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BEST PRACTICES

Be Accountable: Financial guidance helps local faith-based nonprofit

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Special to the Star

Company: **City Vision Ministries** is a community development corporation (CDC) that promotes healthy, stable neighborhoods in the inner city of Kansas City, Kan. City Vision partners with neighborhood groups to help develop a strong economic base through housing and small business efforts. It offers education programs, counseling on projects, assistance in securing grants and loans for development projects and leadership training.

Address: 726 Armstrong, Kansas City, KS

Telephone: (913) 371-5200

Web site: www.cityvisionministries.org

Employees: Eight, plus summer interns

Ownership/top management: City Vision is a faith-based nonprofit organization governed by a 15 member board of directors. Marla Newman is board chairwoman; John Harvey serves as president and executive director; and Evelyn Hudson is vice president of operations.

Challenge: Developing an accounting system.

Background: City Vision Ministries opened in 1992 with a volunteer staff and budget of \$150,000. Harvey said City Vision rehabilitated two homes a year.

“Then we went through a rapid growth spurt from these two homes to a \$13 million project and an annual budget of a million dollars – all in five years,” he said.

While City Vision’s business activities grew, the organization struggled internally. Harvey handled the accounting system, which was limited.

“We were accountable, but we were using up so much time doing things... and there was some data we could not individually track for each funding source,” Harvey said.

With some projects having as many as 22 funding sources, Harvey said, accurate financial reporting was a must.

Action Steps: Harvey shared his concerns with the City Vision board of directors. About the same time, City Vision was contacted by the **Greater Kansas City Local Initiatives Support Corp.**, a national nonprofit organization with strong ties in Kansas City. The support corporation raises billions of dollars from the private sector for use in community development through grants, loans and equity. The support is funneled through local community development corporations such as City Vision.

The support corporation invited Wyandotte County development corporations to network with them through Community Development 2000, an effort to build organizational capacity so that CDCs could be more productive. Harvey signed up.

Community Development 2000 took City Vision through a six month evaluation of its organization, taking a look at everything from board governance and internal management (including financial matters) to resource development and program delivery. The support corporation made recommendations for City Vision and set goals for the organization.

Results: Because of City Vision's continued participation in the Community Development 2000 program, the organization was able to hire an accountant and bookkeeper and find additional dollars to pay for positions.