

Building Capacity and Developing Leadership to Foster Self-Sufficiency



One way that anchor institutions can support community and economic development is by building resident and neighborhood capacity. Done often in partnership with established local community institutions and organizations such as community development corporations, successful capacity building efforts should draw on existing community strengths. The goal is to promote self-sufficiency within the community, which not only builds confidence and trust, but also ensures that the institution has an effective and stable local partner. Well-organized local organizations with skilled leaders are better able to interact with anchor institutions and help level the playing field. Furthermore, empowering neighborhood residents and institutions through capacity building not only strengthens the community but also supports better local services from small businesses and job developers.

Capacity building activities include resident engagement, leadership training, technical assistance and workshops. Additionally, many anchor institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, help increase the capacity of local nonprofits by placing student interns and volunteers in the organization and making faculty research available to the organization. Other institutions invest directly in local business and nonprofit organizations through revolving loan funds or giving money to community development finance institutions (see Policy Briefs on Business Development and Endowment Investment for more details). Providing in-kind resources and educational programs for local organizations and individuals creates a more equal and effective community partnership

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Making it Work

Like many of the proposed community engagement activities that an anchor institution can engage in, community capacity building and leadership development transfers knowledge and resources from the institution to the community. This also suggests a transfer of power and control from one to the other. As with other examples, this is made easier when institutional leaders approach the relationship with community as an equal partnership. In this manner, the anchor institution can provide itself as a partner and resource for the community to build capacity in some of the following ways:

- Engaging community partners directly in designing capacity building and leadership development programs so that they address real community need.
- Offering leadership training, technical assistance and educational workshops to local organizations and residents.
- Investing in local nonprofits and creating revolving loan funds for local businesses.
- Placing students and/or staff as interns or volunteers in local nonprofit organizations and offering research or expertise through faculty or institution leaders.
- Providing easily accessible center for information, data and state, local and federal resources.

Best Practices

Emory

Since 2002, Emory's Office of University and Community Partnerships (OUCP) has run a Community Building and Social Change Fellowship Program, that places students in a year-long internship with a local organization and combines study in the classroom with real work in the community. Emory also provides direct assistance to building the capacity of Atlanta's small network of CDCs, Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood-based Developers. Assistance programs are determined through a collaborative process that began in 2008, when OUCP worked with AHAND to conduct interviews and listening sessions with Atlanta CDCs to help the CDCs identify their strengths and weaknesses and where they would like to go in the future. The results are collaborative interventions that create healthy learning environments for participating students and greatly increase the capacity of local CDCs in areas of key importance.

University of Illinois, Chicago

In 1993, the University of Illinois at Chicago, through its Great Cities Institute, created its Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI). This initiative supports neighborhood revitalization through teaching, research, and services to improve educational outcomes, health status, economic conditions, safety and the physical environment in the neighborhoods surrounding its campus. Premier programs that have come out of UICNI include its Latino leadership development program (Latino Urban Leaders), a community health initiative program (Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion) and Illinois Resource Net, a nonprofit capacity building program. Illinois Resource Net connects Illinois nonprofits and local government with information and resources to help secure federal and state funds. It does so through an interactive website, workshops, online courses, and technical assistance. To date, IRN connections have led to 23 grants totaling more than \$5 million in federal and state funds.

Resources

Anchor Institution Task Force, <http://www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf>

University of Illinois at Chicago, Neighborhoods Initiative, <http://www.uicni.org/>

Emory University, Center for Community Partnerships, <http://oucp.emory.edu/>