as a resource in my final report to the Department of Housing & Urban Development?

Questions for HOPE VI Evaluators

1. Could you briefly describe the focus of your evaluation? (i.e. did you evaluate solely the effectiveness of the CSS plan, or the relocation process, or the physical development, or all of the above?)
2. Please list the members of the evaluation team, if any (no names needed).
3. Overall, what were the easiest aspects of doing the evaluation? What went really smoothly?
4. What were the most difficult and challenging aspects?
5. What do you feel are the most important questions for HOPE VI evaluations to focus on?
6. What, if anything, could have helped you make the evaluation stronger?
7. What, if anything, did you use as a model or guidance for designing your evaluation?
8. How should these evaluations be used and by whom?

Outline of Easter Hill HOPE VI Service Provider Focus Group

5:30pm: Welcome

- Get name tag; Get consent form; Sign in; Grab a pen & paper; Grab some food

5:40pm: Introductions

- Thank-yous
- Intros all around
- Why we are here: explanation of goals & purpose for the discussion

5:50pm: Review previously conducted interviews

- During individual interviews, these are the major points service providers brought up: (summarize major perspectives on the evaluation)
- Is there anything more to add?

6:00pm: Getting specific/Feedback about the evaluation

- Review the most potentially helpful aspects of an evaluation, according to service provider interviews
- Discuss what has actually been done: what methods IURD has proposed (give examples)
- Basic questions to address in this discussion:
 - 1) If service providers, knowing the Easter Hill community and the goals of the HOPE VI program, have any other thoughts on what would be effective evaluation tools to make a strong and helpful evaluation
 - 2) Look at these evaluation tools & methods and talk about the opportunities as well as constraints to increasing stakeholder power and participation in these steps of the evaluation.
- Brainstorm additional ideas for evaluation tools and methods
- Thinking about all these different methods, are there any opportunities for stakeholders (service providers, residents, RHA) to be involved & take a more powerful or leading role in any of these?
- Be specific, what would these activities—and service providers' roles—look like?

- Why? What strengths would stakeholder participation bring to these aspects of the evaluation? Or how would this strengthen the program?
- What about barriers? What do you see blocking participation?
- And what about challenges or problems that increased participation might bring to the evaluation or the program?
- How could the program overcome those barriers and challenges?

6:45pm: Review

- Re-cap the general ideas/thoughts
- Any more thoughts? What are some positives and some negatives to increasing participation in an evaluation?
- Any other ideas or strategies?
- Thank-yous; gather consent forms; last questions

Outline for Resident Focus Group

5:30: Welcome

- Residents fill out a name tag, sign in, read & sign the consent form, get food, grab pen & paper for their own notes. sit in a circle around the table

5:40: Introductions

- Residents, note-taker
- Updates on where the evaluation is now, purpose for evaluation and the focus group, potential outcomes from the focus group, how the focus group will proceed, how participants were selected, and issues concerning confidentiality.

5:50: Discussion about participation & evaluation

- The word “evaluation” means a lot of different things to different people and can be a confusing word
- What does evaluation means to you? What does it make you think of?
- What do evaluations do?
- Why are they important or what should they do?

6:05: Positive Feedback/Strengths

- There has been a lot going on around here because of the HOPE VI program. Although the program is just now beginning what are some of your thoughts about how it’s going?
- First, what do you think is really important about the community supportive services program of HOPE VI?
- What do you think is going well right now?
- How is this program helping Easter Hill?
- Okay, say X (an example they give of a strength or something going well) is going well, do you think residents would come out to meetings or discussion groups or anything to talk about these experiences?
- Do you think it would be important or helpful for you to share what is going well with RHA, UC Berkeley, service providers, or other residents about?

- How could you do that? What would you want to share, and with whom?
- Probe:
 - What do you think would make it likely for residents to get involved with sharing their experiences?
 - Where are people likely to come together?
 - When – days/times?
 - How often?

6:25: Critical Feedback/Concerns

- Okay, there are some good things HOPE VI is bringing to Easter Hill, so what concerns have come up for you?
- What, if anything are you worried about or what is not going well?
- So when X (an example they give) is not going well, or you have concerns about the program, how would you like to be able to express those concerns?
- Again, what do you think this could look like – what could be a good way for residents to express their views about how the program is going?
- Do you think you would feel comfortable expressing these concerns? If not, what could help make you feel comfortable?

6:45: Revisit overall goals for the focus group

- What might be the biggest barriers or obstacles to residents for participating in a process where they're helping look at what's working or not with a program?
- What might help overcome those barriers or make it easier for people to participate?
- What might make this participation real and powerful?

6:55: Wrap-up

- Review what has been said; review outcomes from the focus group; thank-yous, stop tape, collect all waivers

APPENDIX B
Participatory Evaluation Resources

Participatory Evaluation Resources for Beginners

1. American Evaluation Association's "Collaborative, Participatory, & Empowerment Evaluation" working group
(<http://www.stanford.edu/~davidf/empowermentevaluation.html>)
2. American Evaluation Association's electronic discussion list
(<http://www.eval.org/EvaluationLinks/Listservs.htm>)
3. Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (2000) edited by Marisol Estrella
4. Understanding and Practicing Participatory Evaluation (1998) edited by Elizabeth Whitmore.
5. "Participatory Evaluation Workbook for Community Initiatives"
Contact the New Mexico Department of Health, Public Health Division, Healthier Communities Unit
6. "Who are the Question-makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook" by the United Nations Development Programme
(www.undp.org/eo/documents/whop1.htm)
7. W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook
(www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf).
8. University of Tennessee Community Partnership Center
(<http://sunsite.utk.edu/cpc/>)
9. Mosaic.net International (<http://www.mosaic-net-intl.ca/whatis.html>)
10. Eldis, hosted by the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex
(<http://www.eldis.org/participation/pme/index.htm>)