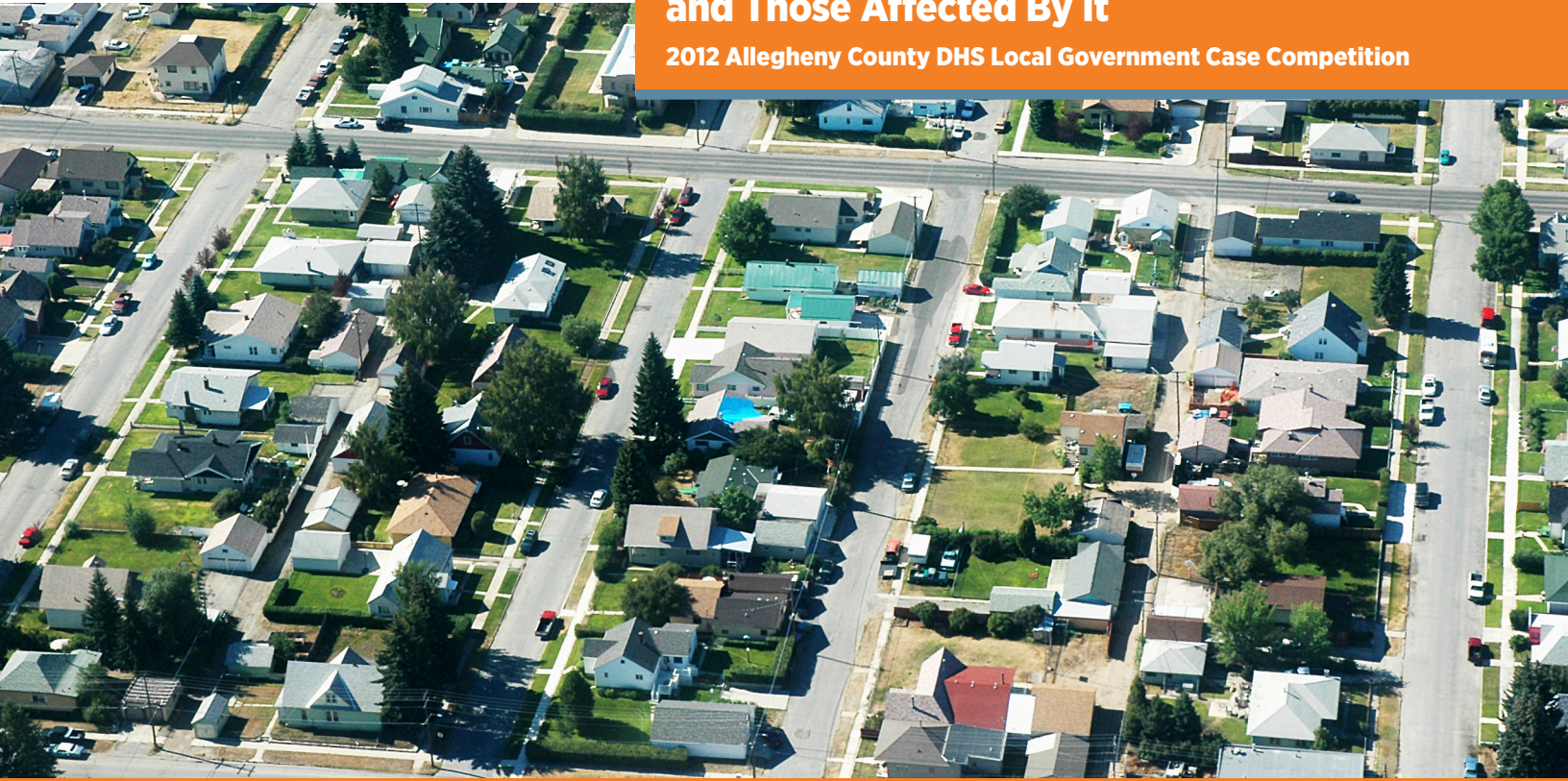


# Addressing Suburban Poverty and Those Affected By It

2012 Allegheny County DHS Local Government Case Competition



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### **Allegheny County Department of Human Services**

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is dedicated to meeting the human services needs of county residents, particularly the county's most vulnerable populations, through an extensive range of prevention, intervention, crisis management and after-care services.

This report was prepared by the Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE), an office within DHS. DARE supports and publishes research related to the activities of DHS in a number of categories, including: Aging; Basic Needs; Behavioral Health and Disabilities; Child Development and Education; Children, Youth and Families; Crime and Justice; and Innovation, Reform and Policy.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2012 Local Government Case Competition is the sixth annual competition sponsored by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and supported by the Human Services Integration Fund. Designed to engage graduate students from local universities in identifying creative solutions to difficult social problems, previous years' competitions have addressed a variety of issues, including how to position Allegheny County as a leader in the environmental sustainability movement, assisting the Homewood Children's Village in designing its five-year strategic plan, addressing academic performance for students attending the Pittsburgh Public Schools who are also receiving services from DHS, and designing ways to address stigma and improve the experiences of individuals living with serious mental illness.

This year's challenge was to respond to a Request for Proposals addressing the issue of suburban poverty and those affected by it. Participants were encouraged to address at least one of the following challenges faced by those living in poverty in the suburbs: isolation, limited ability to access services, lack of knowledge about resources, fragmented or disconnected service continuum, issues of stigma around poverty, and limited transportation options.

Forty-six graduate students from three local universities and eight programs of study participated, creating 12 teams that presented their proposals to four panels of judges composed of individuals from the Department of Human Services, local foundations and universities, community organizations, and winners from previous years.

**Executive Summary***(continued)*

The Case Competition began with a catered evening reception on Wednesday, November 7, 2012, at which time students were given their team assignments, were introduced to the case challenge, and received information about DHS and the issue of suburban poverty from both a national and a local perspective. The teams worked on their proposals over the next two days, and, on Saturday morning, November 10, 2012, each team presented to one of the four panels of judges. Each panel selected a winning team; after lunch, those four teams presented to the entire group of judges. Following those presentations, the judges selected the first, second, third and fourth place winners. The first place team won a cash prize of \$3,000, the second place team won \$1,500, the third place team won \$500, and the fourth place team members each received a \$25 gift card.

The winning team, West End, presented an innovative strategy to address the transportation needs of those living in poverty in the suburbs while at the same time providing entrepreneurial opportunities. The second place team was the Veterans Team, which proposed utilizing the Allegheny County Library Association and its community libraries to provide social service information and emergency food during weekend hours. Third place was awarded to the Rankin Team, which focused on alleviating the stigma of suburban poverty through a social awareness campaign designed to build a movement of understanding and acceptance. Birmingham, the fourth place winner, focused on the use of technology to develop a three-pronged approach of social networking, transportation assistance and professional support.

Only four teams made it to the final round, but every team identified interesting and thought-provoking strategies to address the issues of suburban poverty. Although the strategies varied quite a bit from team to team, certain common themes were identified, including reducing isolation and improving access through the use of technology, reducing barriers to employment (e.g., transportation, professional development, child care), and increasing access to available resources and/or filling service gaps.

Feedback was solicited from students and judges through a survey that was completed at the end of the day. While the feedback received was primarily positive, participants provided some valuable suggestions about ways to improve logistics and team composition. This feedback will be useful in planning for the seventh annual Local Government Case Competition in 2013.



## BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) celebrated its tenth anniversary. As part of that celebration, DHS instituted the Local Government Case Competition, which has become an annual event designed to engage graduate students from local universities in identifying creative solutions to difficult social problems. The Case Competition has been an ideal way to engage graduate students in community issues, make them aware of DHS's reach in the region, and encourage them to consider future employment opportunities with DHS.

The first Case Competition charged students with envisioning how DHS might look on its 20th anniversary. Since then, students have been asked to consider how to position Allegheny County as a leader in the environmental sustainability movement, assist the Homewood Children's Village in designing its five-year strategic plan, address academic performance for students attending the Pittsburgh Public Schools who are also receiving services from DHS, and design ways to address stigma and improve the experiences of individuals living with serious mental illness.

## 2012 CASE COMPETITION

Participants in the 2012 Case Competition were tasked with responding to an RFP addressing the issue of suburban poverty and identifying strategies designed to address at least one of the following challenges:

- Isolation
- Limited ability to access services
- Lack of knowledge about resources
- Fragmented or disconnected service continuum
- Issues of stigma around poverty
- Limited transportation options
- Other experience identified by your team

Participants were assigned to teams of three or four and given instructions on how to prepare to present their projects to one of the four panels of judges composed of community stakeholders, DHS staff and former Case Competition winners.

## Participants

### Students

Forty-six graduate students from three local universities and eight programs of study participated. These included:

#### *Carnegie Mellon University*

- Heinz College

#### *Duquesne University*

- School of Law
- School of Business
- Social and Public Policy Program

#### *University of Pittsburgh*

- School of Law
- Graduate School of Public and International Affairs
- Graduate School of Public Health
- School of Social Work

Students were divided into interdisciplinary teams, based on academic program and demographic factors such as gender, race and age, resulting in this demographic profile:

#### *Age*

- The age range was 21–36
- The average age was 25

#### *Gender*

- 32 of the students were female
- 12 students were male
- 1 student chose not to specify gender

#### *Race*

- 15 students identified as white
- 12 students identified as Asian or Pacific Islander
- 8 students identified as African American
- 7 students chose not to identify race
- 2 students identified as bi-racial or multi-racial
- 1 student identified as Latino



### Judges

The competition was judged by 19 individuals on four panels, representing community organizations, local universities, DHS staff members and winners from previous years. At least one DHS staff person sat on each panel. In addition to seven DHS staff members, judges represented the following:

- Carnegie Mellon University
- University of Pittsburgh
- Robert Morris University
- The Forbes Funds
- BNY Mellon
- Community Foundation of Fayette County
- Northern Area Multi-Service Center
- Center for Hearing & Deaf Services
- Family Services of Western Pennsylvania
- Peace Corps
- Bonner Consulting

### Logistics

Twelve DHS staff members handled logistics and planning, ensuring that the event went smoothly.

#### **OPENING RECEPTION: Wednesday, November 7, 2012**

The 2012 Case Competition began with a catered evening reception held at the Human Services Building in downtown Pittsburgh. Students were assigned to their teams when they arrived so that they had the opportunity to meet their teammates prior to hearing about the case challenge. During the reception, the case was introduced by Diana Bucco, Vice President of the Buhl Foundation (at the time of the Case Competition, Ms. Bucco was President of The Forbes Funds, a supporting organization of The Pittsburgh Foundation). Each student received a flash drive loaded with case materials, including background information about DHS and the issue of suburban poverty from both a national and a local perspective.

#### **CASE PREPARATION: Wednesday, November 7 – Saturday, November 10, 2012**

Teams had all day Thursday and Friday to conduct their research and prepare their presentations. Presentations were due, via email, by 7 a.m. on Saturday; team members were required to check in by 8 a.m. on Saturday.

**CASE PRESENTATIONS: Saturday, November 10, 2012**

The 46 students, divided into 12 teams, conducted their presentations for one of the four judging panels throughout the morning; each team was given preliminary feedback obtained during the judges' deliberations. Teams were judged on the following criteria:

- Verbal Presentation
- Technical Presentation
- Scope of Presentation
- Content of Presentation
- Q&A
- Team Demeanor
- Overall Impression of Presentation

The four winning teams (one from each panel) were announced at lunch. After lunch, the four teams repeated their presentations to the judges, who then deliberated and announced the winning team. The first place team won a cash prize of \$3,000, the second place team won \$1,500, the third place team won \$500, and the fourth place team members each received a \$25 gift card.

**The Case: Addressing Stigma and the Issues of Suburban Poverty**

From 2007 through 2010, the poverty rate in Pennsylvania (defined as population below 100 percent of the federal poverty line) increased from 11.6 percent to 13.4 percent. While the rate increased in both urban and suburban areas, by 2008, suburbs were home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the country (Kneebone and Garr 2010). In Allegheny County, suburban poverty increased 11.8 percent from 2000 to 2010.

Poverty is the result of many—often overlapping—factors. It is more common among families headed by a single female or a civilian male age 16–64 who is unemployed or not in the labor force. Communities with high rates of poverty tend to have a high number of vacant houses and households with no available vehicle or readily available public transportation. People experiencing poverty may face higher rates of involvement in the child welfare system, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, food insecurity, job instability or underemployment, exposure to violence, poor health outcomes, dropping out of high school, and involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice system.

In the suburbs, these issues are exacerbated by isolation; lack of access to education, health care and human services; a lack of knowledge about available services; and the stigma surrounding poverty (Allard and Roth 2010, Murphy and Wallace 2010). Compounding the problem is the fact that people are geographically dispersed, without access to their own cars and with limited public transportation alternatives.

### The Challenge

At the opening reception, Ms. Bucco presented the following scenario:

*The Forbes Funds and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services have decided to take a leadership role on the issue of suburban poverty. They are issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit projects that address suburban poverty and those affected by it. Your team is responding to this RFP.*

Your RFP should address *at least one* of the following challenges faced by those living in poverty in the suburbs:

- Isolation
- Limited ability to access services
- Lack of knowledge about resources
- Fragmented or disconnected service continuum
- Issues of stigma around poverty
- Limited transportation options
- Other experience(s) identified by your team

Many individuals experiencing poverty have multiple needs. Projects that address one or more of the needs listed below as they relate to suburban poverty will be more successful.

- Child welfare system involvement
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Homelessness
- Food insecurity
- Job instability
- Underemployment
- Exposure to violence
- Poor health outcomes
- Dropping out of high school
- Involvement in juvenile and criminal justice system

Each proposal should include the following elements:

- The project goal
- The specific activities you will do to reach that goal
- A plan for how you will evaluate your project
- A financial plan for your project

### Case Presentations

**The winning team was the West End Team**, which presented an innovative strategy to address the transportation needs of those living in poverty in the suburbs while at the same time providing entrepreneurial opportunities. The team included the following three students:

- **Collette Ncube**, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh
- **William Suarez**, Heinz School, Carnegie Mellon University
- **Lingshu Xue**, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

The team suggested the licensing of jitneys to provide transportation to isolated suburban residents, along with the creation of the Allegheny County Jitney Association. Included in the plan was a strategy to license suburban residents to be the jitney drivers, thus creating job opportunities as well as transportation solutions.

The strategy focused on the following objectives:

1. **Eliminate “transit access deserts” in suburban areas:** For a number of reasons, transportation options are less available in suburban areas. The reasons range from the fact that the wider geographic spread and lower geographic density makes it difficult for a transit company to establish profitable routes to the unwillingness of transit companies to serve certain areas. But lack of access to affordable and reliable transportation has a negative impact on the ability to find and keep a job as well as the ability to access necessary services. Providing a cohesive, well-run system of jitneys would solve both of these problems.
2. **Increase access to business centers in both suburban and urban areas for employment opportunities and various services:** Most jobs and services are located in specific high-density areas, often inaccessible to suburban dwellers who don't have reliable transportation. The proposal set forth by the team addresses this issue.
3. **Create business opportunities for the suburban poor:** For anyone in the suburbs with a vehicle but without a job, becoming a jitney driver could be a realistic goal, particularly given the component of the proposal that provides startup grants for those interested in seeking this opportunity.
4. **Encourage self-sufficiency in problem-solving:** By creating the Allegheny County Jitney Association, a self-run trade association, the proposal puts the decision-making and problem-solving responsibility in the hands of the residents.

It is important to note that unlicensed taxis (jitneys) are currently illegal in Pennsylvania under the regulations of the Public Utility Commission, an issue the team addressed directly both by discussing potential ways in which legalization could occur and by demonstrating the benefit to jurisdictions in which a similar system had been established (e.g., New Jersey).

FIGURE 1: Addressing “Transit Access Deserts” in the Suburban Areas of Allegheny County (West End Team)

**LEGALIZATION OF PRIVATE JITNEYS**

## Legalization of private jitneys

- Jitneys would:
  - Address 'transit access deserts' in suburbs
  - Create employment opportunities
- Application for business license would give preference to the suburban poor
  - PUC \$350 filing fee
  - Annual assessment fee < 1% of annual gross earnings
  - Insurance

FIGURE 2: Addressing “Transit Access Deserts” in the Suburban Areas of Allegheny County (West End Team)

**FEASIBILITY OF PRIVATE JITNEYS**

## Feasibility

- Cost effective for private companies
  - Non-unionized labor -> lower operating costs
  - Flexible pricing structure
  - Increased and reliable service -> increasing demand
- No public subsidies
- Allows Port Authority to eliminate its most unprofitable routes

The West End Team’s presentation can be found in its entirety at [www.alleghenycounty.us/DHSLeft.aspx?id=26226&terms=case%20competition](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/DHSLeft.aspx?id=26226&terms=case%20competition).

**The second place team was the Veterans Team**, which proposed utilizing the Allegheny County Library Association and its community libraries to provide social service information and emergency food during the weekend. The libraries would also provide social service referrals using “Skype™-like” technology. In addition, the team proposed addressing the lack of transportation through the creation of five low-cost car repair shops throughout the county. The judges liked the realistic timeline and the attention that the team paid to potential risks and ways in which these risks could be mitigated.

**FIGURE 3: Suburban Needs Task Force (Veterans Team)**

**Risk and Mitigation Plan**

DESCRIPTION OF RISK	MITIGATION PLAN
Not enough funding	Increase in marketing channels Make more organizations and funding sources aware of the project
Overuse of budget	Reduce unnecessary cost Recruit more volunteers
Technology breakdown	Implement improved preparation and backup plan
Self-stigma and avoidance	Increase education on suburban poverty Conduct public awareness marketing campaign
Low satisfaction rate	Increase quality of services
Staff shortage	Cooperate with schools and recruit interns and volunteers
Low donations	Try different channels and increase marketing coverage
Sustainability is not satisfactory	Have detailed plan and check sustainability yearly Change the strategies according to the real situation

**Third place was awarded to the Rankin Team**, which focused on alleviating the stigma of suburban poverty through a social awareness campaign designed to build a movement of understanding and acceptance. Birmingham, the fourth place winner, focused on the use of technology to develop a three-pronged approach of social networking, transportation assistance and professional support.

### Summary of Recommendations

The remaining teams identified a wide variety of strategies for addressing the issue of suburban poverty. Strategies varied quite a bit from team to team, yet certain common themes were identifiable, including reducing isolation and improving access through the use of technology, reducing barriers to employment (e.g., transportation, professional development, child care), and increasing access to available resources and/or filling service gaps.

### Reducing Social Isolation and Improving Access through the Use of Technology

Almost every team proposed using technology to address the issues of suburban poverty. In most cases, the use of websites, social media campaigns and mobile applications was identified as an effective way to address the issue of isolation. Some teams recommended the use of technology to create peer networks; others recommended it as a way to locate and access services; still others saw education as the primary benefit of the use of technology.

**FIGURE 4: Community Connections: Leveraging the Power of Local Residents and Service Organizations in Reducing Suburban Poverty** (McKees Rocks Team)

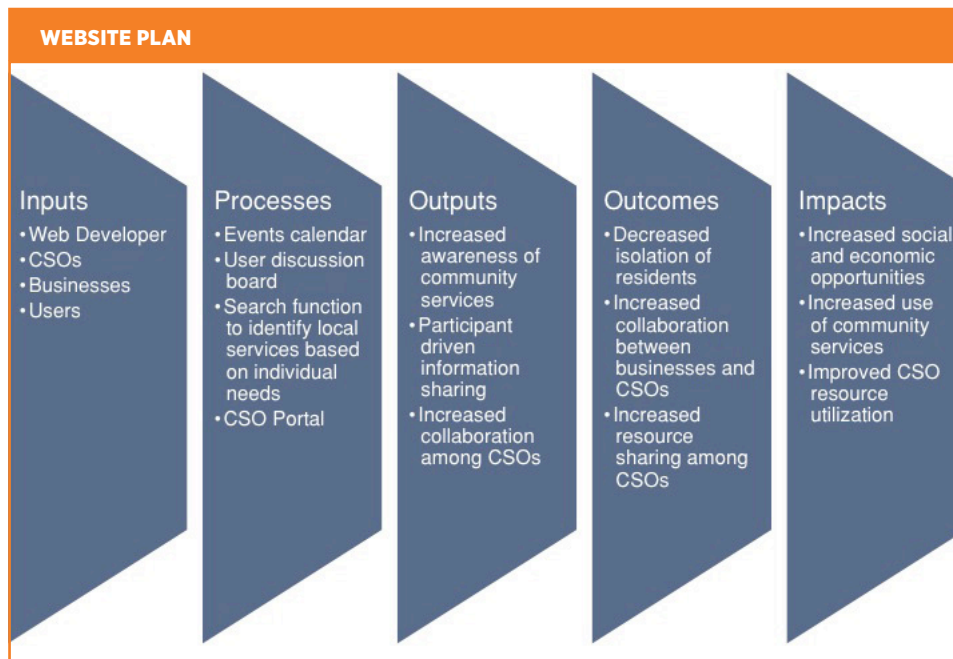




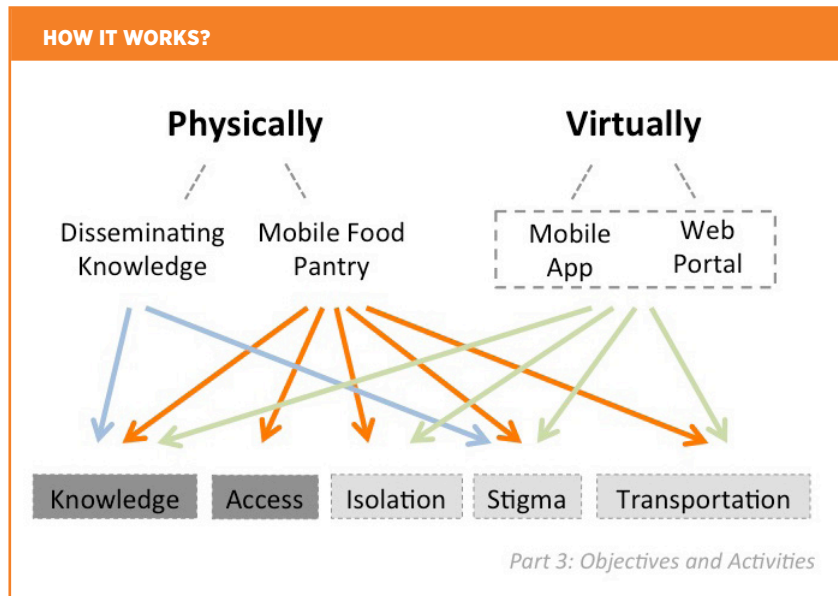
FIGURE 5: SPoverty Speaks (Rachel Carson Team)

**TECHNOLOGY**

- ◉ Website : [SPoverty Speaks](#)
- ◉ Mobile Application
- ◉ Social Media

Some teams combined the use of technology with concrete services; the following slide demonstrates the impact of both physical and virtual connections.

FIGURE 6: Making Connections—Empowering Suburban Residents in Allegheny County to Find Pathways out of Poverty (Roberto Clemente Team)

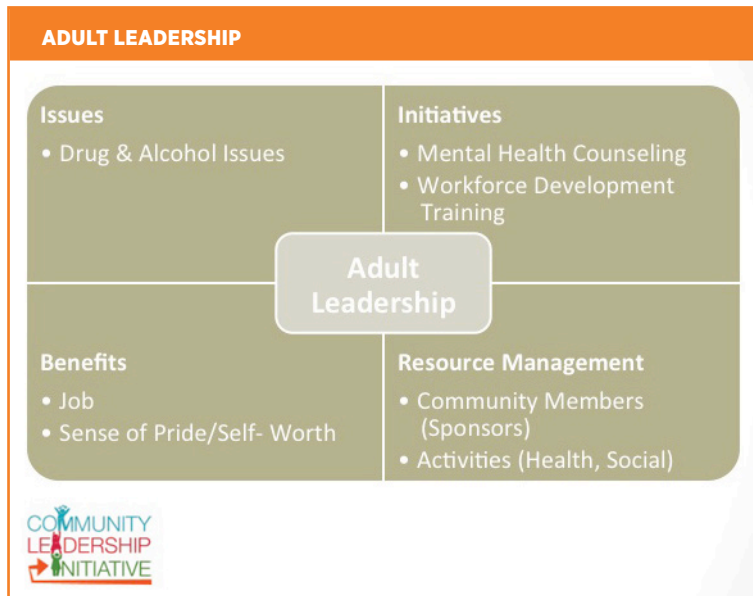


**Reducing Barriers to Employment**

Several teams focused on the issue of transportation as the major impediment to employment, one identified professional development as a necessary prerequisite to employment, and two identified affordable and accessible child care as a barrier.

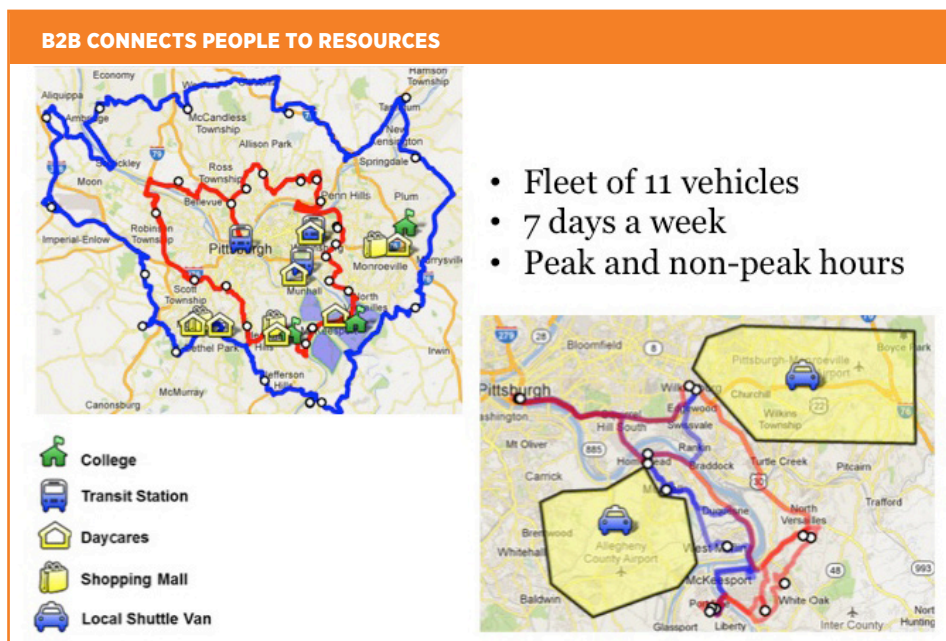
One proposal addressed the issue of suburban poverty by focusing on job training and professional development as a prerequisite to gainful employment.

FIGURE 7: Community Leadership Initiative (Andy Warhol Team)



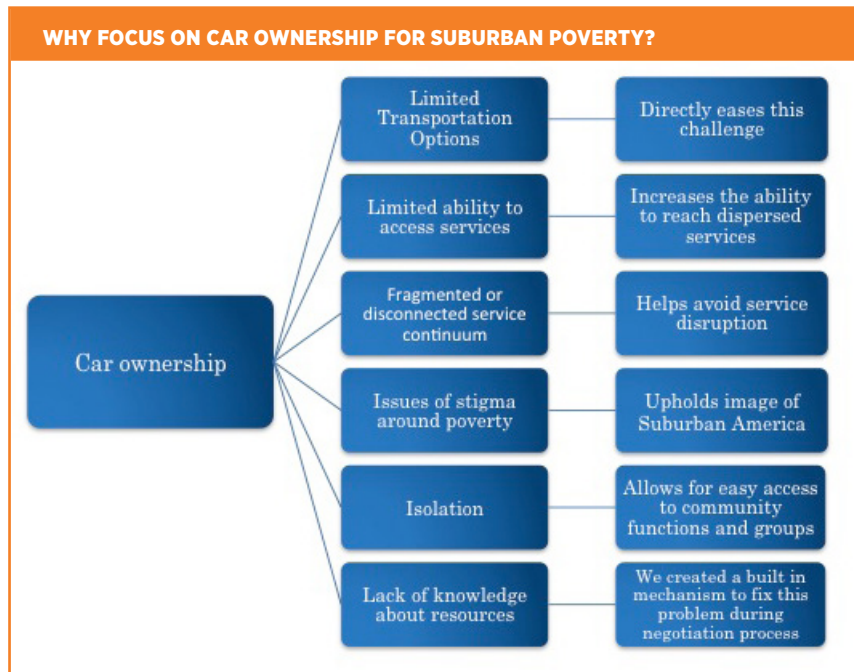
One team addressed the issues of transportation and child care simultaneously through the creation of a time bank in which transportation and child care were the currency. Another proposal utilized technology to improve the capacity of residents to search for available transportation while at the same time funding a shuttle that would take suburban residents to transportation hubs as a way of increasing their access to transportation.

FIGURE 8: Burb2Burgh (Bloomfield Team)



The creation of a subsidized car loan program for suburban residents who meet certain eligibility criteria was proposed as a way to make car ownership more affordable and to eliminate one of the barriers to transportation access.

**FIGURE 9: Addressing Suburban Poverty through a Subsidized Car Loan Program**  
(Fort Duquesne Team)




A program that would provide free refurbished vehicles to eligible individuals was the cornerstone of one team’s proposal.

FIGURE 10: A2B and ACUB<sub>3</sub>D—Commute, Cultivate and Cooperate (Homestead Grays Team)

**COMMUTE: A2B**

## Commute: A2B



- **Goal:** Provide Transportation from Suburbs to the City to Individuals in Poverty
- **Objective:**
  - Eliminate Commuting Burdens
    - Cost
    - Time
- **Means:**
  - Solicit Donated Cars, Motorcycles, and Boats
  - Refurbish the Cars
  - Sell Motorcycles and Boats to Reinvest in A2B and ACUB<sub>3</sub>D
  - Give the Cars to Qualifying Individuals
    - A Valid Driver's License
    - Insurable
    - Below Certain Income Criteria, Considering Certain Expenses
      - Extraordinary Medical Expenses
      - Mortgage
      - Number of Dependents

### **Increasing Access to Existing Resources and/or Addressing the Gaps in Service Delivery**

Most teams identified technology as the primary method of connecting individuals to existing resources. However, there were some other innovative ideas designed to assist residents to access resources and to provide services currently unavailable. These include hiring professionals whose job would be to connect those in need to existing programs and services; the creation of a “Suburban Community Network” linking service providers, transportation providers and service users; establishment of a social service collaborative that would connect and integrate existing services to make them more accessible and coordinated; and social service delivery through public/private partnerships.

FIGURE 11: One Stop—Streamlining Access, Strengthening Communities, Reducing Poverty (Smithfield Team)

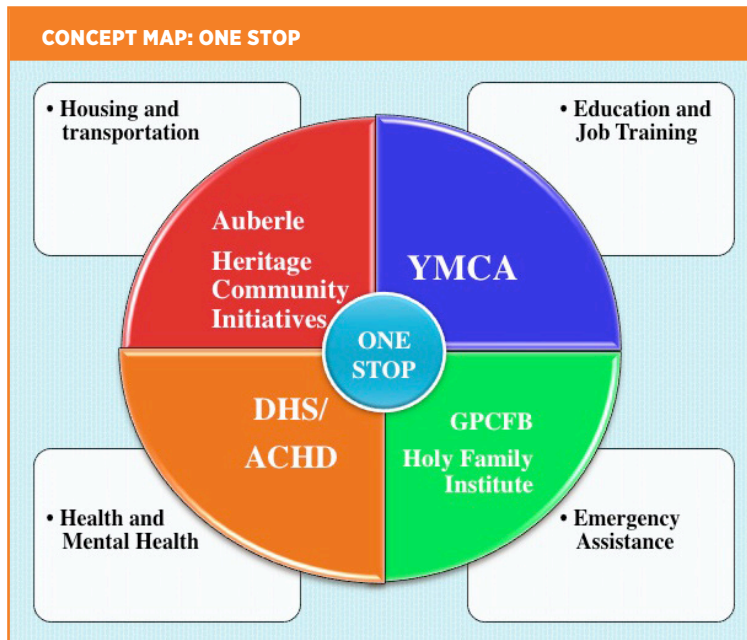
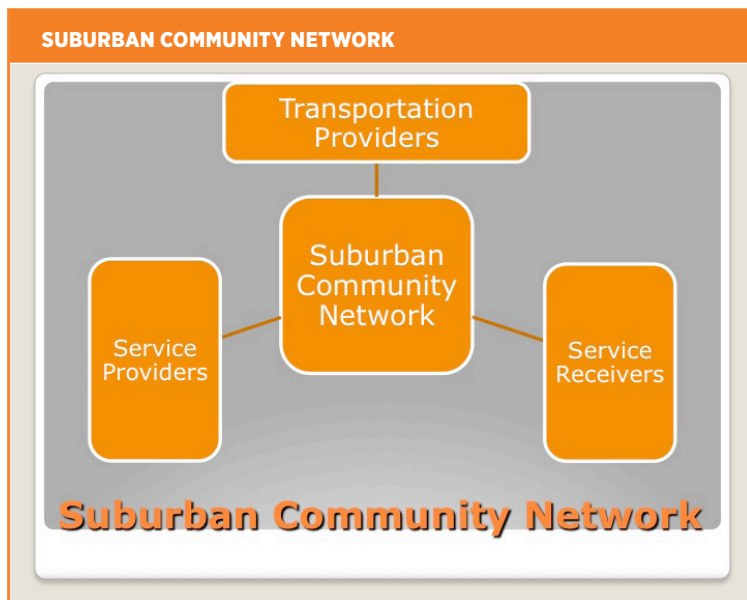


FIGURE 12: Won't You Be My Neighbor? (Hot Metal Team)





Involving the for-profit community in the solution to suburban poverty was identified as a strategy by one of the groups. The strategy involves a marketing campaign designed to reduce stigma, increase awareness and accessibility of resources, and shift the paradigm of social service outreach.

**FIGURE 13: Social Service Delivery in a 21st-Century World—Public and Private Partnership** (Highland Park Team)



One team proposed the development of foundation/community partnerships in which a number of foundations agreed to target their resources to the needs of a specific community.

**FIGURE 14: Addressing Suburban Poverty by Constructing a Comprehensive and Doable Strategy in Allegheny County** (Fort Pitt Team)

**ONE FOUNDATION ADOPTS ONE COMMUNITY**

**Activities:**

- Converse with Local Foundations about the Initiative
- Build the partnership based on mutual fitness

**Issues Addressed:**  
Lack of coordination; Service providers' funding stress

**Measurements:**

- The number of organizations in the conversations
- The amount of extra funding suburb communities gain
- The funding stress level of "Antipoverty Organizations"
- The collaborative willingness among organizations

## SURVEY RESULTS

In order to constantly improve the Case Competition experience for all participants, students and judges are asked to complete a survey at the end of the day. This feedback, in the form of responses to specific questions as well as open-ended comments, is used to inform the design of the next Case Competition.

### Student Feedback

Surveys completed by this year's student participants indicate that most (93%) had a positive experience and appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the Case Competition. **Table 1**, below, provides details about students' responses to the survey questions.

**TABLE 1: Survey Responses: Students**

	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE
The case competition experience was positive	93%	7%	0%
I liked being assigned to an interdisciplinary team	89%	4%	7%
The case was interesting	87%	13%	0%
The case was challenging	91%	7%	2%
The DHS staff were effective in managing the event	100%	0%	0%
The interaction with the judges was positive	96%	4%	0%
The judges asked relevant and challenging questions	93%	7%	0%
The meeting locations were adequate	91%	7%	2%
The refreshments provided were sufficient	96%	4%	0%
The prizes were appropriate	86%	14%	0%
I would participate in another Local Government Case Competition	72%	21%	7%

In addition to these survey results, student comments were reviewed. Students were complimentary about the planning, logistics and staffing of the event, and the case challenge was described as relevant and practical. Many expressed appreciation for the networking opportunities with judges and students from other schools and programs of study. There were many positive comments about the opportunity to meet and learn from team members with different personal and educational backgrounds and perspectives.

However, there are some lessons to be learned from the survey responses. Many students continue to struggle with the logistics of finding meeting time and space, and while we deliberately provide a real-world experience by limiting the amount of time available to complete the project, we acknowledge that it can be difficult for students to find space in which to meet over such a concentrated period of time. Suggestions were offered that will be useful in future years, such as recommending that DHS staff advise students to investigate their library and study room hours and reservation processes in advance.



Some students reported negative experiences with the other members of their teams. Unfortunately, challenging group experiences are sometimes a reality in academic and professional settings. In our efforts to provide a realistic work experience, we acknowledge that this dynamic will affect some teams more than others. We work diligently to put together teams that are balanced and diverse, and will continue to do so.

For a complete list of student comments, see **Appendix A**.

### Judges' Feedback

Judges' comments were overwhelmingly positive (see **Appendix A**). **Table 2** demonstrates that, overall, the judges found the case challenge to be interesting, were impressed with the students and enjoyed the experience.

**TABLE 2: Survey Responses: Judges**

	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
The case competition experience was positive	100%	0%	0%	0%
The case was interesting	94%	6%	0%	0%
The case was challenging	100%	0%	0%	0%
The DHS staff was effective in managing the event	100%	0%	0%	0%
The interaction with students was positive	100%	0%	0%	0%
Students presented creative and compelling solutions to the case	81%	13%	6%	0%
This was an effective opportunity to recruit students for my organization	31%	25%	0%	44%
These students represented the best of what local graduate programs have to offer	60%	40%	0%	0%
The meeting locations were adequate	100%	0%	0%	0%
The refreshments provided were sufficient	88%	13%	0%	0%
I would participate in another Local Government Case Competition	100%	0%	0%	0%

### CONCLUSION

Based on both the formal and the informal feedback received, the 2012 Case Competition can be considered a success. We will continue to consider comments and suggestions, both positive and negative, as we plan for next year's competition.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY FEEDBACK

### Student Comments

Finding a place to meet for group work was challenging. Working under time constraint with strangers was very challenging. Sleep deprivation due to time constraints made early presentations very difficult.

\*\*\*\*

Very useful learning experience, great to network with other grad students since we're often in our own school bubbles/circles of contacts. Facilitating meeting was challenging. It would be useful if students were advised to research their libraries' hours, study room reservation processes/limits and Internet access for guests from other universities in advance.

\*\*\*\*

Provide some Chinese food. Invite winning team sharing experience before or during the kick-off meeting.

\*\*\*\*

Feedback process for feedback was good. Enjoyed getting what we could improve on and add to presentation.

\*\*\*\*

I had a great team, which contributed to my positive experience. I do wish we had one more day as busy schedules reduced our two days to one. If we had three days, perhaps we could have worked two. More private space would be nice. Really nice, fun DHS employees.

\*\*\*\*

I think this is a great event and has the reputation of being worthwhile amongst students that participated. One qualm is that a lot of people (at Heinz at least) did not know about it (despite the info session). Some more publicity could encourage participation.

\*\*\*\*

Overall this has been a fantastic experience. However I have to comment on the decision to assign teams instead of letting competitors choose them. It's only in retrospect that I can say this was not a positive thing. It was one of the most frustrating team experiences I've had. The only reason I "strongly agree" with choice 5 is because I'm amazed at my own perseverance and patience, and I made a longtime good friend in the process. A great topic, great organization, a wonderful opportunity. Thank you!

**Appendix A***(continued)*

This was a great case challenge. The case was relevant and practical.

\*\*\*\*

A later start-time for presentation day would be very helpful. Teams could get back together once more before presenting to improve the content of the case.

\*\*\*\*

This was a very valuable experience. However, since it did require such a time commitment, I likely would not do it again.

\*\*\*\*

I like the idea of dividing people from different expertise into groups. It increases the quality of presentations by viewing the case from different perspectives. On the other hand, it also increases the challenge by adding a team process to the case!

\*\*\*\*

Thank you for the opportunity to showcase our ability to solve real problems and work with people we normally wouldn't. Although stressful, this was a situation that generated positive relationships I hope to carry on because my group was awesome!

\*\*\*\*

Fantastic event! Well-planned! Good job Katie and DHS staff. Suggestion: email map to participants to show parking garage entrance. Confusing with all of the one way streets around. Thank you!

\*\*\*\*

Great networking! Great challenge for my learning portfolio. I truly enjoy group work. The random assignment of interdisciplinary students truly created a well-rounded approach to the problem.

\*\*\*\*

There were directions, but also enough freedom to explore creative solutions (not too many rules). I work well under pressure and non-profit management is a passion I want to continue working in after attaining my MSW. Thanks for all the hard work and opportunity to be a part of this event.

\*\*\*\*

Case competition dealing with fiscal issues would be relevant to the current state of the country. Ditto above but for the Marcellus Shale.

\*\*\*\*

I thoroughly enjoyed this case competition and I loved working in an interdisciplinary setting. This was my first case competition and I'm looking forward to future competitions.

**Appendix A***(continued)*

Great experience overall! For future competitions, though, it might be more helpful to present participants with a less open-ended challenge (e.g., include budget constraints or give a more specific problem to address).

\*\*\*\*

Timing of event is close to end of semester.

\*\*\*\*

The time and interdisciplinary team challenges the depth of case. But it also challenges more on people's team working spirit.

\*\*\*\*

Thank you for working with me with the kids!

\*\*\*\*

As an international student, I love this opportunity to work with team on emerging event/topic that impacts community so much. I learned so much from the case materials. Also, through the experience it proved my education is so valuable that I'm ready to contribute to community development after graduation. Thank you all DHS staff who put this event together. Thank you all the judges for the constructive feedback. I love Pittsburgh and I'm energized to make contributions to the community after graduation.

\*\*\*\*

I found the experience really great. Being an international student, it was a great opportunity to learn about social problems in the US. I liked the way the competition is kept open-ended to allow innovative and creative ideas.

\*\*\*\*

I was not prepared for the amount of work this competition entailed and I don't know if I would participate again. Give out the case on Mon. or Tues. it's not really enough time for people with full course loads and work. Start competition later on Saturday 9-9:30.

\*\*\*\*

My team was comprised of two students from Heinz and one from GSPIA, as such, our team was not very interdisciplinary. More diverse perspectives would have been invited. The food and facilities were lovely, but it would be nice to have had more partitioned off group or individual spaces.

\*\*\*\*

I enjoy interdisciplinary teams in general, but I felt that the effort contributed was not balanced. Lower work ethic and perceived significance of assignment. First semester master's students who did not carry their weight.

**Appendix A***(continued)*

We need a little more time to make a preparation. I just missed three classes.

We hope we can have more feasible time.

\*\*\*

Great event! Wonderful learning experience!

\*\*\*

This was a great experience! Thanks for putting this on and to all of the staff and organizations involved! I love to know that this is a real experience and that our ideas and work may come to fruition.

**Judges' Comments**

Long day to stay engaged. Fear the last presenters have to deal with my attention fatigue! Would you consider the second half be moved to the next weekend?

\*\*\*

DHS staff was great!

\*\*\*

Very enjoyable.

\*\*\*

Great program.

\*\*\*

This panel was great. Judges asked good questions and interacted positively with students. Laura Ellen and Evelyn did a good job.

\*\*\*

Great experience! Thanks for including me!

\*\*\*

This was a positive experience and I tremendously enjoyed it! Would definitely do it again!

\*\*\*

Well done! Thoroughly enjoyed it!

\*\*\*

Had some great presentations, great students, just not 100%.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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