

Presentation of Workshop Summaries

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After the individual workshops met, the facilitators and participants reconvened in a plenary session to present their major findings, the themes they had identified as important, and their recommendations for future action.

1. Capacity Building among Community-Based Organizations Workshop

The participants in this workshop stressed two important themes from their morning session. They emphasized that associations should focus on specific projects in their fund-raising efforts because the projects can be used as important marketing tools. They noted that donors are attracted to specific target issues rather than vague ideals, and if an NGO can point to past successes, then they are more likely to gain financial support for projects in the future. The associations would have much more leverage in fund-raising through championing specific projects. The second issue they highlighted was the importance of networking among the NGOs. Inter-group collaboration can be an important way to increase capacity to host large events, to share ideas about fund-raising, and to troubleshoot problems in building capacity.

2. Inter-NGO Collaboration Workshop

The participants in this workshop stressed a number of important points. First, they noted that while it is fine to start out as a small group, it is very important for associations and NGOs to think about eventual expansion to address issues that are important to a wide range of organizations and individuals in the African immigrant community. They suggested that cultural events and promotional events are a good place for people to sell and trade ideas. As in the first workshop, the participants noted that there is strength in unity, and that Africans in the US should put “tribal” differences aside and focus on building an inclusive community. Also like the first group, this workshop emphasized the importance of networking among NGOs, and suggested that they make a more formal effort to meet and exchange ideas; an umbrella organization was suggested. Finally, the participants explained that collaboration could take place on many levels. First, collaboration can take place through individuals. They mentioned that many immigrants often do not trust one another, and it might be beneficial to have an event where people can air such concerns as individuals in an open forum. Second, collaboration can take place through visiting other NGOs and sharing ideas that way. The third level of collaboration would be an umbrella organization that could eventually affect policy.

3. Networking with Political Officials and Other Communities Workshop

The participants from this workshop said they focused on two themes in their session: what levels of government associations should approach, and how to deal with problems of naturalization. First, they suggested that associations think about approaching government on the local level, for example the mayor's office and city council members. Then, they said that since the associations might have problems gaining leverage since they are generally non-voting populations, NGOs might think about joining or collaborating with other civic groups that have more power, for example, African-American organizations. To close, they suggested that NGOs might want to address issues of naturalization with government officials.

4. Transnational Networking

The final workshop brought some new issues to the floor as it focused specifically on issues related to Africa rather than the African community. They noted that transnational networking could provide insight to the NGOs on issues such as immigration status. They suggested that associations get involved with political parties on the African continent that have representatives in the US, but noted that they should be aware of different opinions and ideologies they might encounter. They mentioned that ethnicity is still a problem, and many people tend to organize on ethnic lines. The workshop participants made a number of recommendations to the NGOs. First, they said that a center is needed where people can meet to share information. Second, they suggested creating an organization that aimed to help people who would like to open businesses; a suggestion was made to involve local business leaders who might like to share their experience. Third, they suggested developing a website with a database of organizations that work in specific domains, for example, with gender issues. Next, they noted that money being sent back to Africa must be accounted for in some way. Finally, they stressed the importance of disseminating information in Africa so people there will know who to contact in the US and how to do so.