

## **Formation of Faith-based Cross-sector Partnerships: A Game Changing Collaboration**

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Faith-based and cross-sector partnerships offer unique opportunities to shore up faith-based organizations' capacity to meet the needs of low-income families. With the recent cutbacks in federal and state funding for social programs that support needy families, faith-based organizations have increasingly tried to fill this void. However, many faith-based organizations are small and lack sufficient financial capacity to deal with the increases in need. This research project focused on why and how cross-sector partnerships are formed between faith-based and secular institutions. Through participant observation, interviews and examination of secondary data, and Grounded Theory and Constant Comparison method of analysis a framework for forming faith-based, cross-sectored partnership was developed. Results indicate the most salient factors that affect the formation of these partnerships: faith-based social mission, partnership initiator, assessment of qualification, mission overlap, and partnership benefit.

*Key Words:* faith-based, community development, cross-sector, partnerships, formation, religion

### **Introduction**

#### ***Benefits of Faith-Based Organizations Engaged in Community Development***

Since the 2008 economic downturn and the austerity budgets of many local, state, and the federal government (Orszag, 2010), many policy leaders and planners are looking for innovative ways to address poverty, inequality, and other social ills in the most efficient and cost effective manner (Bane, 2008, Hayden, 2002). As planners gauge the most effective way to solve social issues efficiently, collaborations and engagements with faith-based institutions will be a key strategy within the broader plan as many policy makers are looking towards partnerships with faith-based organizations to fill the gap (Coats, 2001, Institute for Educational Leadership, n.d, UNFPA, 2009, Vidal, 2001). Both policy makers and academics have touted faith-based organizations as the next generation of community development organizations because of their potential to generate change in their communities (Cnaan, Wineburg, and Boodie, 1999; DiIulio, 2000; Coats, 2001; Wineburg, 2001). Such organizations have the ability to leverage tithes for community development activities to provide a variety of services including housing,

economic development, social services, education, health services, community organizing, youth development, and senior citizen services (Botchwey, 2007).

Faith-based organizations have collaborated with cross-sector partners to provide larger-scale social services, health screenings, job training, shelters, affordable housing, to name a few (Hayden, 2002). However, to partner effectively with faith-based organizations non-religious organizations and community development professionals, municipal planners, and business elite need to understand faith-based organizations' mission, resource capacity, and desired benefits. While cross-sector partnerships can be a great way for small to mid-sized faith-based organizations to engage in community development, research is sparse as to what conditions form these partnerships.

This research study investigated why and how faith-based organizations build partnerships with cross-sector organizations. First a literature review on the formation of partnerships was performed examining three cases of haphazardly formed partnership and their consequences. Next the reader is introduced to a framework for the development of successful faith-based cross-sector partnerships through two case studies: African American Baptist

Church partnered with Fighting Against Hunger to deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to community residents and a three-way collaboration between Ministers for Education and Economic Development (MEED), the Bankers' Council, and J. J. Workforce Development to arrange a Workforce Development and Financial Education program. Finally a few recommendations on how to proliferate faith-based cross-sector partnerships are offered.

## Literature Review

Hayden (2002) defined faith-based organizations as “(1) congregations; (2) national networks, which include national denominations, their social service arms . . . and networks of related organizations; and (3) freestanding religious organizations (which are incorporated separately from congregations and national networks, but have a religious base)” (p. 7). Contrary, Botchwey (2007) limited its definition to religious organizations with independent 501 (c) 3 organizations. For the purposes of this research, Hayden's (2002) definition is used because it reflects a diverse range of faith-based organizations. Cross-sector partners, on the other hand, could include public or private, non-profit or for-profit, secular or faith-based agencies and organizations. In terms of this research study, cross-sector partners are the non-faith-based organizations (i.e., Fighting Against Hunger, Bankers Council, and J.J. Workforce Development Agency). Partnerships are defined as two or more agencies or organizations working together toward a common goal “through mutually agreed division of labor” (Compassion Capital Fund National Resource Center, n.d., p. 4).

Partnership formation stage and partnership development stage have often been conflated (Gray, 1989); however, others argue that partnership formation should be seen as a distinct and separate stage from partnership development (Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2010) because each stage has its own key factors that must be assessed before the partnership receives a green light. Specifically, in the partnership formation stage, the potential partnership should be assessed to determine if it has transformative capacity. If there are gaps in capacity, clear mis-alignments in values or motives as well as a history that is marked by a lack of trust, these should be considered red flags that the partnership should not form because it will not result in transformative social change. Similarly, Erie, Kogan, and MacKenzie (2010) found that when there is only the assumption that organizations have the same motives and intentions, the principal organization can open

itself up to agency loss, or a deviation from principle objectives.

In a public-private partnership in San Diego, Erie, Kogan, and MacKenzie (2010) uncovered the pitfall of engaging in a partnership where values or motives were not shared. In the redevelopment of Petco Park by the San Diego government, the private partner reaped the benefits and the city of San Diego suffered because the private partner did not share the same convictions that the public sector carried. The private partner purpose was to maximize its profits at the expense of the number of affordable units that needed to be developed. The Petco Park example supports Andrews and Entwistle (2010) research that it is more efficient, effective, and equitable for the public sector to partner with other agencies within the public sector because of shared similar motives.

However, a partnership with divergent outcomes can still work if they produce a mutual benefit to both partners. For example, Rio Tinto, a coal developer, and Earthwatch, a non-profit concerned with environmental sustainability, created a symbiotic relationship because Rio Tinto's motivation was to improve their company's reputation and had funding available to support Earthwatch's mission. By developing a cross-sector partnership, they were able to improve the status of both organizations. Earthwatch, through operations financing from Rio Tinto, enhanced its standing in the sustainable environment field and Rio Tinto was able to improve its public image through its association with Earthwatch (Erie, Kogan, MacKenzie, 2010)

Nonetheless even when cross-sector partnerships have a mutual goal, tensions can develop causing the partnerships to fail. In the case of an university and community partnership, two university researchers were contracted to produce a needs assessment of a community for two community-based organization (CBO), a turf war developed and eventually causing the partnership to end because the researchers put forth an idea for the university and CBOs to do an immediate project. However, the question of which entity had the right to implement change for the community had not been addressed at the start of the partnership and the CBOs did not want the university to implement any of the action steps (Jagannathan, Camasso, Mend, Varela, and Shah, 2011),

The examples previously given were of public-private partnerships, business-non-profit partnership, and university-community partnerships that worked or faltered. Few research studies focus on the unique characteristics of successful faith-based and cross-sector partnerships. Why and how these partnerships are initiated and the groundwork needed before a partnership is developed is offered so that an

opportunity for broader faith-based participation in community development is realized.

## **Methods**

This is an exploratory, qualitative research project that examined why and how faith-based organizations build cross-sector partnerships. This research specifically examined small- to medium-sized African American faith-based organizations with community and economic development partnerships with secular institutions. In this section, I will describe how the community areas and partnerships were chosen.

### *Identification of Community Areas*

The target population for this study consisted of predominately small- to medium-sized African American faith-based partnerships located in suburban communities. Small- to medium-sized faith-based organizations were chosen because they would have an incentive to partner because they may lack the capacity of mega-churches. African American faith-based organizations have long been strong drivers of community and economic development for low-income neighborhoods thus examining their efforts would assist other faith-based organizations that are considering entering this realm.

Suburban communities were chosen because the majority of the research to date has primarily focused on faith-based organizations in major urban cities (Reese and Shields, 1999; Owens, 2006; Monsma, 2006; Cnaan, Boddie, McGrew, and King, 2006), many of which have a strong mayoral presence that compels various institutions (governmental and non-governmental organizations) to work together. Local suburban governments tend to be less influential, and their power is more fragmented in comparison to major urban cities due to separately elected library, school and park districts boards, rather than appointees by the mayor. Because of this, it is more critical for partnerships and collaborations to develop among these various entities while offering environments of more choice and horizontal negotiation.

Suburban communities located South (n = 53), near South (n = 10) and West (n = 42) in the 6 counties surrounding Chicago, IL, with a population of 50% or more African American residents were selected. The U.S. Census bureau provided critical community-level statistics - population size, percentage African American, median income, educational attainment, percentage of individual poverty, and median home price, which were compared to form similar communities groups.

Similar communities were sought so that the macro-context of each partnership was similar. Those communities with at least a double-digit percentage of poverty in 2000—Calumet City, Maywood, Harvey, Phoenix, and Robbins, were further selected for investigation because poverty is an indicator of the economic health of a community and that a crisis in the economic environment and limited resources might spur collaborations between groups.

### *Identification of Churches*

For these five community areas, the local churches were identified through various means: on official municipality's website, the Mayor's office, and the Chamber of Commerce's business directory. They had to be an African American faith-based organization (with 50% or more of its membership identifying as African American), with a membership less than 1,000. These organizations stood to gain more from partnerships than organizations with memberships over 1,000, which may have enough resources to engage in large-scale community and economic development activities alone.

### *Identification of Partnerships and Cases*

A questionnaire was mailed to each church pastor requesting participation. Follow-up phone calls were made to all the churches yielding 3 completed surveys out of 142 churches. Of those 3 church respondents, one was African American Baptist Church. The pastor of African American Baptist Church, its leaders, and members of its congregation agreed to participate in an examination of their food partnership. To locate additional partnerships for inclusion in the study, a second round of phone calls were placed to the original 142 churches. This yielded a ministerial group and their partners that agreed to participate in the study.

### *Data Collection*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three levels of partnership stakeholders: (1) leadership (i.e., pastors, executive directors, bankers, etc.), (2) support staff and volunteers, and (3) members of faith-based organization and/or recipients of community development activities. The interviews varied in length of time from 1 hour to 2 hours. Secondary data such as meeting minutes, email correspondence, development proposal and budget were collected to triangulate the interview data. To understand the dynamics within the partnerships, partnership meetings were audio recorded over a period of one year (April 2010-May

2011). All qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using HyperRESEARCH,<sup>1</sup> a qualitative data analysis tool that allows coding of the narratives.

**Data Analysis**

This study’s overarching goal was to formulate a substantive theory around the emergence of faith-based cross-sector partnerships. To aid in theory development, Glaser and Strauss (1999) Grounded Theory and the constant comparative method were used to analyze the data.

**Participants**

Sixteen participants including church leadership (i.e., pastors, executive directors, bankers), support staff,

volunteers, congregation members, and recipients of community development activities were interviewed for this project.

**Community demographics and partnership descriptions**

Calumet City and Harvey are both south suburban communities of Chicago with an African American population over 50% since the 2000 Census collection. Population counts respectively in Calumet City and Harvey were 37,042 and 25,282 (Census, 2010) and their poverty rates for the year 2010 were 21% and 33.2% (see Table 1). As a comparison, 2010 poverty rate for the City of Chicago was 21.4%, the state of Illinois was 13.1%, and nationally it was 14.3%.

Table I: Community Statistics

	Calumet City	Harvey
Pop (2000)	39071	30000
Pop (2010)	37042	25282
% Change	-5.2	-15.7
% Af. Am (2000)	52.9	79.6
% Af. Am (2010)	70.6	75.8
Difference	17.7	-3.8
% Ind. Pov (2000)	12.2	21.7
% Ind. Pov (2010)	21	33.2
Difference	8.8	11.5

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Data [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

**Case I: Delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables**

African American Baptist Church (AABC) is working with Fighting Against Hunger (FAH) to deliver fresh produce to families. AABC has been in the community for over 50 years and has a congregation size of 45 to 50 people. The leadership of the church is comprised of 1 pastor, 2 deacons, and 1 deacon-in-training. FAH is a non-profit food distribution organization with 650 sites. The church has partnered with FAH for 4 years to distribute fresh produce to communities in its catchment area once a month. While FAH provides the food, AABC provides the space (i.e., church parking lot or building depending on weather) and the volunteers<sup>2</sup>. There are no income requirement or geographical restrictions on who can receive food.

**Case II: Financial education and workforce development**

The second faith-based and secular partnership is between the Ministers for Education and Economic

Development (MEED), the Bankers’ Council, and J. J. Workforce Development Agency for job training and financial education programs. The ministerial group has been in existence since the 1960s originally as an advocacy group, but currently operating as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit. Its mission is to become a stronger driver of economic development for the community. The Bankers’ Council is comprised of three banks that addresses all the funding requests the various banks received from community organizations. J.J. Workforce Development Agency has been in operation for over 30 years and has a long and established track record in its field of workforce development.

The goal of this tripod partnership between MEED, Bankers Council, and J.J. Workforce Development is to produce a workforce development program and financial education program that increases employment in the south suburbs and lending and banking opportunities for the banks. Each partner brought different resources into the collaboration. MEED provided their partners with access to populations via their churches and media

outlets, legitimacy and long-standing trust within their communities, and intimate knowledge of the community. Bankers Council brought financial capital, physical space to host meetings, and expertise on banking products. J. J. Workforce Development brought workforce development expertise. The outcomes projected were 100 people placed in sustainable jobs, 100 applicants referred for educational or vocational training, 300 for employment services. Not only would the outcomes help eliminate poverty in the communities, but also provide the banks with a larger pool of eligible clients.

## Results

### *Framework for Faith-based Cross-sector Partnership*

Utilizing Grounded Theory and the constant comparative method, key constructs emerged as foundational factors for the establishment of a successful faith-based partnership: progressive faith-based social mission, partnership initiator, assessment of qualifications, mission overlap, and potential benefit to each partner. Figure 1 represents this emergent framework and helps to conceptualize the key components needed to begin a cross-sector partnership with faith-based organizations and in the following paragraphs offer a discussion of the framework.



Figure 1: Faith-based-Cross Sector Partnership Initiation Conceptual Framework

### *Faith-based Social Mission*

The nature of faith-based organizations' social missions or theologies varies. Theology is "that ongoing activity of the whole church that aims at clarifying what 'gospel' must mean here and now" (Hall, 2003, p. 177). In other words, it is that manifestation of biblical faith in the context of modern society. This manifestation includes faith-based organizations social mission. Many faith-based organizations have a social mission that originates from the Biblical text of Matthew 25:35-40, which

admonishes believers to feed, clothe, shelter, care for, and visit those who are less fortunate (i.e., hungry, naked, homeless, sick, and incarcerated, respectively). The operation of soup kitchens, clothing drives, temporary shelters, bedside visits, and prison ministries executes this mandate. A more progressive agenda might include advocacy for those same populations at the local, state, and national level, providing permanent affordable housing, job training, operating a school, opening a credit union or other alternative banking system, teaching gardening and urban farming skills, and protesting the high

incarceration rates of young African American and Latino men among other things.

Successful cross-sector partners understand the capacity in which faith-based organization execute their social mission and their role in the community and look for partnership that will to compliment their services and resources. If a faith-based organization does not view their role in the community as going substantially beyond promoting their religious beliefs, they might not serve as an ideal partner. One participant noted that the theology of the pastor or church leader affected the actions of the church:

I would say much of it depends on the pastor. And what I would say is the pastor's theological understanding. I think the pastor's theology will be important as to what they [the church] get involved in

because I find that some pastors are completely divorced from any kind of social ministry. They do not think it is important. They do not think that it is valid. So I think the first thing is the pastor's theological understanding. I think it will dictate, determine, and drive what they get involved in. (Interview church leader A, 07.22.10).

**Partnership Initiator**

Partnerships were more likely to form when intentional relationships were developed and maintained between same-sector and cross-sector organizations and institutions. Three types of partnerships initiators were derived (see Table 2).

Table II: Typology of Partnership Initiator

Type of Partnership Initiator	Influential	Member of Partnership
Networker	Yes	Yes
Broker	Yes/No	No
Convener	Yes	Yes

A networker is a person who builds intentional relationships with influential people including community groups, fire, police, schools, mayors, policy makers, etc. and who is constantly seeking opportunities to partner with them on mutually beneficial initiatives or projects. This individual is a part of the social service fabric and leverages those connections and ties. One pastor describes how he maintained his relationship with the mayor,

The relationship [with the mayor] is at a point where I will actually go and just stop to see if I can get in . . . You know, I just stopped to say hi or I would call . . . so I am intentional about working these relationships. (Interview church leader A, 07.22.10)

A broker is a person who brings together unknown partners. This individual is not a part of the partnership, but he or she serves as a conduit or third party that connects potential partners together, is knowledgeable about the aims, goals, or mission of a diverse set of actors and is in a prime position to connect actors across sectors. When participants were asked to describe how their partnership formed, the intervention of a broker was revealed. The formation of the partnership between the food pantry and the church occurred because the city's mayor made a referral, "He [representative of the food pantry] had apparently contacted the Mayor, and the Mayor sent him here" (Interview with church leader A, 07.22.10).

A convener is an influential person and an integral part of the partnership that commands the respect of those in his or her respective field and is able to corral colleagues within his/her field to the partnership table. For example, one of the lead bankers was an influential convener for the formation of the Bankers' Council. This individual brought together various bankers to the table because of her relationship with each of the bankers (Interview with banker A, 01.30.11). This typology distinguishes the various functions of the individual who are able to coordinate partnership formation. After establishing an initial connection, partners get to know one another and foster their relationship and determine what resources each may bring to the partnership.

**Mission Overlap**

Mission overlap or mission fit speaks to how well the faith-based organization's and the cross-sector partner's ideologies, goals, and interactions with the community are similar or different. Missions that are identical or complementary produce successful partnerships. AABC has a broader goal to share its religious beliefs with people by community outreach services, and their social mission includes feeding the hungry. AABC's mission complimented the FAH's mission of mobilizing the community to give access to healthy food and help alleviate hunger for those in need.

MEED's mission and goals completely overlap with that of the Banker's Council. MEED's primary objectives focus on education and economic development having facilitated financial education workshops in the past. The Bankers' Council wanted to partner with an organization to host financial education and workforce development on a larger scale. The addition of J. J. Workforce Development to the partnership was advantageous because their area of expertise was workforce development, which satisfied Banker's Council objectives.

### *Assessment of Qualification*

There were specific qualifications that all of the organizations considered when deciding whether to partner with one another. Faith-based organizations weighed authenticity, level of funding, and commitment to building community heavily. Whereas cross-sector partners emphasized capacity, credentials/expertise, influence, knowledge, and reputation more.

Table III: Assessment of Qualifications

Faith-based organizations	Authenticity Funding Commitment to building community
Cross-sector organizations	Capacity Credentials/Expertise Influence Knowledge Reputation

*Authenticity.* Faith-based organizations desire to spread their religious beliefs and convictions and their outreach efforts often serve double duty. One goal is to fellowship with residents, find out how their lives are going, celebrate their accomplishments, mourn their losses, and build community through conversation. One church member discusses the challenge of this dual role:

People come and take advantage of the activity and we want that, but we, well just got to get to working us to draw them on a more permanent basis. . . And not just so that we have numbers in the church, but that we are building Christ's kingdom. (Interview with church member A, 08.29.10).

Another goal is to share their faith or religious beliefs with those in the community and invite them to become members of the church. Given this function of a church, it is not surprising for church leaders to select a cross-sector partner that allows the church to be authentically a religious body as expressed by this church leader,

"So for me when I have to go out and do things within the community or partnership with someone I, the one thing I look at is letting the church be who we are" (Interview with church leader B, 07.23.10).

*Funding.* Faith-based organizations look for cross-sector partners with financial capital to bring resources to the table that they do not have. One faith-based leader highlighted this necessity:

Yeah, that is what it is almost like in a poor community. A poor man cannot help a poor man.

Somebody has got to have some money. So in partnering that is part of the partnership to look for groups of peoples, whether they be a board member or a business man who has some resources that they brings to the table. (Interview with church leader C, 11.10.10).

*Commitment to building community.* The character of the partner organization is a matter of major concern also when deciding on whether to partner. A partners' commitment to the community is a valuable attribute that faith-based organizations highly value. One church leader stated, "Well we are looking for organizations that certainly have parallel to what our community is about. Organizations who are serious[ly] working within the community and have the goal to upgrade the community . . ." (Interview with church leader C, 09.20.10).

Another religious leader stated that "As long as the commitment of the person that we partner with is about building the community . . ." (Interview with church leader B, 07.23.10) they are satisfied with the partnership.

The non-tangible characteristics of a cross-sector partner can be just as influential to partnership formation. While commitment to building community is not antithetical to any partnership formation, it is important to emphasize why it is critical for faith-based organizations to select the right cross-sector organizations. Many churches, especially in African American communities, have a long and established history of being an anchor

institution in its communities. It is where people in need turn to for help. Given this reputation, churches would be very reluctant to partner with any organization that could potentially exploit the community.

Cross-sector partners valued slightly different characteristics when it came to assessing potential faith-based partners. Capacity, credentials/expertise, influence, knowledge, and reputation were their primary key components.

*Capacity.* Cross-sector partners want to know that their partner has the capacity to carry out the project. Capacity, in terms of a diversified funding stream, staffing, and equipment, is critical to carry out a project to completion.

And it [their credentials] lends itself to how legitimate the organization is and it lends itself to how much access they will have to other funds because you want to diversify your funding sources. You don't want to just rely on the banks. We want to feel comfortable that you are not just relying on our community dollars to run your program. We want to know that you are out also fundraising and also grant writing and making sure that all of those things are taking place. (Interview with Banker B, 09.24.10)

We were asked to get involved cause we already have a lot of what you [MEED] are trying to build and we did not want to reinvent the wheel . . . We are not a start-up agency, we are not trying to get an office, we are not trying to provide computers; we already have it. (Partnership meeting, non-profit member A, 06.30.10).

*Credentials/ Expertise.* Cross-sector organizations were concerned about the credentials and expertise of potential partner organizations. They wanted their faith-based partners to have already developed a strong track record and expertise in the service delivery area of the program or project because these cross-sector partners wanted some assurance of a successful outcome and to know that their investment was well spent. "In order for the banks to say that we are going to give you money you have to prove in paper, in records, in results historical . . ." (Partnership meeting, banker A, 07.22.10).

*Knowledge.* Intimate knowledge of the community and problem domain is an asset because it is in a position to articulate the problem domain to the partner that does not have such knowledge as expressed by one banker,

You know, I think we are looking for someone who, ultimately I would say we are looking for an organization that have been around, I would not say in existence for a long time, but they know and are aware of the problems in those communities. And they are at the forefront of addressing those whether it is through federal subsidies programs that are in

place, but they can really crystallize it and give and opinion about what is going on in those communities. (Interview banker B, 09.24.10).

*Influence.* Influence in this case is conceptualized as ability to leverage power, position, reputation, credibility, and trustworthiness to attract stakeholders to participate in the program created.

Some of the other factors that we look at besides having a history and being established is what is your influence? We look for influence because if you have no influence that means that those dollars don't go where they need to . . . (Interview banker A, 01.30.11).

This trait would be very valuable to a partner organization that has not built rapport or established trust within the target population.

*Reputation.* The value of a good reputation is that partnerships can form through a referral of another community group or institution, if the partner has a good track record of getting things done.

So what happens is that if something happens or something they want to be done or they want to involve the church, I can tell you 9 times out of 10 it is something that is going to end up on our door step. . . we do not go outside looking for partnerships at all. People come to us. It is like pitching an idea, if someone wants our involvement; we heard that you all can get it done. Give us some time, we will think about it, and lets see what we can do and boom, let it happen. (Interview, church leader B, 07.23.10)

The value of a good reputation is that one does not have to seek out partners they will seek you out.

### ***Benefits to Partners***

Both cross-sector and faith-based organizations have underlying rationale for engaging in partnerships than just producing a benefit to the community. They expect to benefit for their participation in a partnership. A mutually beneficial agreement is key factor to partnership formation (Austin 2000; Ivery, 2007; Mirafteb, 2004). Faith-based organizations must be adamant about making sure it is mutually beneficial to their organization. This could involve opening up opportunities for both faith-based and secular institutions to introduce their products, services, or ideology to the community. Organizations desire to give away their products and services with hope that people will stay long enough to learn more about their additional products and services or way of life they are advocating.

Another tangible perk that collaborators can receive from their participation in a partnership is organizational development as noted by one banker,

To really look at them [MEED] and their passion, and to see that they really want to make



changes, . . . but they don't necessarily have the folks in line with the capacity to be able to do that and we (bankers) are trying to help them with that. So hopefully we'll see that. (Interview banker B, 09.24.10).

Organizational development is a great benefit especially for organizations that are struggling with capacity and need to learn ways to operate more efficiently and effectively. Lower skilled organizations could benefit from partnering with higher skilled organizations through skill transfers (Gray, 1989). Small to mid-size faith-based organizations in particular have this issue to contend with as their staff sizes tend to be small, sometimes with the pastor being the only paid staff. Having not only human resources, but also the right mix of human resources—all necessary skill sets present—is in high demand for many small to mid-size churches.

For MEED securing additional human resources and support for the organizations in general, including attracting more members to the organization was a priority, according to the Executive Director of MEED,

It has kind of helped them [MEED] really position themselves to really gather more human resources and more organizational support across the board. It has definitely been a good marketing tool for the membership base. (Interview executive director A, 09.26.10)

### **Foundation for Success**

Following the above framework will place the faith-based cross-sector partnership on a collision course with success. Equitable partnerships, ones that not only distribute labor and power equally, but also benefits each partners' central mission are the glue that holds strong partnerships together and have the potential to be a "transformative experience" (Seitanidi et al., 2010).

### **Conclusion**

There are 350,000 churches in the United States (Hartford Institute on Religion Research). This represents the power of the volunteer sector. Planners and other professions engaged in community development cannot afford to overlook this important resource, especially those working in low-income and/or minority communities.

Many African American churches have been engaged in faith-based community development for over a century (Billingsly, 1999). In modern day, many mega churches, churches with memberships over two thousand members (Hartford Institute on Religion Research), leveraging their tithes and

offerings to do larger scale, brick and mortar community development projects such as community centers, credit unions, senior housing, affordable housing, and the like (Billingsly, 1999; Botchwey, 2007). However, in sheer numbers, there are far fewer large mega-churches (1,611), than traditional size churches (Hartford Institute on Religion Research). Moreover, small to mid-size churches have significantly less paid staff than mega-churches (Hartford Institute on Religion Research).

Given these differences, it is not easy for these smaller institutions to engage in large-scale community and economic development activities. To scale-up the capacity of small- to mid-size faith-based organizations to do the same, partnerships are one strategy that can booster their capacity. By taking into account: faith-based organizations' social mission, presence of a partnership initiator, mission overlap, assessment of qualifications, and partnership benefits, equitable faith-based cross-sector partnerships can form and help transform communities.

### **Notes**

1. HyperREARCH is a software device for Mac computers that allows the researcher to "code and retrieve, build theories, and conduct analysis" of qualitative data, "graphics, audio, and video sources" [www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html](http://www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html).
2. AABC and FAH are the primary partners. Additional support is received from the City of Calumet in the form of folding tables, carts, volunteers, and trash pick-up while a local high school and college send student volunteers.

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