

Designing a Social-Welfare Safety Net that Supports Low-Income Workers

by Jodi R. Sandfort

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Citizens recognize the disconnect between current social-welfare programs and the volatility of the low-wage labor market.

In 1996, the United States eliminated the entitlement to cash assistance for low-income citizens with the passage of historic welfare reform. With the institution of time-limits on cash assistance, the policy goals of the social-welfare system shifted from “income support” to “work support” and the welfare rolls decreased substantially. Although policy goals changed, the service-delivery structures providing public benefits to low-income workers remained largely untouched. Cash and near-cash benefits, such as tax credits or food support, employment services, and

other social services, have continued to be delivered through complex and fragmented systems built for another era. The operation of social-welfare systems continues to focus on documenting program eligibility through reams of paperwork, delivering employment services through a maze of contracts, and providing other services through piecemeal public investments that need to be supplemented with charitable efforts.

To improve upon these antiquated systems of social-welfare delivery, new practices of public governance that

use a purposeful approach to system design, relying upon careful analysis and deployment of networks of public and private organizations, need to be employed to address important societal problems.¹ In this article, I use such a purposeful approach to think through viable design options for social-welfare

¹ S. Goldsmith and W.D. Eggers, *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004); and J.R. Sandfort and H.B. Milward, “Collaborative Service Provision in the Public Sector,” in *Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 147–174.

system reform consistent with the policy goal of actually “making work pay” for low-income citizens.

This work is informed by both a three-year research project that I conducted to investigate two networks of nonprofit organizations providing human services in Minnesota, and my own professional experience within philanthropy, where private funders are working with new institutions as critical, intermediary partners to enhance service delivery for low-income Americans. In the field-based study, I examined two networks that provide a myriad of social programs to low-income Minnesotans. In contrast to purposive design of networks advocated in this article, the networks I studied emerged from either top-down government funding or bottom-up organizing. In both cases, managers and leaders in direct-service organizations were trying to pool resources, learn from each other, and improve effective service delivery to citizens. In both cases, however, these essential tasks were inhibited by the convoluted nature of public funding and accountability, and the imprecise investment of private, philanthropic resources. This research impressed upon me the importance of thinking anew about social-welfare design. Incremental approaches to the system’s improvement will not create the level of change required to support low-income citizens facing the realities of the low-income labor market. We must significantly recalibrate the system for it to operate effectively.

Although it is possible to embark upon such a systems-design effort without understanding the context, such efforts rarely lead to practical alternatives. Therefore, this article first describes current social-welfare service-delivery structures shaped by federal and state policy to implement cash assistance, work support, and other social services for the poor. These current arrangements do not constitute a system at all, but rather have emerged from various, fragmented policy gestures that too often place additional burdens on low-income citizens rather than ameliorating these burdens. I then illustrate how purposeful public investment could create and leverage network-wide resources to improve social-welfare delivery. Although it is not feasible in Minnesota or any other state to completely “wipe the slate clean,” viable options for redesign of social-welfare systems do exist. A grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program

supported the initial field-based research that informed this article.

Current Social-Welfare Service-Delivery Structures

Scholars and social-welfare advocates within the United States often draw upon the “safety net” as a metaphor for public policies and service-delivery arrangements supporting the poor. Although some scholars have decried the holes in this net, the metaphor itself conjures up images of a coherent set of policies and aligned services designed to catch disadvantaged citizens during a crisis—during a “fall.” It implies a system that can operate as an integrated whole. However, in the United States, no such coherent social-welfare system ever really did exist.

A Historical Perspective. As in many countries, the first responses historically to poverty in the United States were local, charitable, and often religiously based. Local public leaders created poor houses both to provide shelter and food for the destitute and to control their movements. Many communities also developed charitable organizations, such as settlement houses and mutual-aid associations, to provide language instruction, childhood enrichment, and other family services for those in need; these essential community institutions provided important avenues for low-income families’ advancement. Although many public poor houses were closed early in the 20th century, many original charitable social-service organizations continue to operate today. Minneapolis’s Pillsbury United Communities and East Side Neighborhood Services, as well as St. Paul’s Neighborhood House, Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, and Keystone Community Services, reflect this tradition. During the last 50 years, however, these organizations have increasingly relied upon public funds to supplement local charitable gifts to grow and support their various programs.

At the national level, the 1935 Social Security Act established a foundation for social-welfare policy that was incrementally built upon through the 20th century. It created expectations of minimal income-support for the aged and other vulnerable groups. Some changes to the act enhanced its initial premise, such as providing income support to disabled adults or extending benefits to needy parents. Others tried to address emerging issues, such as changes in family structure, expansion

of women’s roles, and increased volatility of labor markets. Most changes were passed incrementally, often through categorical programs with eligibility requirements or program rules that often did not align with other efforts. Public bureaucracies sometimes provided the main service-delivery infrastructure. Other times, private organizations, either as service providers or mechanisms to harness community resources, delivered services. Public entities governed some policy arenas, whereas boards of public, nonprofit, and business elites governed others. Over time, the social-welfare policy arena became carved up into narrow implementation structures, each charged with carrying out a particular set of programs.

Current Service-Delivery Programs.

Many public social-welfare programs focus on granting cash or near-cash support to low-income citizens. Some of these programs, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, provide direct cash on a time-limited basis. Others provide subsidies for particular goods, such as food, medical care, or child care, or focus on changing citizen behavior, such as child-support enforcement programs. In these programs, public bureaucracies are the main institutions administering public benefit. For some programs, such as Medicaid and food support, federal rules shape much of program administration, whereas state governments play a more supporting role. For cash assistance, child support, and child-care subsidies, significant administrative authority rests with state governments. In some instances, such as in Minnesota, states devolve significant responsibilities to county governments. Thus, even though public organizations implement these programs, policy and practice vary considerably among the states.

Starting in the 1980s, public-welfare bureaucracies began contracting with private organizations to deliver services that did not involve cash or financial benefits. Employment services, culturally specific programs, and enhanced case management for multiproblem clients are all provided by private organizations. For example, many nonprofit community action agencies operate the Head Start program, which provides early education enrichment and family support to very low income children. Federal and state governments predominantly fund these agencies and, as with the public bureaucracy, top-down rules guide their administration.



Although social-welfare policy changed in the 1990s, public benefits continue to be delivered through inadequate and fragmented service-delivery systems from another era.

A parallel service-delivery infrastructure consisting of a dizzying array of programs and administrative authorities also exists for workforce development programs. Federal and state public policies fund training, job placement, and retention, either for workers who have lost their jobs or for employers in markets with a limited supply of workers. In Minnesota, 16 state and federal agencies administer 71 public workforce development programs.² These public agencies, in turn, work through community or technical colleges or private for-profit and nonprofit agencies to deliver actual training and workforce-development services.

In addition to income-support and employment programs, federal and state governments also use private agencies to implement other programs for the poor. For example, community-based organizations have been granted public contracts to fund child care and emergency shelter, food banks, and English classes. Funding for these efforts comes from various state, county, and city departments; oftentimes, more than one funder supports such programming. Each funder has its own grant

or contracting application, proposal or bidding processes, negotiation terms, and accountability requirements, which create significant administrative complexity within the local service providers.

Such service arrangements evolved as local organizations or public entities began to carry out the social-welfare policies adopted incrementally over the last century, creating a mass of administrative systems ostensibly focused on supporting low-income workers. For administrators, technical details of cash assistance programs must be distinguished from other programs, such as Medicaid, energy assistance, employment training, and child care, because of the policy requirements regarding eligibility and access. However, as this brief overview highlights, such specialization can create a maze of programs, each with different entry points and accountabilities. The current arrangements also significantly shape day-to-day operations on the ground. Staffers in both public organizations and private agencies spend countless hours dealing with the consequences. They assist citizens in completing applications asking for the same information again and again; they refer citizens to other entities for services without clear mechanisms of follow-up; and they document results for narrowly defined funding sources that cause them to lose sight of real assessment of citizens' needs. What often gets lost among this activity is the

ultimate goal of public policy: Are low-income Americans able to navigate the labor market and adequately support their families?

Principles that Ground Social-Welfare Delivery-System Design at the Front Lines

Low-income citizens feel the consequences of the current social-welfare delivery arrangements most acutely. The magnitude of the challenge for these individuals is significant: citizens earning at or near the minimum wage face considerable job instability, with job cycling and lay-offs being common; former welfare recipients and other low-income workers' earnings tend to remain low over the long-term; and few low-income jobs provide health, dental, or retirement benefits, yet these workers often struggle with health problems that can inhibit their abilities to retain work. Employment alone does not address these challenges. Although public policies and programs do exist to help with some of these issues, significant barriers exist to accessing virtually all social-welfare programs.³

To make the situation more concrete, think for a moment of a low-income single mother. She might be working two jobs to make ends meet, shuttling a toddler back and forth to day care on a city bus, sharing an apartment with a friend. How does she navigate the current service arrangements? Alternatively, consider a middle-aged couple whose grown children repeatedly come to stay with them when experiencing transitions in their own lives. The couple's history of retail work does not provide them a solid asset base or any access to health insurance which, as they age, is increasingly important. What type of public safety net can they access?

When either of these families seeks assistance from the public bureaucracy, they currently confront distinct applications for health insurance, food support, and child-care assistance. The same is true if they inquire about employment-training opportunities or assistance with energy costs at local nonprofits. Each program has unique eligibility criteria and required documentation; oftentimes programs must be accessed through different agencies, and referrals to other organizations

² Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Governor's Workforce Development Council, "Minnesota Inventory of Publicly Funded Workforce Development Programs," 2003. Although this inventory was completed seven years ago, the situation has not changed significantly.

³ S. Allard, *Out of Reach: Place, Poverty, and the New American Welfare State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

are common. The maze of relationships is difficult to understand. Often recipients do not know whether they are benefiting from public service or are merely the fortunate beneficiaries of private charity. Interestingly, to apply for “work supports” or attend eligibility interviews and benefit redetermination meetings, citizens often must take time from work. However, this process goes directly against the supposed goals of policy. To support low-income citizens so that they can work and improve their circumstances, our society needs to redesign these current social-welfare delivery arrangements.

To guide such a redesign, new principles must be articulated. In the work described here, I relied on an analytical tool known as “backwards mapping” that was developed many years ago by Richard Elmore.⁴ Rather than attending to incremental alterations to the current arrangements, backwards mapping focuses on the actual interactions that are desired between frontline workers and citizens in order to inform system redesign.

I started my analysis by examining the specific behaviors at the lowest level of implementation that have generated the need for policy intervention. For social-welfare delivery systems, the behaviors I examined are the realities faced by low-wage workers: What interactions should citizens experience from publicly funded agencies so their employment efforts are supported and they are able to manage their family issues? What interactions would enable them to pursue other opportunities? Think again about the previous examples of the single mother with a toddler working two jobs or the middle-aged couple who for years have worked at retail jobs that do not provide benefits, even though they must support their extended family. What interactions would support their work efforts and allow them to access public resources for which they are eligible? Beyond considerations of the citizens’ needs, backwards mapping also considers the needs of the public service system. What interactions would ensure an appropriate implementation of policy passed by elected officials?

In grappling with these questions, I offer four principles to help guide the redesign of the social-welfare safety net:



Federal, state, and local governments use community-based nonprofit organizations to implement various programs for the poor, including food banks, emergency shelter, and child care.

- ▶ **Fair application of policy.** Work-support benefits need to be targeted to family circumstances as delineated in public policy. Eligibility criteria need to be met and benefits distributed in a fair manner so that they reach groups for which they are targeted.
- ▶ **Provision of accessible services.** At the margins of the labor market, job hours rarely adhere to the conventional 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM schedule. As a result, public programs must be accessible at multiple times and have a range of access points. Information about public benefits needs to be communicated clearly for citizens with a wide range of abilities, and application processes must be user-friendly.
- ▶ **Appropriate matching of need to support and services.** The specifics of people’s lives vary and the need for work supports differs. Braiding various programs together for a particular families’ circumstances allows them to be provided more efficiently and effectively. When people are asked to reveal personal information to public systems, the process can be eased significantly if frontline staff and citizens speak the same language and share cultural references. Although it might be difficult in some locations to accommodate the diversity of all client populations, attention to small details often can ease relations tremendously.
- ▶ **Using reliable information to aid decision making.** In the new economy, information is plentiful, even overwhelming. Sources that provide consistent information and resources that help people answer the most pressing and persistent problems they face are crucial; such resources allow people to develop options when they must respond to the unexpected.

Implementation of such principles would assist, rather than hinder, citizens’ efforts to navigate the dynamics of the low-wage labor market. They are, in Elmore’s notion, characteristics of frontline interaction that are inadequately supported by current administrative practices and service arrangements. If realized, these principles also would improve citizens’ experience with government and potentially enable them to have more direct engagement in democratic processes.

Such principles should act as beacons guiding any new system-redesign efforts. Because backwards mapping starts from frontline conditions, it pushes system designers to move from a top-down analytical framework to instead design systems so they support interactions between staff and citizens adhering to these principles. These characteristics also define system effectiveness. Given the inherent limitation of public resources, this design process would benefit from the use of the tools of the 21st century such as networks,

⁴ R. Elmore, “Backwards Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions,” *Political Science Quarterly* 94 (1979): 601–616.

information infrastructures, and new approaches to public governance.

Elements in New System Design for Social-Welfare Delivery

In the new era, public bureaucracies are no longer the dominant administrative apparatus in the social-welfare system. As a result, we must identify design elements rather than particular structures that take advantage of networks and are able to take on different forms depending upon state and local resources. Although it is possible to conceive of a national design, it is more likely that administrative authority in social welfare will continue to rest at the state level. Some states might be poised to include the full range of cash and near-cash benefits, employment, and social-service supports; others might focus on a narrower programmatic band. Each state faces some choices in terms of how to proceed. In some places, it might be possible merely to align and update system elements; in others, it will be necessary to dismantle an old arrangement and replace it

with a new system. In all situations, specific design elements can be applied. Table 1 summarizes the system design elements—direct-service providers, intermediaries, and public governance—that emerged from my application of backwards mapping analysis to the challenges of current social-welfare service delivery. Each element includes unique roles and core competencies upon which the others depend. I next examine each element in turn and provide, for each element, promising lessons from current examples throughout the country.

Direct-Service Providers. Direct-service organizations work directly with families, offering case management, early childhood education, work training, or other services that cushion the volatility of the low-wage labor market. They possess particular knowledge of community resources, client circumstances, and local labor-market dynamics. With this knowledge, staffers can embody the backwards mapping principles elucidated previously by providing services that are fair, accessible, appropriate, and reliable.

Low-income citizens need trusted resources that can help them strategize about how to navigate through the inevitable challenges that arise. Seasoned staffers recognize the morality of direct-service work, and know that trust comes through quality relationships. Often-times effectiveness of service delivery hinges on staffers' ability to work with clients to achieve small wins. To do so, frontline staff members need organizational access to resources, tools, and information that they can customize to a particular family's needs in a particular community.

Examples. Some direct-service providers are currently experimenting with approaches aimed at overcoming limitations and operating more in keeping with the new system-design principles identified here. National foundations are investing in Centers for Working Families in 13 metropolitan areas, with others under development. Controlled social experiments are also underway in three local Work Advancement and Support Centers.⁵ At all these sites, a broad range of employment, financial services, and income supports are combined, sequenced, and delivered to clients. Staff members help low-income workers stabilize income, access public work-support programs, and obtain fairly priced financial services by resolving credit problems. Another model operates in rural North Carolina and Minnesota.⁶ In that model, nonprofits rely upon computer software to enrich, automate, and track clients in ways not typical with traditional case management. Staffers can access information about employment, transportation, child care, and other services across a large geographic area through comprehensive databases and client-management software. Flexible philanthropic dollars and, increasingly, public funds support these examples of direct-service initiatives. Information systems that integrate services across the silos of current service arrangements bolster these programs. In addition, these programs build upon the unique role that community-based organiza-

Table 1. Reconstituting the Safety Net: Critical Design Elements Identified through Backwards Mapping Analysis of the Current Social-Welfare Delivery System

| Design Element | Roles | Promising Examples |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Direct-Service Providers | <p><i>Work to ensure basic principles of service delivery are achieved:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fair application of policy ▶ Accessible services ▶ Appropriate matching of service to need ▶ Reliable information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Multiservice organizations ▶ Centers for Working Families ▶ Enhanced case management through information systems |
| Intermediary Organizations | <p><i>Work to increase the efficient sharing of resources within the network around the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Financial resources ▶ Program capacity ▶ Organizational capacity ▶ Network capital ▶ Policy understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Joint fund development for public and private sources ▶ Tools and technical assistance for direct service ▶ Facilitated peer learning ▶ Advocacy training, fiscal and social analysis |
| Public Governance Systems | <p><i>Work as systemwide guardian to achieve public intent (enable workers to navigate and thrive in low-wage labor market):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fair eligibility determination ▶ Design and integrate network ▶ Guard against private-interest capture ▶ Monitor systemwide results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Electronic application and eligibility verification |

⁵ A preliminary assessment of the first initiative, initially sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is due in late 2010. MDRC is conducting the second experiment. For more information, visit www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/FamilyEconomicSuccess/CentersforWorkingFamilies.aspx or www.mdrc.org/project_14_40.html.

⁶ Northern Connections operates in west central Minnesota and Connect, Inc. operates in rural North Carolina.



Although the work of the United Way and private philanthropic funders is important in the operation of the social-welfare system, their investments are often underutilized by public leaders.

tions can play in helping single parents confronted with unstable employment and limited social support.

Intermediary Organizations. Intermediary organizations are a second design element in a more coherent system focused on the new reality of low-income workers.⁷ These organizations garner information and resources to decrease transaction costs between two parties—in this case, direct-service providers and the state—and increase operational efficiencies and program effectiveness. Although not yet widely used in social-welfare safety-net programs, intermediaries play important roles in other fields, such as mental health, community economic development, and affordable housing. These fields resemble social welfare because they receive diverse forms of government funding and have redesigned their service systems in light of significant policy changes. Intermediaries can provide access to new sources of financing, offer program tools, bolster management support, create networks among similar organizations, and cultivate policy knowledge (Table 1). They also provide information to public decision makers about the

successes and challenges of policy implementation visible from the vantage point of frontline agencies. Where neither pure markets nor public provision operates effectively, intermediaries enhance systems capacity.

In the last 15 years, some private foundations have realized that, in a decentralized social-welfare system, purposeful investment in intermediaries is wise. Because many of these efforts are currently being evaluated, no definitive conclusions can be drawn; however, they offer some promising practices to consider. For example, some intermediary organizations have developed an online benefits tool, which allows frontline staff to help citizens assess their eligibility for public work-support benefits, such as food support, health insurance, tax credits, and energy assistance.⁸ Other intermediaries build program capacity by developing and sharing specific technical knowledge. For example, helping low-income citizens access tax credits requires technical knowledge about tax preparation, distinctions between state and federal rules, and electronic-filing processes. Intermediaries such as the Center for Economic Progress and Accountability Minnesota help direct-service organizations recruit volunteers,

offer certified training, and monitor results. Because many categorical public programs are quite technical, intermediary organizations can specialize in particular arenas and share this expertise.

Intermediaries also can build networks and policy awareness among direct-service organizations. Often, they convene people from different vantage points to share information and grapple with how to solve collective problems. For example, the Minneapolis-based MACC Alliance of Connected Communities regularly convenes 26 direct-service organizations. Through a combination of peer learning and formal training, valuable knowledge is developed and shared across the network. Such meetings also serve as learning venues for county and state policy makers, offering insight into how policy ideals manifest near the ground. As Table 1 summarizes, these examples point to various important roles that intermediaries in system redesign play. In the new reality, where government and nonprofits work together to implement and refine policy, such activities are essential to enable networks to operate as coherent systems. They help to ensure that our design principles of appropriate services and reliable information can be implemented at the front lines.

Public Governance Systems.

The final design element in a new social-welfare delivery system is an entity serving as a neutral administrator, monitor, and system designer.

⁷ The term “intermediary” does not have a consistent use across research communities. In this work, I have modified a framework used in studies of community economic development intermediaries. See N. Glickman and L. Servon. “By the Numbers: Measuring Community Development Corporations’ Capacity,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 22 (2003): 240–256.

⁸ See Seedco, a national intermediary, the Minnesota office of the Children’s Defense Fund (their Bridges to Benefits tool is being used throughout Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana), and the Governor’s Ohio Benefits Bank initiative.

Governance is the process of deciding direction and assuring accountability, such as the role the Metropolitan Council plays in overseeing Minnesota's metro-area transit and development plans. Neutral public governance can also be housed in state agencies, such as the Minnesota Department of Education's role in elementary and secondary education. In social welfare, public policies define particular criteria for cash and near-cash benefits and, as a result, eligibility determination for these programs should not be outsourced to intermediaries or private providers. However, current program administration could be improved. In many states, such as Minnesota, state or county staff members determine eligibility for programs such as cash assistance, food support, or childcare subsidies. Yet Utah has centralized eligibility determination at the state level and is using information technology systems to streamline processes. For some programs, applications are taken online; for others, application materials are electronically accessible. Rather than requiring applicants to provide paper documentation of wages, assets, and address, staff use electronic information now readily available from other state agencies. Many states, including Minnesota, use such approaches in other work-support programs, such as

unemployment insurance. A similar approach could be used to improve social-welfare implementation and establish a clear public governance function.

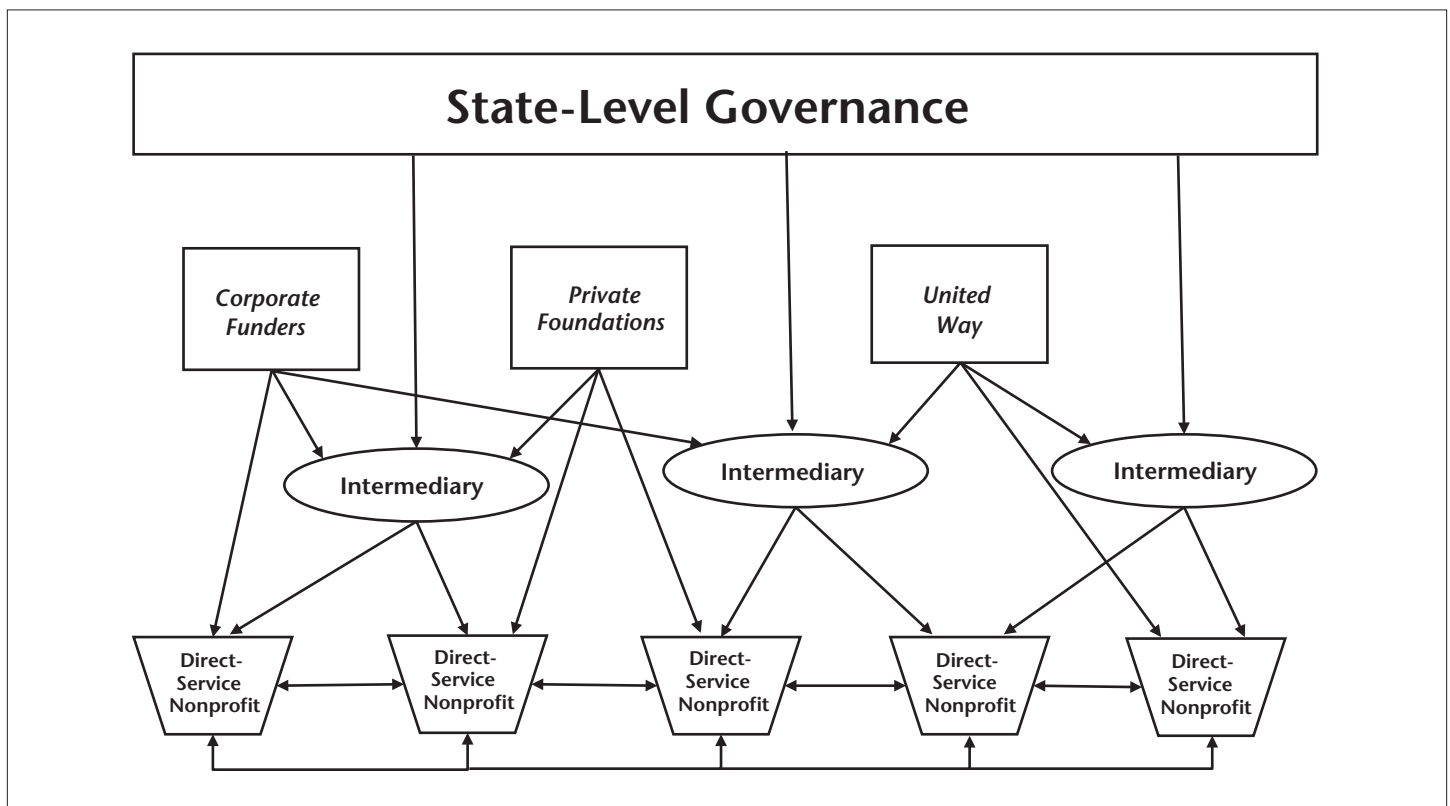
A robust public governance system for social welfare also could ensure that citizens can access information about public investments and results. Multiple, and sometimes competing, goals are reflected in current social-welfare policy: enhancing earning from low-wage work; providing early-childhood education so parents may work; limiting access to cash assistance; limiting family size; and providing emergency services. Even more minute performance measures structure the reporting requirements of various service providers. Although political realities about poverty created this diversity, adequate public governance can guarantee that minute measures are not what orient the operation of the entire work-support system. Instead, governance can involve a public process toward clear, systemwide results in line with principles of fair, accessible, appropriate, and reliable system operation. Once articulated, measured, and used, such information can be used to ensure that the safety net is actually operating as a coherent system.

The role of public governance systems in social-welfare redesign also pushes public managers to assume

different roles than in traditional public bureaucracies. They must embrace their critical perspectives as system designers and facilitators, thus moving beyond the details of the legislative mandates, implementing institutions, and professional relationships that have *de facto* become social-welfare service arrangements.

Figure 1 offers one visual representation of a network design option incorporating all of the elements discussed in this article. This representation assumes that—as with markets—coherent public-service delivery systems can be built with rules, institutions, and knowledge from an array of public and private organizations. The United Way, private foundations, and corporations already invest in ways that serve low-income citizens. However, the critical linkages between these entities and other system components are often not made because of a lack of public governance. To move forward implementation of the ideas in this article, and based on the insight from backwards mapping analysis, public governance needs to be improved and focused on purposive system design in the social-welfare arena. It should capitalize on the investments of other funders and the existing and potential expertise of intermediaries, and leverage the knowledge within frontline organizations.

Figure 1. State Level Network of Funding and Other Implementation Resources



True public governance would require thinking carefully about how to arrange these design elements given particular state or local settings. In a particular state, what are the most effective sites for providing direct services that support low-income workers? Is a co-location or call center model more effective in reaching families in particular regions of the state? What intermediary organizations can provide resources to enhance the program, organizational, and network capacity of direct-service organizations? How can these various nodes be linked through information systems to facilitate efficient and effective communication about benefits, community resources, or program innovations? Although the specific answers to these design questions will vary state by state, developing them is fundamental to effective public-network operation.

Moving Forward

In the last 10 years, the goals of the American welfare state have dramatically shifted away from providing income support; although temporary cash assistance remains available to very needy citizens, the focus of government intervention is now on supplementing earning and providing employment and social services. Unfortunately, the system of public-service delivery has not shifted to account for this change. The realities of the 21st century necessitate that we consider how advances in

systems design can be used to realign the public-welfare system to more effectively achieve policy goals.

Backwards mapping focuses our attention on the frontline experiences of citizens. From the vantage point of the single mother with a toddler working two jobs, the middle-aged couple working retail, or the frontline staff in public-welfare offices or nonprofit multiservice organizations, the characteristics of high-quality service delivery are clear. Eligibility for services must be assessed fairly. Services must be accessible to citizens with inflexible work schedules. Services must be matched to particular family circumstances. Assistance must be given to help people sift through the mass of information they encounter about work supports. Although direct-service organizations have essential roles in carrying out these visions, their work must be supported by a network of resources. Intermediary organizations can provide some essential elements, with their unique ability to package resources in ways not accessible to many direct-service providers. In addition, public governance is needed to ensure proper design, alignment, and performance of the whole network.

No state is currently operating a complete system as envisioned here. In fact, it is now popular to assert that merely moving to performance contracting will reform the social-welfare system. However, the nature of the problem at hand—responding to the

challenges created for citizens by the low-wage labor market—requires more significant public governance. In fact, much of the redundancy, complex relationships, and categorical program silos that exist in current service arrangements arose because of the lack of such oversight. As the examples provided throughout this article suggest, private funders and organizations are experimenting with approaches to reconstitute the safety net based on the new reality of social needs. It is time to redesign the social-welfare safety net so that it addresses problems of citizens rather than contributes to them.

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Will Craig Earns Spot in GIS Hall of Fame

Will Craig, associate director of CURA, was selected for inclusion in the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Hall of Fame by the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA). The honor was bestowed in September 2009.

"Will has made the University of Minnesota a major player nationally in the GIS community, and he has made CURA an invaluable partner for many community organizations in the Twin Cities region," says Edward Goetz, director of CURA. "What is wonderful about his work in GIS is that it combines national leadership in this field with real, practical engagement with local communities."

Craig entered the University of Minnesota in 1960 as a freshman,

studying math and technology. He eventually earned his doctorate in geography from the University, and then directed the West Bank Computer Center until 1970, when he joined CURA as associate director. In the early 1970s, Craig also began as system manager and project director of the Minnesota Land Management Information System, one of the first GIS in the nation. He is cofounder of the University's master of geographic information science professional degree program, and he continues to teach an Urban GIS course through the geography department that pairs students with community organizations that have a GIS project need.

Craig has helped to shape the field through his pioneering work in public participation GIS, taking steps to bring

GIS out of the institution and make it useful to those in the community. "Will's contribution to public participation GIS has been significant and he is one of the founders of the movement," says Nancy Obermeyer, one of Craig's Hall of Fame nominators. "The democratization of this valuable technology has enabled many local organizations to speak truth to power, contributing their insights to policy debates that affect them and their constituents."

Adapted from an article Stephanie Wilkes, University Relations. The original article can be found at http://www1.umn.edu/twincities/faculty-staff/features/2010/UR_ARTICLE_184711.html.