

## DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENCES

### Goal:

- Develop authentic trusting, sustainable partnerships within communities and organizations supportive of Latino Youth Development.

### Objectives:

- Developing authentic relationships across differences.
- Acknowledging the impact of differences.
- Building trust.
- Ensuring sustainability.
- Working with communities of differences and understanding the levels of oppression and change.



Efforts to enhance 4 H outreach to Latino youth require much more than new recruitment approaches. Successful 4 H outreach efforts must also examine and address societal barrier and organizational inequities which limit the full engagement of Latino and other historically marginalized groups. While targeted recruitment efforts can increase representative diversity within programs and organizations, these efforts do not guarantee full and equitable engagement of historically marginalized groups. Achieving full inclusion of Latino—and other marginalized youth and their respective communities—requires developing *authentic relationships across differences*; acknowledging the *impact of differences*; *building trust*; ensuring *sustainability*; working with *communities of differences*; and understanding the *levels of oppression and change*. Each of these components of building partnership across differences is highlighted and described in a 2005 publication developed by the 4-H Youth Development Program at Michigan State entitled, *Partnerships for Positive Youth Development: What Can We Learn from the Albion Community Model?* as follows:

## **Authentic Relationships**

Authentic relationships across differences are genuine and sincere interpersonal relationships based on high levels of trust. They honor and recognize the similarities, differences and impact of differences that may be present at all times and in each interaction.

## **Impact of Differences**

The impact of differences refers to the ways in which organizational and societal structures, policies and systems work to benefit some groups and disadvantage or exclude others based on race, gender, disabilities, class, sexual orientation, and other human differences. From an organizational perspective, many youth organizations that have primarily involved white populations are struggling to become more welcoming, inclusive and relevant for young people and adults of color. Differences must be taken into account when seeking to develop partnerships to promote the healthy development of children and adolescents.

## **Trust**

When developing partnerships across differences, it's extremely important to enter into relationships with an open mind and an open heart. . As author bell hooks states, "Creating trust usually means finding out what it is we have in common as well as what separates us and makes us different." The truth is our denial of difference has created ongoing conflict for everyone (hooks, 2003, p. 109). Trust can be strengthened when people are willing to take the time to know each other for who they are and what they bring to the group, and by honoring similarities and differences.

## **Sustainability**

Authentic partnerships across difference begin with the intent of, commitment of and support for

maintaining long term relationships and programs. To develop sustainable partnerships across difference, organizations are encouraged to involve young people from marginalized groups in grant-funded programs with the intent to support and maintain the relationships over time.

### **Communities of Difference and Levels of Oppression and Change**

Community is often thought about in terms of what binds people together, such as shared norms, beliefs and values. Communities of difference are based not on sameness or homogeneity but on respect for differences and on the absolute regard for the intrinsic worth of every individual. Communities of difference do not begin with a dominant set of established norms but commit to developing these norms together within a climate of openness and respect. The work of engaging new audiences in community programs and efforts requires a willingness to examine and focus on both personal and institutional obstacles to working with differences.

Oppression and change happen at four levels: personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural. The personal level includes people's values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions. The interpersonal level includes language, behaviors and actions that often reflect thinking at the personal level. The institutional level includes laws, policies and procedures that may serve to include or exclude and advantage or disadvantage groups of people. The cultural level reflects societal notions and norms of what is considered "right, beautiful and true." Oppression occurs at all four levels and meaningful change will only happen if multiple levels are addressed.

## Assessing Trust, Sustainability and Shared Power

Central to authentic relationships across differences are discussions related to trust, sustainability and shared power. Within each of these discussions is the need to define, redefine and consciously and consistently dig deeper into how each of these notions become realized and nurtured within our authentic relationships across differences (Pace & Pizaña, 2011).

To this end, the following questions can serve as a catalyst for initiating the level of personal interpersonal, institutional and cultural reflection, introspection and self-assessment that partnerships across differences require:

- Why might the target group individual that I am interested in developing an authentic relationship have the desire to be involved with me?
- What are my motives for wanting to be involved in this relationship? Are these motives foundational principles to building trust or are they obstacles?
- What history of involvement do I have with the individual from the target group? What obstacles or opportunities does this history present to the relationship?
- What personal reflection work must I continually do to understand my privileges, my assumptions and prejudgments and other potential barriers to building trust as I work to develop an authentic relationship across differences?
- When interacting with individuals who are culturally different from me, what reactions or internal messages do I receive that trigger defensiveness or denial on my part? What do I need to do for my self to work through these reactions to build and maintain a trusting relationship?
- What characteristics and systems of mutual accountability will need to be a part of our relationship in order for there to be sustainability in our relationship?
- What will I need to sustain the relationship when the relationship becomes internally or externally difficult?
- What personal or dominant group characteristic must I examine that can be obstacles to sustainability? Do I need to be aware of issues related to control? Do I need

- to be aware of issues related to a well-intentioned “savior mentality” where my thoughts are centered on having all the right solutions and approaches to an issue and coming in to rescue the excluded group individual?
- What do I need to be concerned about related to the tendency to operate from a monocultural perspective/approach as to how a relationship should be developed or sustained?
  - What are components of shared power that are important to me?
  - What am I willing to investigate and redefine in order to build a collective vision toward shared power in my authentic relationship across differences?
  - What are the obstacles toward realizing my individual or our collective vision of shared power?
  - How will I know that I have built a foundation that would support shared power in my authentic relationship across differences?

### Promising Practices for Building Community Collaboration

The work developed by Michigan State University Extension 4-H Youth Development on building partnerships across differences is supported by several studies on strategies for effectively working with Latino communities. *Community-Based Translational Research in Arizona: Enhancing Partnerships with Hispanic/Latino Communities*, highlights best practices for and key lessons learned for enhancing community-translational research with Latino audiences in Arizona.



[http://azdhs.gov/documents/biomedical/aztransnet/Enhancing\\_Partnerships\\_with\\_Hispanic\\_Latino\\_Communities.pdf](http://azdhs.gov/documents/biomedical/aztransnet/Enhancing_Partnerships_with_Hispanic_Latino_Communities.pdf)

## Enhancing Partnership Strategies and Lessons

- Establish a long term commitment by all partners.
- Recognize and acknowledge the community as a valuable and contributing partner; create the means for the community to participate in the research activities; work to build capacity within the community for the mutual benefit of all partners.
- Facilitate collaborative, equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research and in decision-making regarding the research activities.
- Integrate knowledge and intervention for the mutual benefit of all partners.
- Develop structures and processes that facilitate the trust and the sharing of influence and control among partners.
- Build the capacity of all partners for continued involvement in translational research.
- Plan ahead for sustainability.
- Be inclusive on all decisions regarding the communication of project results.
- Provide programming that is culturally appropriate, that is accessible and relevant for the Latino families you intent to serve.



Enhancing outreach and engagement to other marginalized groups of youth is equally as important. ***Building Black-Brown Coalitions In The Southeast: Four Case Studies Of African American-Latino Collaborations***, offers several concrete steps for coalition building. These strategies include:

<http://www.southerncouncil.org/pdf/BlackBrownCoalitions.pdf>

### 1. Establish Trust among Coalition Members

Coalition members have to quell fears, disprove popular stereotypes, and place people in situations where they can feel comfortable. Consider using places where the community gathers, as well as organizing events with food, music, and dance.

### 2. Identify the Issues

During the first phase of relationship-building, the issues must be prioritized and respected to serve as the motivating factor to work together.

### 3. Develop a Process for Communication

Language is a common problem in Black-Brown coalitions since communication is central to every facet of coalition-building. Bilingual members are a vital asset to any Black-Brown coalition. People want to be heard in the language they speak most comfortably. Coalitions can seek translation assistance from local colleges, universities, or service agencies, or perhaps they can establish their own programs to teach English or Spanish. The key is enabling coalition members to speak freely and confidently. This can be accomplished by translators who care about the cause and the statements shared within the coalition.

### 4. Find a Safe Place to Meet

The location is a symbol of solidarity. Coalitions need to identify a place that is easily recognizable, accessible, and safe. Entering into coalitions is a political act. Parents, children, undocumented immigrants, workers, educators and other concerned residents all



fear loss if their actions are uncovered. Churches seem to be the location of choice for most coalitions. Coalition members' offices are another choice for meeting, strategizing and conducting coalition business.

### **5. Promote Contextual Understanding**

Although the initial issue(s) is what brings communities together, it is the search for context that sustains the coalition. Community leaders must offer opportunities to understand the struggles, fears, and aspirations of both African Americans and Latinos. Context provides perspective that goes beyond the superficial stereotypes that exist on the surface. Latinos need to understand the history of African Americans in the United States, especially the modern Civil Rights Movement. Equally true, African Americans need to understand the history of Latinos in the United States spanning more than four hundred years and appreciate 20th century immigration of many Hispanic immigrants fleeing the poverty, violence, and dictatorial regimes of Latin America. An important segment of the U.S. Hispanic population was here before the U.S. became a country. Not everyone migrated to the U.S. like some communities say, "the border moved over us." This process also establishes a sense of humanity and kinship. Coalition members evolve from being seen as stereotypical African Americans or Latinos to becoming individuals who are unique.

### **6. Representative Leadership Must be Predicated on Trust**

Leadership is another essential element to effective coalition-building. Leaders cannot be self-proclaimed, but identified by the community as persons who are trustworthy and capable of addressing the interests of all coalition members. Faith leaders, grassroots organizers, or labor leaders often serve in some leadership capacities. What coalitions want from their leaders is respect, an understanding of the issues, the capacity to mobilize communities, the ability to think strategically, and the audacity to speak truth to power.

### **7. Create an Agenda Based Upon Current Community Concerns**

Once a coalition is formed and the leadership is established, there must be a sense of direction and purpose. The agenda is the destination and roadmap towards group success.



It contains those issues that resonate most deeply among African Americans and Latinos and it outlines what should be done and by whom. Therefore, the agenda is also a tool for sustaining enthusiasm and empowering residents to act. It is a document, created through a democratic process, that represents the sacrifice and labor any coalition demands.

### **8. Identify Goals, Objectives and Tasks that are Attainable**

Coalitions exist to change a social phenomenon that is negatively impacting the lives of a certain population. Change is incremental and purposeful. Coalition leaders should develop a plan whereby members can consistently enjoy victory from their efforts. Trying to accomplish more than is feasible will undermine any momentum attained and lead to group apathy. Remember, success is in the eye of the beholder.

### **9. Take Time to Enjoy One Another**

The reason for uniting usually stems from negative circumstances. People are angry, frustrated, fearful, and wanting to act. In the midst of building a coalition, there should be time for enjoying the company of others who were once strangers, but are now allies. For example, organizing potlucks, cultural events, or community projects allows men, women, and children to bond. Coalitions work well when members enjoy each other's company and appreciate what everyone brings to the table.

An easy way to start in these circumstances is to get to know the local organizations that already have credibility within the Hispanic community. They can help you identify community leaders and might even introduce you. Working with adults who already have a relationship with youth in the community can be an effective strategy for bringing Hispanic youth to the program. Form partnerships to deliver educational programs. Oregon 4-H, for example, has had a strong relationship with the Latino community spanning almost two decades. They have successfully engaged Latino families in sports, cultural activities, technology, summer camps, field trips, college readiness conferences, career exploration, and leadership development.

## HISPANIC CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As part of 4-H's efforts to widen its reach within the Hispanic community, there is an opportunity to engage the private sector, both at the corporate and individual professional levels and gain financial and human capital support to impact Hispanic youth. Below are some recommendations that can help local 4-H staff in this effort.

### **Develop Relationships with Professional Organizations**

In order to identify local companies and professionals who are focused in the Hispanic community, 4-H staff can develop relationships with local professional and business organizations. See "Current Resources" for a list of organizations.

### **Identify Companies with Affinity**

In order to determine the potential for engagement, 4-H staff should learn about a company's history and mission, look for corporations whose values align with 4-H and identify companies that focus on the Hispanic community.

### **Develop and Promote Engagement Opportunities**

Once potential organizations and individuals are identified, 4-H staff should create opportunities for engagement by providing specific descriptions of the volunteer, mentorship, and coaching opportunities, as well as develop programs that local companies can invest in through their philanthropic efforts. Such opportunities could be presented at "open house" type events at the target companies which can be arranged through the employee networking groups or volunteer programs. Also, speaking opportunities can be obtained at events held by local business and professional organizations.

### **Engage 4-H Alumni in the Corporate World**

4-H staff can identify CEO's, senior executives, and other professionals who are 4-H alumni and volunteers and encourage them to give back by volunteering themselves and by engaging other professionals in their organizations. Testimonials are an effective way to drive

enthusiasm and commitment in the Hispanic professional community, if staff can create opportunities for 4-H alumni to share the impact 4-H had in their development, this would help communicate the importance of the program and help drive participation.

### **Highlight Success Stories and Provide Networking Opportunities**

Provide a space for companies and individuals who are engaged to track results and share best practices, as well as network with each other. For example, if local professionals from several companies are involved as mentors or coaches, 4-H staff can encourage them to network with each other or share their experiences at local business or community events. They could create focus or study groups which would add value to their own careers and provide exposure opportunities at their companies.

You will also need to be prepared to show the impact your program is having on your clients. Corporations will want to know how many Latinos are being served by your program/club. Be ready to share the data that supports your claims.