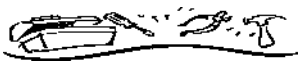

TOOLKIT
NUMBER 6

Systems Improvement

Training and Technical Assistance Project

Engaging and Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations in Initiatives for Children, Youth, and Families

Prepared by the Institute for Educational Leadership
with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

About IEL

For more than forty years, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)— a non-profit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC—has worked to achieve better results for children and youth. At the heart of our effectiveness is our unique ability to bring people together to identify and resolve issues across policy, program and sector boundaries. As a natural outgrowth of our work, we have created and continue to nurture diverse networks across the country.

Today, IEL is working to help individuals and institutions increase their capacity to work together. We are building and supporting a cadre of diverse leaders, strengthening the capacity of education and related systems, and informing the development and implementation of policies. Our efforts are focused through five programs of work: Developing Leaders; Strengthening School-Family-Community Connections; Governing; Connecting and Improving Systems that Serve Children and Youth; and Improving Preparation for Work.

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Joanna Uribe assembled the Toolkit, with editorial direction from IEL staff Sheri DeBoe Johnson, Carlo Ignacio, and Kwesi Rollins and OJJDP staff Robin Delany-Shabazz. Carlo Ignacio and Kwesi Rollins provided additional editorial and formatting assistance. Project staff would like to express gratitude to everyone who made a contribution to the development of this Toolkit.

Project Staff

S. Kwesi Rollins, Project Manager
Sheri DeBoe Johnson, Project Director
Carlo Ignacio, Research Associate

For more information on the SITTAP initiative or the Toolkit series:
Carlo Ignacio, Research Associate
Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
202.822.8405, ext. 105 (voice)
202.872.4050 (fax)
ignacioc@iel.org (email)
Please visit our websites: *www.sittap.org & www.iel.org*

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Background on SITTAP and the Toolkits

The Systems Improvement Training and Technical Assistance Project (SITTAP) reflects the ongoing commitment of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to find better ways of working with states and communities to improve the well-being of children, youth and families by developing comprehensive community-based solutions to a broad range of issues. SITTAP, which is operated by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), is designed to develop, expand, and enhance the skills and capacities of key stakeholders in communities to make systemic changes leading to more efficient and integrated systems of care (particularly juvenile justice and child welfare systems) for children, youth and families.

Improving juvenile justice and child welfare systems is a process, not an event. Recent reform efforts reflect a shift from treatment and adjudication to prevention and from centralized service delivery to community-based comprehensive strategies. Participants at every level of the change effort must maintain the vision of a more responsive, collaborative and efficient system and simultaneously implement changes while responding to the day-to day crises inherent in the individual agencies and operations that comprise the 'system'. This is perhaps the biggest challenge to achieving better results for children, youth, families and their communities.

The need for more effective strategies to address child abuse and neglect and juvenile delinquency is prevalent in almost every setting in America — large, small, urban, suburban and rural. However, violence prevention and child protection are often most needed in communities that suffer from high rates of poor housing and homelessness, unemployment and underemployment, under resourced schools, poor health care and other social conditions that contribute to social isolation and widespread hopelessness. These are problems that many of the SITTAP demonstration sites are dealing with at some level. These factors make instilling the value of civic engagement and system-wide change through collaboration challenging.

About this Toolkit

This toolkit provides checklists, suggestions, case studies, and resources for how to recruit and support partners from the faith-based community in efforts to strengthen, improve, or redesign systems of care for children, youth, and families. The information is intended to help demonstration sites connect to faith-based organizations and networks that share the common purpose of helping children and their families in need of support, yet operate within a framework different from that of government and public systems.

ENGAGING AND PARTNERING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INITIATIVES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

The elders told us that this is the road of life that we're walking down. We're supposed to be holding up one another, supporting each other, having our arm underneath our brother's arms while walking down the road of life.

(Reuben Snake, Winnebago medicine man)

1. CONTEXT AND HISTORY

Over the last decade, there has been a shift in the public discourse on the role of faith-based organizations in the delivery of public services. In 1996, welfare reform shifted primary responsibility for service delivery to state and local municipalities. As part of this change, tthe faith-based community has increasingly been promoted as a valuable resource in addressing social needs. Language attached to federal funding encourages states to make faith-based organizations partners in the delivery of services. Federal legislation lays out specific steps for states to follow in order to facilitate the capacity of faith-based groups to access federal funds, but with unique cultures and constitutions in each of the 50 states of this nation, the results and response have varied widely.[1]

In spite of the recent federal attention, the fact is that faith-based organizations have long been integral to the safety network of services and resources in most communities, from church-sponsored emergency food pantries to affordable housing. There is a lengthy history of partnership between government and the charitable work of faith-based communities. In the past, government subsidies and voucher-based fee income were given to religiously affiliated hospitals, orphanages, schools, and colleges, often in place of establishing public institutions.

Today, our nation continues to rethink the balance of cooperation between government and religious organizations as our society grows in complexity.

The political and legal questions related to this issue have been studied and discussed in great detail since the shift in federal attention took such a determined and intentional turn. For those embarking on developing partnerships and contracts with faith-based organizations, written resources exist to help explore the legal and constitutional issues that need to be considered. *(See Resources Section for listing.)* What has been lacking is a practical "how-to" guide.

2. PURPOSE AND INTENTION

A Guide

This document is such a guide for engaging faith-based communities. It is a toolkit of checklists, suggestions, case studies, and resources for how to recruit and support partners from the faith-based community in efforts to strengthen, improve, or redesign systems of care for children, youth, and families. This information is intended to help you connect to communities that share the common purpose of helping the needy, yet operate within a framework different from that of government and public systems.

Crossing Cultural Divides

This toolkit focuses on bridging cultural divisions to build a unified vision for change. We advocate an inclusive approach to partnerships so that your community can mobilize the greatest number and variety of resources and expertise with the goal of supporting healthier children, families, and communities. Partnerships push participants to think outside their proverbial boxes and enhance participants' abilities to create systems that are adaptable, flexible, and responsive to diverse needs.

Effective Partnerships Create Change

Laws, policies, and regulations can mandate changes in how a community or system operates: how juvenile offenders are treated, how mental health services are delivered, or how public resources are allocated across populations. The legal approach is the community's way of codifying moral and ethical principles for the betterment of society or a system. However, the underlying beliefs, attitudes, and ethical intentions also need to be nurtured within individuals so that they change how they approach their work and relationships. Civil rights laws can mandate systems change, but without corresponding change in individuals, discrimination will continue. Truancy can be outlawed, but without personal motivation, children will continue to tune out or underachieve. We need societal directives and we need personal transformation. Creating an effective community partnership can further both goals.

To be effective, community partnerships require the following essential elements in order to facilitate planning and problem solving:

- Trust and greater understanding among diverse individuals, organizational cultures, and institutions;
- Open, honest, and consistent reflection and communication;
- Mutual respect and civility in dealing with differences;
- Accommodation and compromise to keep the process moving;
- Generosity of spirit and sharing of resources for greater impact;
- Faith and determination that the process will lead to a greater good.

Ripple Effect

Partnership calls for participants to transform how they think and act, requiring that they embrace inclusion, cooperation, sacrifice, tolerance, flexibility, and the harnessing of collective creativity.

Like a pebble dropped in a pond, an effective partnership creates ripples that grow in power as they spread. Witness the experience in Boston when the combined effort of multiple public systems, individuals, community insti-

tutions, and public agencies resulted in diverse strategies that led to two years with no youth-on-youth murders. This successful collaboration in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston has set off a ripple as other communities try their versions of the Boston pebble. One key ingredient for success in the Boston project was the participation of faith-based groups, including a small but determined Azusa Christian Community Church located in the heart of the neighborhood. As a result of the Boston experience, the National Ten Point Leadership Foundation (NTLF) was formed to be "a national coalition that organizes clergy-law enforcement-community partnerships for youth development and against violence among inner city youth." [2]

3. WHY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO BE AT THE TABLE

Access, Knowledge, Trust

As an ever-present and tangible manifestation of voluntary service and civic engagement in our society, faith-based communities are a part of every community – not apart from them. Yet we often overlook these communities as viable partners because of deeply ingrained lessons on the separation of church and state, codified by our founding fathers. They have significant competence and knowledge to contribute, born of a history of providing services and supports. They provide access to their communities – entrée for outsiders to the many cultures that make up our nation – because they are trusted. Many faith-based communities nurture core values of active citizenship, community self-reliance, and public spiritedness that are vital to building effective partnerships.

4. WHAT ARE FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Researchers have many ways of defining faith-based organizations. The following are generally accepted parameters:

- They are directly connected to a faith community (a group of people organized around a religious or spiritual belief system).
- They have a religiously oriented mission statement.
- They receive significant support from religious organizations.
- They are initiated by a religious institution.[3]

As defined above, there are many service organizations affiliated with or initiated from within religious communities. These service organizations came into being as a formal way to carry out their communities' spiritual commitments. Some, such as Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, and United Jewish Communities, maintain an active identification with a particular denomination. Others, such as Goodwill Industries, began as faith-based service initiatives but are no longer identified with religious communities. Regardless of their degree of association with their respective faith communities, all are critical elements in the agency landscape within a community. In smaller communities, they may be the only service providers available.

The Faith-Based Community Today

Introduction of the Faith-based and Community Initiatives in 2002 is the most current recognition by the federal government of the contribution faith-based communities make in addressing complex social problems such as homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, welfare-to-work, violence, and incarceration. Those faith-based groups currently involved in formal service delivery are likely to be working in collaboration with other agencies to provide services in neighborhoods and for specific target groups such as troubled youth, the unemployed, young children, the homebound elderly, prisoners (both those incarcerated and those re-entering the community), and welfare-to-work recipients.

In the past, faith-based groups were required to have separate nonprofit 501(c)3 status to access government funding. Those groups already familiar with this pre-existing infrastructure are the most immediately prepared to join a new partnership as leaders and service providers for a reconfigured service delivery system. However, with new federal directives, separate 501(c)3 status is no longer required for receiving government support. This change has allowed many smaller and less-experienced faith-based groups to seek federal and state funding in support of their social service programs.

5. PRIOR TO PARTNERING

Identifying and Locating Faith-Based Communities

Identifying those faith-based organizations with a capacity and desire to partner involves inquiry and discovery. Every community has its own unique combination of faith-based organizations that has evolved as a result of history, geography, cultural diversity, median age, and migration patterns. Identifying leaders and congregants of these faith-based organizations requires that you physically enter their world; for example, connecting with independent storefront community-serving ministries not listed in the phone book may require visiting neighborhoods on foot.[4]

Developing connections to faith-based communities includes several steps:

1. Articulate intention: Begin with belief that the involvement of this sector of the community is essential to your effort. Clearly articulate how a partnership with this sector would work, including specific possibilities for faith-based participation. Make your intentions clear through proactive outreach, follow-up, and personal contact with respected leaders. Focus your efforts on the most likely candidates for partnerships: for example, if your primary goal is the provision of services, initiate contact with faith-based organizations that already have a history of service provision. Your criteria should direct your search to the most likely organizations.

2. Gather information: Identify faith-based organizations in your community by making personal connections and establishing relationships. There are several ways to initiate contact with existing faith-based organizations, ranging from long walks or drives through the targeted community, to use of the internet, to Community Youth Mapping.[5] Local phone directories provide one

useful window into a community. Listings include faith-based groups of all sizes, including a broad range of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim denominations and congregations as well as Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Baha'i, Native American, and other faith-based communities.

3. Conduct a search: Begin your search with people you know; ask them whether they know of faith-based communities or leaders who might be interested in forming a partnership addressing the issues you want help with. Newspapers can also be helpful; look for names that appear repeatedly, and note any faith-based leaders speaking at community meetings. Finally, long-time residents in target neighborhoods are likely to be good sources regarding local leaders.

Remember that in many communities (maybe yours) partnerships already exist and have been doing good work. For example, in Cleveland, Ohio an interfaith alliance is integrating social justice and personal transformation goals to reach youth and help them turn their lives around.[6] The collaboration leverages the skills and experience of each member to create a service network of support for youth in the Fifth Police District. The Clergy United for Juvenile Justice brings together Baptist and Islamic clergy in a program managed under the auspices of Lutheran Youth and Families. Youth enroll in the Rites of Passage program and martial arts training offered by local Muslim organizations. They are assigned mentors from the local Baptist churches, who are trained by Big Brothers Big Sisters Inc. Drug and alcohol screening is provided by Catholic Charities.

4. Initiate contact: Personal outreach is vital in initiating and maintaining relationships with faith-based organizations. When possible, begin with already-established relationships and contacts within the target community; relying on mutual acquaintances can make establishing new relationships easier. In-person contact may be necessary, particularly since some faith-based organizations may not be easy to reach by phone; in any case, face-to-face communication can be an especially effective way of reaching out to a particular congregation or leader. Make clear your own commitment to the project as well as the ways in which the proposed partnership would link to the goals of the congregation.

If you are invited to come and speak to the congregation, tell the story of what you are trying to do, why this is important to you, and how it links to their spiritual mission, and invite them to make this mission mutual. Speaking to a congregation puts a face on the invitation to partner; further, it supports the leader who invited you and gives credibility to his or her interest in becoming a partner. Finally, this approach provides you with an opportunity to assess qualities that are important to successful partnerships: openness, interest in learning from others, willingness to consider creative approaches, and the ability to understand constraints and limitations without blaming.

Finally, because people of power and influence can often help to convene diverse groups of people, make use of elected officials who can help you establish productive partnerships with faith-based organizations. Like leaders of religious communities, political leaders have a pulpit from which to preach; your mayor, state legislator, or governor can bring his or her leadership and authority to support your collaborative effort.

- Personal outreach is crucial to building relationships. Recruiting someone who is known and respected in the faith-based community to conduct outreach can help. If this is not possible, someone who knows both you and someone within the target community could make the initial introductions.
- Make a phone call to introduce yourself and the project. Because not all community ministries are easy to reach by phone, you may need to attend a scheduled activity to make initial contact and get a phone number.
- Hold a face-to-face conversation with a member of the congregation to find out what the congregation is already doing for the community.
- Ask about the concerns of the congregation and its leaders to assess how these concerns might relate to the issues you are presenting.
- Provide your information and request for the congregation's involvement. Come prepared with data that support your case, and make connections between the issue your project addresses and the congregation's spiritual mission.
- Find out their process for making decisions and commitments about new projects. For some groups, a committee is responsible for decisions; for others, the decision rests on the word of the leader.
- After your initial meeting, thank your contact by phone or letter, and restate your understanding of the conversation and any agreements reached. Attention to such things as thank-you letters communicates respect for your contact's time and information.

Often, local politicians know people in the faith-based community, and, depending on their reputation within the communities you are targeting, they can be helpful in initiating and maintaining positive partnerships with faith-based communities.

- Use them to articulate the concept of partnerships with faith-based groups across your community.
- Have them sanction program ideas that emerge from the collaborative process.
- Use them to obtain information and convene people to advance the work of the collaborative partnership.
- Encourage them to set up citizen summits to give visibility to your work.
- Ask them to promote the success of your efforts.
- Encourage them to delegate government resources, when appropriate, to provide technical assistance to faith-based members of the collaborative to help them meet infrastructure requirements and access funding resources.
- Have them establish a civic switchboard to help connect resources and people, including faith-based groups.

Remember that this process takes time. It is critical in this phase to allow sufficient time for gathering information and for establishing and building relationships. Through this interactive process, several changes occur:

- Knowledge about faith-based communities in your area expands, as does the inventory and framework of community assets. This helps set a foundation of inclusion.
- Individuals involved in the process expand their conversations about social problems and human needs to include people from different walks of life. This brings new perspectives and builds new relationships.

Benefits of Partnering

Experience has shown that many things are possible when systems partners work together with faith-based groups with integrity and mutual respect:

- Strengthening of community ties and improved neighborhood safety for residents.
- Geographic renewal in which change is focused on a specific school, street, or neighborhood.
- Stretching of public resources to help individuals improve their assets through home rehabilitation projects, home ownership, and access to Individual Development Accounts and Earned Income Credits.
- Providing youth services to create positive environments for families and neighborhoods, promoting positive peer influences, and modeling for youth and families of how to build and sustain a supportive community that can work together for change.[7]

DANZA MEXICA

In the 1990s, a school-based collaborative of teachers, service providers, and community groups successfully competed for state grants to establish a Healthy Start Collaborative, which organized a network of services including after-school programs and in-school counseling services for students from a neighborhood struggling with gang violence. Among the members of this collaborative was Danza Xitlalli de San Francisco, a danza Mexica (Aztec) group that maintains faith traditions based on thousand-year-old indigenous beliefs and rituals originating in Mexico. Movement through dance is an integral part of its spiritual form.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, several danza Mexica communities are involved in community building efforts. Through the American Indian community, danza Mexica groups have encouraged young people to participate in traditions such as sweat lodge ceremonies, pow wows, and vision quests. At danza Mexica ceremonies, youth seek out elders for counseling and guidance. The physicality of dance, combined with its cultural foundation, attract troubled young people and give them a meaningful alternative to street life and an identity outside of being "on probation" or a "client" in an agency. As one young Latino father said at a meeting with elders in 2004, "I first saw danza at a Cinco de Mayo celebration when I was 16 years old. I was in a gang. I had been with a friend of mine when he was shot in the head in Oakland. I wanted to change, but I didn't know how. A college mentor took me to danza. I didn't understand anything, but my subconscious told me I needed to connect." As this man's unsolicited testimonial explains clearly, the ancient religious traditions and spiritual practices that underlie danza Mexica provide both cultural competence and a sense of belonging within a traditional faith-based community. Such communities demonstrate how cultural competence and faith-based partnerships that are not visible in the mainstream can have a strong influence on young people of color, and should not be overlooked when building collaborative efforts.

Contact:
Danza Xitlalli de San Francisco
E-mail: cincopalms@aol.com

INCLUSION AND **RELATIONSHIPS** ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

6. ENGAGING WITH THE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

Process of Engagement on the Continuum:

Information sharing > Coordination > Cooperation > Collaboration

Engagement occurs along a continuum. Some partnerships with faith-based organizations will focus primarily on information sharing. In these cases, the faith-based group serves as an outlet for information, acting primarily as a recipient rather than as a full partner.

> *In an information-sharing partnership, your group might place informational pamphlets at the site of worship, pass out flyers regarding community events, or provide non-controversial educational workshops for congregants.*

In the information-sharing phase, potential partners can get a feel for each other by negotiating low-risk agreements.

When relationships of mutual respect are established and the partners know each other, coordination and cooperation replace or supplement simple information sharing, and faith-based groups take on supportive and facilitative roles. In these two stages, faith-based organizations act as partners in a common cause but do not take on major leadership responsibilities. They are comfortable as supportive allies. For example, faith-based groups might provide space for programs such as Head Start, open their site to non-secular planning activities, host community fairs, assist with outreach and referrals of congregants and community members to needed services, encourage their congregants and followers to get involved in community activities, and lend their names and voice to advocacy efforts.

At the most intensive level of engagement, the faith-based group collaborates actively in the planning and provision of services. They are deeply involved in defining the issues and in designing systems change. They are willing to invest time and resources for the cause they have taken on. They own their part as full partners and leaders for change.

Getting Started

> *The best way to engage partners is to craft a collaborative partnership together from the ground up.*

Through collaboration from a project's inception, mutual buy-in occurs at the beginning and sets the foundation for long-term commitment. Collaborations and partnerships work better when the "building" starts from scratch and when partners have an equal voice in envisioning and creating new strategies together. Conversely, when people join a group after basic decisions are already in place, it is easier for them to walk away when obstacles arise. The reality, though, is that much of the funding that supports collaborative partnerships carries non-negotiable requirements regarding types of partnerships. In

Checklist to assess potential partners

- Understand the capacity of the faith-based groups you are inviting to the table. Look at their current activities, how they carry them out, who they reach, and the degree of religious content associated with their services.
- Organizational characteristics: How are they structured? Are they neighborhood-based? What are their affiliations? What is their size? What are the demographic characteristics of congregants?
- Administrative characteristics: What is their mission? What is the managerial structure? What are the staffing practices? How are their finances managed?
- Environmental characteristics: What is their site like? What facilities do they have (kitchen, meeting rooms, etc.)? Where are religious symbols displayed?
- Funding characteristics: How is their funding spread between religious contributions and secular dollars? How are decisions made about how to spend funds?
- Program characteristics: What activities or services are they already providing? What is the proportion of religion-based and service-based activities? What are their requirements for participation in their programs?

these situations, the initial meetings must develop a process for understanding and accepting the mandated assumptions and strategies.

Outreach

You may not have resources for a dedicated outreach coordinator. Solution: share outreach work.

> *Identifying potential relationships is vital in establishing partnerships with faith-based organizations, and can be done in several ways.*

In addition to sharing outreach work with other group members, consider asking a leader within the target faith-based community to sponsor a special gathering of his or her peers for you to speak to. Many larger denominations have an established structure for convening multi-congregation meetings to disseminate information, community requests, and communiqués from superiors; to provide training and support to each other; and to discuss particular events of mutual interest. Storefront ministries on the front lines of street outreach are often independent operations, but their ministers meet periodically to share information and stay connected. Attending one of these meetings would provide an opportunity to talk to several ministers at one time. Find out about scheduled meetings within the networks of faith-based groups and ask for time to present your request. This outreach model can miss the unexpected information and linkages that often surface in one-on-one conversations, but it is a way to begin recruiting partners. Personalize your contact with these groups by following up with a thank-you phone call or letter to your contact.

- What does collaboration mean? Spoken statements of shared intention? Signed agreements? Pooled resources?
- Who is the target population? Where do they live? Will the program focus exclusively or primarily on particular groups limited by age, gender mix, income level, or ethnicity?
- How is family defined?
- What are the group definitions of high-risk and at-risk?
- What does outreach entail and what entities are responsible for this? Who controls referrals?
- What is the service model under consideration? Will it involve sharing space? Creating one intake protocol? Pooled supervision under one partner? Coordinated case conferences among partners?
- What constitutes accountability? What is expected of everyone? Are roles clearly defined? How will accountability be monitored and addressed?
- What does support mean? Access to phone consultation? On-going training activities? Grant writing assistance? Contract dollars?
- What is meant by outcomes? What will define success for participants? What timeline will you use?

Building Trust

In the most effective collaborative, partners take time to develop a base of common knowledge. This requires learning about each other's services, resources, organizational cultures, and working constraints. Without this common knowledge, partners often rely on stereotypes and misconceptions.

The most important thing to keep in mind when building trust among partners: Do not make promises you can't keep. If you make a promise, deliver. Integrity and trust are essential to a successful partnership. They also reflect key values echoed in the spiritual literature of all denominations.

Creating a Common Language: Trust develops in new relationships through time, shared experiences, and familiarity with a common language and frame of reference. It is important to take time during the exploratory phase to reach agreement on the meaning of the language used regarding the issue of concern, the collaborative model being considered, and all partners' expectations.

Whenever possible, translate key concepts from secular language into more familiar theological language. For example, strategic planning and evaluation can be discussed using the theological concepts of ministry and stewardship of resources; this translation helps move the discussion into familiar territory where all partners can participate equally in creating a process they own and value. Such a commitment to building "bilingual" capacity bridges cultural differences and models inclusion.

Information is power. Since the use of jargon and acronyms excludes people, minimize their use. If they are necessary, include a definition that expands the shared vocabulary among partners. Create a culture of plain talk to model inclusiveness.

Involving the Right People

Evaluations of successful partnerships with faith-based communities underscore the importance of involving committed, charismatic leaders who have outstanding skills in connecting to people.

For example, in Boston, the Rev. Eugene Rivers was the driving force for his small congregation's involvement in the Boston Ten Point Plan. In Cleveland's Clergy United for Juvenile Justice, the Rev. Ralph Hughley's passion for troubled youth translated into his capacity to pull clergy and congregations together in a coalition for juvenile justice. Qadwi Bey, a Muslim member of this Cleveland coalition served as a mentor, father figure, and teacher for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Make sure that your faith-based allies are well respected in the community. Without a respected leader, the partnership is unlikely to be successful. Finally, remember that the politically well connected are not always the ones community residents respect.

Check Track Records: Like all human endeavors, faith-based communities may have leaders who struggle with ego, power, and the lure of money. And like secular institutions, they can be prone to bureaucratic thinking, disconnection, and a desire for influence. Therefore, thoroughly consider the reputations and track records of individuals and congregations before forming partnerships; careful assessment at the beginning can help to avoid later problems.

Building Capacity

Partnerships can give faith-based groups the opportunity to focus their energies on projects of mutual importance, while simultaneously providing them with resources to help them work within the requirements of secular and government funding agencies.

Given the number and diversity of their congregations' and communities' needs, faith-based leaders carry a heavy responsibility and often face a so-called "tyranny of need," [8] which stretches their human and material resources. Partnerships provide faith-based leaders with an opportunity to focus their leadership on a specific initiative without burning them out. Partnerships can also provide beneficial technical support to faith-based organizations. On the other hand, faith-based groups face what might be called a "tyranny of requirements" the first time they receive government funds: bookkeeping systems must be in place to ensure that public funds are not used for religious activities; clients must have a real alternative if they choose not to use the services provided by a religious entity; funding agencies may require evaluations conducted by outsiders who do not know the community or understand an organization's work. The support of partners is essential in preparing faith-based organizations for these requirements.

Many faith-based groups do not have sufficient staff or infrastructure to take on projects requiring particular bookkeeping systems or service procedures. Fur-

Ground Rules and Guidling Principles:

As important as developing a common language is establishing ground rules and guiding principles for working together. This allows all partners to explore ideas, work with differences, and keep the process moving.

- Agree to disagree and to hold your differences without walking out on each other.
- Respect differences and validate each other's strengths.
- Be accountable to each other.
- Focus on specific and achievable outcomes.
- Identify small wins, and brainstorm a finite number of measurable outcomes.
- Teamwork means mutual support and mutual accountability.
- Do not leave partners out on a limb with all the responsibility.
- Help each other out.

ther, some churches may be reluctant to open their own financial documents to public scrutiny. Partners can help congregations with infrastructure and staff capabilities: they might develop bookkeeping systems that separate government funds from church funds, create separate accounts for government and church monies, establish a separate nonprofit 501(c)3 entity, or find a fiscal agent to manage the grant funds. Given the serious consequences of poor money management, these issues must be addressed from the beginning.

Strategic Communication

Encourage faith-based leaders to communicate regularly with their congregants regarding their work in the partnership. If leaders move forward without informing their congregations, their congregants may be reluctant to contribute their time or money when called upon; without being included in the partnership process, congregants may have different expectations than leadership regarding both the project and the target group (for example, if the target group is street-identified youth, they may be viewed as bad or dangerous rather than in need of assistance).

The need for communication is true for all partners. Leaders may get caught up in planning and forget to encourage the buy-in of their front-line staff, but systems change can never be effective without the buy-in of individuals responsible for implementation, regardless of whether those individuals are congregants (in a faith-based community) or staff members (in an agency). To encourage buy-in, encourage all partners to visit each other's venues together to speak to congregants and staff members. This presents a model of a partnership with a shared vision

Myths and Realities

Although it is a common belief that faith-based communities provide access to a pool of highly motivated and caring volunteers, research does not support this belief; rather, congregations act on the same fears and biases found in society as a whole.[9] A few highly motivated individuals will be eager to participate, but most participation will be limited to giving money and attending meetings. Most volunteer participation takes place after a plan of action has been adopted and specific roles identified, and outreach is as necessary in recruiting, training, and supporting a congregation's volunteers as it is in establishing the initial partnership.

> *For example, in Philadelphia, part of Amachi's success in developing a volunteer pool of mentors recruited from 42 churches was due to the extensive experience of one partner, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeastern Pennsylvania, in establishing protocols for screening, matching, and supporting volunteers.*[10]

In addition to keeping congregants informed regularly, the collaboration can encourage individuals to volunteer for short-term tasks; this kind of participation encourages voluntarism among a broad range of people, and lets them explore volunteer possibilities with little pressure. Young people at faith-based schools can also be recruited for community service, as can adults who attend local institutions of higher learning or training centers for religious leaders.

Front-line volunteers face many demands, especially in projects that mentor high-risk youth, families in crisis, or prisoners reentering their communities. Volunteers motivated by personal faith or spirituality often ask themselves, "Am I doing enough?" or "What more could I be doing?" *These volunteers need support systems and access to training to avoid burnout.*

Human Frailty: The idealized version of faith-based communities presents them as reservoirs of good people ready to volunteer with love, commitment, and a sense of divine purpose. However, like most people in our society, many people of faith have difficulty finding time for themselves, let alone enough to give to others. They are not immune from fear and self-protection, and are often more comfortable providing help that does not involve intimate contact with the poor and troubled. This in part explains why emergency support (such as food, clothing, and financial assistance) is the most widely reported form of social services provided by all faith-based organizations, along with projects like Habitat for Humanity.[11]

7. IMPORTANT RESEARCH FINDINGS AND OTHER REALITIES

A growing body of research, along with the National Congregations Study of 1998,[12] points to the following general trends to keep in mind while looking for faith-based partners:

- Larger congregations come with a larger pool of people to involve, but many members may not live in the neighborhood and may not have strong connections to neighborhood concerns. However, their size gives them a greater fund-raising capacity and more connections to outside resources than smaller faith-based communities. They are more likely to be involved in some provision of social services.
- Smaller congregations often have less infrastructure and experience with strategic planning and evaluation, but they know the neighborhood and the people in need and bring a passion to their ministry. This is especially true for small storefront and neighborhood-based congregations. These congregations are more likely to require more intensive outreach strategies to establish initial contact.
- Smaller congregations are more reluctant to accept government money, but research shows that "black churches are more likely than any other... to accept public funding for their outreach work."[13] Black congregations are also more likely to participate in social services that require long-term commitments, such as employment, mentoring, and substance abuse prevention.
- Single denomination church service agencies tend to include more religious content in their service programs than do ecumenical coalitions.
- Large mainline Protestant denominations (such as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Lutherans) and theologically more liberal organizations are more likely to be involved in collaborative efforts, to be active in social services in general, to provide long-term services, and to select social ver-

sus religious programs. Of these groups, larger congregations focus on job-training and financial services, while smaller congregations focus on daycare and social services.[14]

- Community size and location also influence the services congregations choose to provide: urban congregations tend to focus on health, mental health, and emergency needs, while suburban congregations focus on childcare programs.[15]

As they do in all communities, tensions exist between theologically more liberal and more conservative congregations, between "religion that places spiritual value on reformist engagement with state and society, and, on the other hand, religion in which the primary spiritual goal is salvation for individuals through religious and moral discipline."[16] The hot political issues of the day (for example, same-sex marriage and the role of women in the clergy, congregation, family, and community) will cause tensions, and differences in worldview (for example, whether social justice or personal transformation is most important in instigating change) are also likely to exist. All partners must understand this from the start and accept these differences rather than allow them to interfere with the work of the partnership. These views are not mutually exclusive, and partnerships should encourage their members to focus on the solutions most suited to their belief systems.

8. IN CLOSING

Working with faith-based groups is a proven way to develop new strategies and resources to support children, youth, and families. These partnerships provide new perspectives on the complex problems facing your community and families, and building relationships between secular and faith-based communities can forge new alliances and open new avenues for achieving your goals.

- Bring on capable, committed leaders respected by both secular and faith communities.
- Maintain frequent and open communication to keep everyone up-to-date.
- Demonstrate the value of partners through inclusion, respect, and transparency in decision-making.
- Agree to outcomes that are realistic and achievable.
- Make sure that the initial expectations of faith-based partners match their existing capacity.
- Offer opportunities to increase their capacity through training, technical support, or funds.
- Establish a structured and well managed administrative component to support all partners.
- Commit to an effective system of accountability with on-going feedback.
- Follow through on promises.
- Appreciate and celebrate small successes along with larger achievements!

CASE STUDIES

1. Ex-Offender Action Network

The faith-based Ex-Offender Action Network (EAN) of Los Angeles County was more than ready to be a full partner in collaborative efforts to help ex-offenders find employment, and to address the root problems that make it difficult for ex-offenders to get and keep jobs. As a result, EAN initiated a partnership with local government agencies.

EAN was created in 2001 as a project of Regional Congregations and Network Organizations (RNCO), a network of small congregations organizing to advocate on social justice issues affecting their communities, such as reentry of ex-offenders and HIV prevention. Ex-offender members of RNCO participated in training on faith-based approaches to research, planning, and leadership, and formed the leadership team of EAN. In 2002 and 2003, they organized ex-offenders and other members of church congregations to advocate for more funding for ex-offender employment services and policy changes to reduce barriers to employment.

Through this advocacy effort, EAN leaders met the staff of the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission (LAHRC) and began looking for ways to work together. LAHRC staff introduced EAN leaders to the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CCJCC) and its Interagency Anti-Gang Task Force. CCJCC leaders were aware that many ex-offender gang members leave prison intending to get out of the violence of gang life but end up returning to it when they cannot find jobs. CCJCC agreed to act as the convener for a partnership of EAN and government agencies that began in June 2004. CCJCC used the forum of the Interagency Anti-Gang Task Force and personal connections to involve the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, Probation Department, and Workforce Investment Board; the California Department of Corrections Paroles Division and Economic Development Department; and the US Attorney's Probation Division.

In the beginning, the collaborative faced many obstacles to working together effectively. For example, EAN leaders and members were not confident that working in partnership with government agencies would strengthen and not weaken their faith-based advocacy on ex-offender issues. On the other hand, government agency partners wanted assurance that the collaborative's work would benefit ex-offenders of all faiths. CCJCC staff facilitated discussions and exchanges of information among partners to build trust and foster better communication.

The collaborative's first project was a Community Reentry Job and Resource Fair held in November 2004 at the First AME Church's Renaissance Center in South Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County community with the largest concentration of ex-offender residents. Partners worked together on outreach to ex-offenders, recruitment of employers and service providers, and logistics for the fair. They pooled in-kind resources and funds to make the fair happen. The partners set what they considered ambitious but realistic goals for the event: 300 ex-offenders would have access to 10 employers and 10 service providers.

Over 700 ex-offenders ranging in age from 16 to 66, 20 employers, and 12 service providers participated. The Los Angeles Fire Department joined the collaborative after a fire marshal responded to the site because of overcrowding.

Employers represented small and medium sized locally owned businesses, Starbucks, local government agencies, and community organizations. One local food service business, Pollo Campero, hired six ex-offenders on the spot and scheduled interviews with 40 more. Ex-offenders also participated in orientation sessions on using Los Angeles County and City WorkSource Centers. Over 100 ex-offenders registered for WorkSource Center services. Community organizations provided information on and referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Additionally, the fair featured workshops on expungement of criminal records and job preparedness, as well as testimonials from ex-offenders who are now successfully employed.

Partners are now planning a series of Community Reentry Job and Resource Fairs in other Los Angeles County communities where large numbers of ex-offenders live. The collaborative will reach out to a new faith-based partner in each of those communities. The collaborative is also planning a symposium for business owners on the local, state, and federal tax incentives and utility rate reductions available to companies that hire ex-offenders, and is working to involve business partners.

Contact:
Ex-Offender Action Network
Ernest Austin, Lead Organizer
4701 South Central Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90011
Phone: 323-238-0445
E-mail: eaustin@lametro.org

INTERAGENCY STEERING COMMITTEE

The Interagency Steering Committee (ISC) of Imperial County, California has worked together since 1989 to create, improve, and expand effective services for children, youth, and families in this isolated desert region on the US border with Mexico. During their first 10 years of working together, ISC members represented local education agencies, county and city departments, colleges, and the small number of nonprofit organizations operating in this rural area.

In 1999, partners made it a priority to engage faith-based organizations. The Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE) was acquainted with leaders of Youth for Christ, a campus ministry, because both groups provided violence and substance abuse prevention and early intervention services in middle schools and high schools. ICOE staff members asked Youth for Christ leaders to join a collaborative gang outreach effort, and offered funds from an OJJDP grant to support the faith-based group's participation.

After repeated efforts to get a response, OJJDP set a deadline for a plan specifying partners and budget allocations. The deadline passed without an answer from Youth for Christ. ISC leaders talked with OJJDP about the importance of waiting for a response for Youth for Christ because of group members' ability to build trust and rapport with gang-involved youth.

After what seemed like a long wait to the government agencies and yet a short time to Youth for Christ members, the group decided to join the collaborative effort and worked effectively to reach youth gang members. The leader of Youth for Christ also became an active member of the ISC and recruited representatives of other faith-based organizations.

Contact:
Imperial County Office of Education
1398 Sperber Road
El Centro, CA 92243
Phone: 760-312-6498
E-mail: rbrogan@icoe.org

2. Truck Driving School Partnership

This is a reminder that listening closely to the dreams of others can bring together the right mix of resources and skills to make particularly effective partnerships possible. It is also a reminder of the important roles individual people play as leaders, communicators, and connectors in successful partnerships. They are the ones who welcome conversations about potential partnerships and serve as trusted go-betweens: in short, identifying and involving your community's connectors can lead to the making of small miracles.

Some would say it was serendipity; others would say it was prayer. By 2003, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin Counties had spent seven years looking for a large enough site to launch a truck driving school in San Francisco, a city where available real estate is hard to come by and even more difficult to afford.

In the southeast section of town, in the heart of the African-American community, True Hope Church of God In Christ was taking to heart its mission to help the most disadvantaged. Ex-prisoners were returning to this impoverished community with little hope for jobs, and the church leadership was exploring ways to meet this need. The church had a large piece of undeveloped land on their property, but not much money or experience in raising funds through grant writing.

Meanwhile, in 2002, a collaborative that included Goodwill launched a small diversion employment pilot project called "Street to Work." In 2003, as part of the initiative to develop targeted job training, a sector analysis identified the local industries most open to hiring ex-prisoners; among the findings was truck driving.

One staff member involved in the project is a Latino who grew up on the streets; he likes to joke that he has a PhD in Streetology. His talent is talking and making connections, and he knows a lot of people in all walks of life in the city: in short, he is a natural for bringing about collaboration. In the course of his "travels," he came to realize that Goodwill and True Hope had a common mission, and that each had resources that could help the other. The two groups did not know each other and appeared to have no connection to each other, but he used his personal relationships with key people in both institutions to bring strangers together and initiate change.

Because the right people got together, a new truck driving school opened its doors in 2004 in a violence-plagued neighborhood, a school whose priority is to serve the most disenfranchised, giving special attention to parents. The first class of 10 men and one woman, all African Americans from the target neighborhood, got their permits within three weeks of enrolling, ready to start on-the-road training. The success does not end there: the new partners are now working on another collaboration that includes the San Francisco Housing Authority and the Tenants Association from one of the area's most blighted housing developments.

This partnership is not just about an exchange of land for training slots. Rather, it is also about creating a support system around the participants and their families and within the larger community. It is about leveraging skills and resources to take a vision and make it reality. And it is about key community institutions coming together because of one individual who paid attention and made the first and most critical connections happen.

Contact:
Project Director, Truck Driving School
Goodwill Career Services
1500 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone: 415-575-2126
Website: http://www.sfgoodwill.org

3. Masjid Al-Islam

Masjid Al-Islam, located in the Dwight neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut, interprets the teachings of the Quran for today's reality. Motivated by faith, they have extended their resources to improve the lives of their neighbors; in fact, the City of New Haven cited Masjid Al-Islam in the Greenwood Street District plan as a positive force for community stabilization. To this end, they have partnered with local residents, the Hospital of Saint Raphael (across the street from the Masjid), and the City of New Haven in several successful neighborhood collaborations; in particular, they have:

- participated in the establishment of a fully functioning Community Block Watch (#311), which meets monthly, for the purposes of encouraging positive community development, fighting crime and blight, and helping to plan the neighborhood's future;
- worked with neighbors, the Hospital of Saint Raphael, and the local police department to eliminate open illegal drug trafficking in the area;
- cooperated with residents, area institutions, the Hospital of St. Raphael, and the City of New Haven's Livable Cities Initiative to develop the Greenwood Street District planning document, which provides guidelines for future development in the neighborhood;
- formed an informal partnership with the City of New Haven and the Hospital of St. Raphael for the purpose of developing plans for the rehabilitation of properties at 608, 610, and 620 George Street, and 53 Gilbert Avenue.
- organized and cooperated with numerous neighborhood clean-ups for both the area immediately surrounding the Masjid and the larger community;
- encouraged stabilization of the neighborhood by urging Muslim families to move into the area as homeowners and tenants;
- assisted in the reduction of crime and negative activities by holding congregational prayer seven days each week, as well as educational and social programs at various times throughout the week;
- encouraged Muslims to invest in more than a half million dollars worth of property in the area surrounding the Masjid.

Because Islamic faith communities like Masjid al-Islam are connected to some of the most disenfranchised members of our communities, they can be valuable partners in working to improve the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in the neighborhoods in which they have their mosques.

Contact:
Imam Dawood Yaseen
Masjid al-Islam
624 George Street
New Haven, CT 06511
Phone: 203-777-8004

RESOURCES

Annie E. Casey Foundation *(http://www.aecf.org)*
The Annie E. Casey Foundation works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. The Foundation provides information regarding faith-based and family initiatives and findings.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) *(http://cadca.org)*
CADCA addresses the role of the faith community in designing prevention initiatives dealing with substance use. CADCA's mission is to build and strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create safe, healthy, and drug-free communities. The organization supports its members with technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies and marketing programs, conferences, and special events.

FASTEN: Faith and Service Technical Education Network *(http://www.fasten-network.org)*
FASTEN offers informational resources and networking opportunities to faith-based practitioners, private philanthropies, and public administrators who seek to collaborate effectively to renew urban communities. FASTEN actively identifies best practices in faith-based services and multi-sector collaboration, and produces and disseminates educational materials for practitioners in the public and private sectors. Their motto: "Sharing Knowledge, Strengthening Connections and Improving Outcomes."

Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) *(http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org)*
IAF is non-ideological and strictly non-partisan, but proudly, publicly, and persistently political. IAF builds a political base within society's rich and complex third sector – the sector of voluntary institutions that includes religious congregations, labor locals, homeowner groups, recovery groups, parents' associations, settlement houses, immigrant societies, schools, seminaries, orders of men and women religious, and others. And then the leaders use that base at times to compete with, at times to confront, and at times to cooperate with leaders in the public and private sectors. The current generation of IAF

organizations began in the mid-1970s. Since then, 52 local organizations have emerged in regional clusters:

- Twelve organizations in the northeastern cities and counties between Boston and Washington, DC
- Five organizations in the south and near south
- Seven organizations in the midwest in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Nebraska
- Twenty organizations in the southwestern states of Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico
- Four organizations in California
- Four organizations in the northwest, in Oregon and Washington

Institute for Community Peace (ICP) *(http://www.instituteforcommunitypeace.org)*
ICP promotes a safe, healthy, and peaceful nation by mobilizing community resources and leadership. ICP is a partnership among public and private grantmakers and experts in violence prevention and community collaboration that provides support and resources to community collaborations to prevent violence and promote peace with strategies of citizen engagement and community empowerment.

PICO National Network *(http://www.piconetwork.org)*
PICO builds community organizations based on religious congregations, schools, and community centers, which are often the only stable civic gathering places in many neighborhoods. PICO helps congregations identify and solve local neighborhood issues before addressing broader issues at a city, state, or national level. As a result, PICO federations are deeply rooted in local communities. PICO federations are independent nonprofit organizations made up of religious congregations, schools, and neighborhood institutions. Today PICO has 50 affiliated federations working in 150 cities and towns and 17 states. More than one million families and one thousand congregations from 50 different denominations and faiths participate in PICO.

Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) *(http://www.ppv.org)*
P/PV is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs, and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. In carrying out this mission, P/PV works with philanthropies and the public. P/PV's work addresses a wide range of critical social issues, and involves a varied group of sectors and institutions to assist policymakers, funders, and communities in setting priorities and identifying realistic opportunities for advancing promising or proven policies and practices. P/PV has numerous publications regarding the work of faith-based groups within youth initiatives across the country.

The Religious Movements Homepage Project @ The University of Virginia
(http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/profiles/profiles.htm)
This website provides profiles of more than 200 religious movements and offers basic demographic and background information, a summary of beliefs, discussion of controversial issues (when appropriate), links to important websites about each group, and select print bibliographies. In addition, it provides an index with links to hundreds of religious groups not profiled on this site.

Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy *(http://www.religionandsocial-policy.org)*
The Roundtable conducts in-depth nationwide research on the role and efficacy of faith-based social service programs. Its goal is to fill broad gaps in knowledge about the relative effectiveness and capacity of faith-based services, and the constitutional issues involved in public funding. The Roundtable's independent and non-partisan research seeks to contribute to a more informed debate on this important issue among policymakers, stakeholders, journalists, and the public.

White House Office on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI)
(http://www.fbci.gov)
FBCI provides comprehensive funding, regulatory, and technical assistance information regarding federal initiatives located in seven federal agencies with a goal "to make sure that grassroots leaders can compete on an equal footing for federal dollars, receive greater private support, and face fewer bureaucratic barriers."

Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives -- 2003 *(http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/us/us_faith.html)*
This working group comprised of leaders from civil liberties and religious groups – many of whom have frequently clashed publicly and in the courts over church-state and "charitable choice" issues – released 38 joint recommendations for expanding and strengthening the role of faith-based and community organizations in the delivery of social services to America's neediest citizens.

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