

Developing and Sustaining Regional Affiliates



Malissa Martin, 2012 Communities In Schools Robert H. B. Baldwin Fellow

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regionalization is a form of nonprofit strategic restructuring, and a significant movement in the nonprofit arena that is often led by funders seeking better use of their dollars and organizations looking for greater capacity. A regional structure can effectively reduce duplication of administrative costs, while simultaneously allowing for a greater level of shared expertise and wise use of resources across multiple communities. These benefits would better position Communities In Schools both now and in the future, enabling expansion and replication to be instituted more effectively and possibly at a quicker pace.

As it pertains to the CIS network, regionalization occurs when:

- A Single affiliate expands its geographic service area to include multiple communities and counties, without joining with another affiliate via merger or administrative consolidation.
- Two or more CIS affiliates merge to form a larger affiliate.
- Two or more CIS affiliates do not fully merge, but choose to consolidate some or all of their administrative functions.
- A state office establishes a new affiliate, planning from the outset that its reach will be regional.

Across the country, a number of Communities In Schools affiliates are already practicing regionalization, although

the leaders of these affiliates may not all define their organizations as “regional.” While some Communities In Schools leaders are cautious about embracing what they view as a new or unfamiliar strategy, others have a strong interest in exploring the concept

The four examples listed above fall under three regionalization structures: geographic expansion, merger, and administrative consolidation. These three structures and the model built around them form the core of this study’s work.

PURPOSES, BENEFITS, AND BARRIERS

The study began with three basic assumptions:

- Regionalization is a viable organizational structure for existing and future affiliates.
- Regionalization would not be required, but instead offered as an option to interested affiliates.
- Regionalization should be broadly inclusive and flexible while respecting the intent of Total Quality System (TQS) standards.

While the original purpose of the study was to determine how to engage affiliates in regionalization that benefits them and the communities and students they serve, it ultimately revealed larger purposes:

- Creating stability and sustainability
- Helping position the network to take advantage of its significant gains in visibility and credibility

In order to fulfill those goals, national leadership of and support for implementation of a regional model is crucial.

The proposed regionalization model works for affiliates of all sizes and benefits every type of community. According to many regional affiliates, regionalization offers especially significant benefits in rural areas, providing greater funding for both services and administrative functions, as well as better access to human capital and expanded opportunity to deliver services in rural communities. Regional affiliates may well prove to be a primary means of ensuring rural

stability and sustainability, which, in turn, support the sustainability of the entire CIS network.

This study also uncovered some issues in the Communities In Schools network, primarily around the replication model and state office structures. While unexpected, these issues were not unsurprising, given that regionalization affects governance structures, organizational standards, rural issues and community environment and factors and these things, in turn, affect regionalization.

ABOUT COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS ROBERT H. B. BALDWIN FELLOW MALISSA MARTIN

Malissa Martin is the President and CEO of Communities In Schools of Kansas. During her thirteen years in the network, she has worked with local, state, urban, suburban, and rural affiliates in nearly every facet of operations. Martin's fellowship focuses on creating a model for developing and maintaining effective regional affiliates in the Communities In Schools network.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS ROBERT H.B. BALDWIN FELLOWS PROGRAM:

Named after Communities In Schools' founding board chairman, the Robert H.B. Baldwin Fellows Program aims to promote and sustain Communities In Schools leadership by bringing together the best ideas from the network's past and present leaders. The program, made possible through a generous grant from MetLife Foundation, addresses the issues surrounding leadership retention, development and transition in the nonprofit sector.

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