A promising new model for multi-disciplinary grantmaking is emerging from the work of the Heinz Endowments’ environment program, according to a recent evaluation report on the program’s first year.

The report was produced by the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning in Philadelphia, a firm engaged to monitor the environment program as part of an innovative process of continuous evaluation. Traditionally, grantmaking programs are evaluated retrospectively, after several years of operation. For the environment program, however, the Endowments adopted an ambitious plan to integrate the evaluation process into the program from its inception. Under the plan, OMG was engaged to track the program’s progress and report annually on its findings.

In its first report, OMG takes special note of the environment program’s unusual emphasis on team-building among its grantees. OMG describes this as a “promising” approach that could become a national model.

“We wanted to go beyond traditional support for autonomous organizations and programs,” explained Andrew McElwaine, the program’s director. “We obviously still support individual grantees on distinct projects, but we also look for opportunities to bring grantees together for joint initiatives.”

The result, according to the OMG report, is a program that has assembled its grantees into an inter-organizational team of local and national experts on eco-efficiency and environmentally sound economic development. This “Green Team,” as OMG christens it, is a resource that can be called into action whenever necessary.

“When we have the opportunity to play a role in one of the many environmental initiatives in the region, we are able to assemble this team of experts to provide a broad range of relevant expertise,” said McElwaine. “Their complementary perspectives make them particularly effective in sharpening agendas and increasing the likelihood that a project’s impact will be sustainable.”

“I think the Heinz Endowments represent an emerging style of pro-active grantmaking,” said Ed Wilson, senior project director at OMG. “In addition to pursuing its own strategic goals, the environment program is trying to build something in Western Pennsylvania—a strong network of environmental organization and a spirit of teamwork in the region.”

The “Green Team” already has made a mark on several programs, three of which are discussed here to illustrate how the concept works.
The Green Neighborhood Initiative (GNI) is a Heinz Endowments program which targets low to moderate-income neighborhoods for significant energy, water and resource savings in order to increase household income and spur neighborhood redevelopment. The initiative concentrates these activities within specific neighborhoods that will serve as showcases for energy efficiency and sustainable design.

The challenge was in crafting comprehensive, cross-disciplinary action and implementation plans tailored to the needs of individual target neighborhoods. The Green Team concept provided the solution.

“The Heinz Endowments have gone to great lengths to help grantees get to know each other and work together to develop more effective strategic plans for these initiatives,” commented Ann Gerace, executive director for Conservation Consultants Inc. (CCI), a Pittsburgh-based non-profit devoted to energy conservation, environmental education and energy-related community services.

“What we are trying to do is create a total community effort to improve quality of life through resource efficiency,” Gerace added. “When we began, so much of this initiative involved just making the community aware — now, residents and businesses are calling us asking ‘What can I do?’ and ‘How can I help?’

This interest is explained by the GNI’s success in two communities, Carrick and Tarentum, where the program has helped to reduce pollution, improve business profits and increase the value of local housing. The effects of these Green Neighborhood Initiatives are as follows:

### CARRICK GOES GREEN

In 1996, the town of Carrick became the first “green” neighborhood in Western Pennsylvania, a move prompted by a coalition of public, private and community organizations striving to revitalize the area by cutting residential and business energy costs. Their hope is that money saved through energy conservation measures, including weatherization and recycling, will be reinvested into the community.

To help with this process, the GNI assembled the following Green Team players:

**Conservation Consultants, Inc.**
CCI has helped over 200 residents of the neighborhood to take advantage of free energy surveys and over 100 to obtain free weatherization. CCI estimates that the Green Neighborhood Initiative can cut Carrick’s annual natural gas consumption, electricity usage and water usage — all while enhancing residents’ comfort and promoting environmental awareness.

**CCI and Lead Reduction**
Challenging the health hazards that lead poses, especially to children, the Green Neighborhood Initiative is providing lead reduction assistance to targeted Carrick households. This includes risk assessment and risk reduction of lead-based paint and lead dust.

CCI is partnering with Dr. Herbert Needleman, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, on the development of a manual for household lead reduction. CCI is also working with the Allegheny County Health Department, whose Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Demonstration Project provides assistance to low and very-low-income families with children under age six. This program leverages HUD grants totaling up to $5.1 million.

Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)
BSR is a Washington, DC-based organization that helps companies conduct business in an environmentally sustainable manner. In addition to working with local banks to provide energy efficiency loans, BSR is providing ongoing technical assistance to targeted Carrick commercial and industrial businesses. Currently, in partnership with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center, it is working with the Carl Colteryahn Dairy, a local dairy and milk processor and the largest industry in Carrick.

### PROGRAM STATUS

Over 50 percent of Carrick businesses and residents are participating in the Green Neighborhood Initiative. Those involved have already exceeded the program’s initial expectations by saving an average of 30 percent in annual electric, gas and water bills, since the program began.

### TARENTUM ECONOMIC AND ENERGY INITIATIVE

After 20 years of leasing its municipally owned electric system to West Penn Power, the town of Tarentum recently decided to reassume control of its utility.

To facilitate the transition, the town issued an urgent plea for assistance in reducing energy costs. Seizing on the opportunity, the Green Neighborhood Initiative quickly assembled a Green Team with the following players:

**Conservation Consultants, Inc. (CCI)**
CCI has years of experience working with local utilities to provide education, audit and inspection services. With the help of a $250,000 grant from T.W. Phillips, the gas company that serves Tarentum, CCI is providing weatherization assistance to low-income households and audit and consulting services for several municipal buildings. It also has convinced local bankers to offer energy efficiency loans to the town’s middle-income residents and businesses.

**Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)**
BSR has arranged eco-efficiency audits for energy efficiency, waste minimization and pollution prevention, for the two largest energy consumers in Tarentum, a newspaper publisher and a brick refractory.

It is also working with local banks to provide energy efficiency loans for large commercial and small to mid-size industrial companies.

Above: Carrick was selected from more than 22 towns to become the first “green” neighborhood in Western Pennsylvania. The goal of the program is to make the community a resource-efficient area that can be showcased, studied and copied by other neighborhoods.

Right: The enthusiasm of the town is displayed on “Carrick Goes Green” signs posted in front yards and windows of participating households and businesses.
program status

“By calling on the team of consultants, the Heinz Endowments were able to respond promptly to a time-bound opportunity without going through the lengthy process of soliciting proposals and awarding grants specifically for that purpose,” the OMG Evaluation Report noted. “Few grantmakers have that degree of flexibility.”

Tarentum homes, many of which have utility bills exceeding monthly mortgage payments because of the age of the buildings, are now being rehabilitated to maximize energy and resource efficiency by combining utility weatherization programs with low-interest financing from area banks. The homes that are participating in the program have saved an annual average of 35 percent in gas bills — the highest in the state of Pennsylvania.

future green neighborhoods

Conservation Consultants, Inc. is currently expanding the Green Neighborhood Initiative into Knoxville, PA and will soon expand to Lawrenceville, PA. It has a commitment from Equitable Resources of Pittsburgh, a natural gas provider for the city, for $800,000 toward the Lawrenceville project — a 10 to 1 match for Heinz Endowment support. The funds will be used to weatherize as many as 200 low-income households.

Pennsylvania Energy Project (PEP) The Pennsylvania Energy Project, an organization that provides advocacy services to environmental and energy interests, is providing Tarentum with legal counsel on resuming control of its utility and guidance on organizing stakeholders and city council members. In addition, PEP and CCI have been working with Tarentum’s borough engineer on the design and financing of a new, more efficient substation.

program status

The foundation for 32 units of environmentally sound housing has been poured at the site and construction is underway. “One of the most significant experiences of having the different ‘Green Team’ entities involved was that we all learned from each other,” commented Rebecca Flora of SSLDC.

“The process enabled everyone to gain a better understanding of each perspective, not only the technical aspects, but the reality of advancing environmental concepts in an urban situation.”

Heinz Endowments Integrated Initiatives

The New Birmingham project is an example of an Integrated Housing Initiative, a joint strategy that addresses goals defined in both the Environment and Economic Opportunity Programs. Both programs support affordable housing initiatives that feature maximum energy and resource efficiency, and allow the owner to retain disposable income. The New Birmingham project presents an opportunity for two Endowment programs to combine expertise and resources to meet the needs of the Western Pennsylvania community.

Pennsylvania is home to over 10,000 contaminated industrial sites, many in the Pittsburgh area. Addressing these “brownfields” and the obstacles they pose to economic development is one of the environment program’s chief challenges.

In an attempt to demonstrate how the challenge might be met, the South Side Local Development Company (SSLDC), a non-profit developer, proposed building environmentally sound housing on one of the more visible of these sites — the barren wasteland that was once home to USX’s South Side steel mill. The plan, dubbed the New Birmingham Project, will offer moderate and middle-income homebuyers the opportunity to purchase a home in the city’s first cost-effective, environmental housing development.

The New Birmingham Project was greeted with skepticism at first, mainly because of its emphasis on environmental housing. The Heinz Endowments saw this as an opportunity to convene the “Green Team” to demonstrate to the city, homebuyers, and nonprofit and for-profit developers that this new approach can be both cost- and energy-efficient.

In this case, the team members include:

- Green Building Alliance (GBA)
- Conservation Consultants, Inc.
- The Green Building Alliance, comprised of four environmental groups — CCI, the Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP), Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) and the Group for Recycling in Pennsylvania — conducts outreach and educational efforts to promote cost effective and environmentally responsible building practices. In conjunction with CCI, the organization is providing technical assistance to the South Side Local Development Company throughout construction of the New Birmingham site.
- Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI)

The New Birmingham project presents an opportunity for two Integrated Housing Initiatives that feature maximum energy and resource efficiency, and allow the owner to retain disposable income. The New Birmingham project presents an opportunity for two Endowment programs to combine expertise and resources to meet the needs of the Western Pennsylvania community.
The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy approached the Heinz Endowments to support its efforts to retrofit the historical downtown Burke Building. The organization was looking for an opportunity to create a sustainable, environmentally sound location for its headquarters, and to create the first “green” building in Downtown Pittsburgh.

While the environment program normally does not support building campaigns, the Endowments recognized the Burke Building as a significant opportunity to showcase energy efficiency and green redesign.

“It is a goal of the Conservancy to achieve a highly visible downtown headquarters representing a working example of how an old building can be successfully retrofitted to create a truly green building,” said Cynthia Carrow, director of administration for the Conservancy. “The broad resources made available to us through the Heinz Endowments have enabled us to address various measures and share ideas that will promote energy efficiency and conservation in our region.”

The convening of the Green Team for the Burke Building project included the following players:

**Carnegie Mellon University and The Green Building Alliance**
Dr. Steve Lee, a member of the architecture faculty at CMU, is working with the Green Building Alliance to provide the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with technical assistance and support. A team of architects at CMU and members of the Green Building Alliance reviewed the initial plans and made suggestions for building renovation.

**Rocky Mountain Institute and Conservation Consultants, Inc.**
CCI and RMI conducted initial evaluations of the Burke Building and listed extensive options for the Conservancy to pursue.

In conjunction with the Rocky Mountain Institute, CCI submitted costs and specifications for renovation and consulted with the Conservancy on a number of technical and environmental issues. All building products, materials and equipment were selected to provide for the energy efficiency of the structure and the interior health, safety and comfort of building occupants.

CCI is also working with the Conservancy to promote public awareness of cost-effective, environmental building principles through an exhibition in the proposed ground floor resource center.

**PROGRAM STATUS**

Building renovation is currently underway and will be completed by mid-November. The Burke Building is expected to be energy efficient, provide cost savings, and be functional long into the future.

**FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR THE GREEN TEAM**

Although the OMG report recognizes the Green Team as a promising model for flexible grantmaking, it also notes that “as innovative and promising as the approach seems, it is not without its challenges.”

When a program brings together organizations and individuals with different work styles and expectations, there are often uncertainties associated with time, cost, management and organizational culture. The approach places higher demands on all organizations involved and forces them to work together in situations that they are not used to.

However, the OMG report indicates that none of the problems associated with the Green Team are insurmountable, and in every instance, participants have suggested that the benefits of teamwork far outweigh its costs.

The Heinz Endowments plan to continue monitoring the process over the next few years and report on the impact the model has on the Western Pennsylvania community.

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Left: The Burke Building, reflected in the glass of PPG Place, was built in 1836 and at various times has housed a restaurant, a savings bank, an office building and a barber shop. The historic landmark is now under renovation to become the first “green” building in downtown Pittsburgh.

Below: Part of the building’s renovation includes restoration of this decorative tin ceiling, a turn of the century addition to the building.