

Presentation Category:
*Local Government
Professionals Toolbox*



BOLD Conversations Create Strategic Partnerships

“Innovative training strategies that build a professional tool box of genius, power, and magic.”

Jurisdiction:

National Forum of Black Public Administrators’
Tampa Bay Area Chapter: Regional Non-For
Profit: Hillsborough County, Tampa ✧ Pinellas
County, St. Petersburg-Clearwater ✧ Polk
County, Lakeland – Manatee - Sarasota

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Synopsis

BOLD Conversations Create Strategic Partnerships

*By Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Mercedes Pearson, Ozell George, and Carl Harness
Representing Pinellas County Government, City of Clearwater, and Hillsborough County*

Project Synopsis for the Call for Case Studies 2011 Transforming Local Government/FCCMA Conference Clearwater, FL

Intent of the Program

Our project's goal is to inform public sector leadership of innovative collaborations that can assist them in building a professional toolbox. The methodology for our program consists of effective communication, corporate partnerships and leveraging university intellectual assets.

In tough economic times, training is often one of the first things to go. According to the 2009 survey by Experts, a learning-services firm indicated that 49% of the respondents expected to decrease training budgets for the upcoming year. The survey results of 84 corporate and government organizations also revealed, "the primary reason for decreased training is the lack of evidence that a connection between training and positive impact on the organization is evident." However, the NFBPA Tampa Bay Area Chapter's Leadership Conference has a model of proven results of effectiveness.

Accordingly, the NFBPA Tampa Bay Area Chapter saw the need to provide an affordable local opportunity which clearly establishes a connection between practical application and training was developed. To that end, we implemented a bold initiative that combined existing and potential employees from various governments entities, university partners, elected officials, and corporate members to engage in dialogue, train, and network in a risk free environment where issues and solutions specific to African American leadership. This initiative was developed to design a professional tool box that would empower participants to take strategic risks and bolder and broader steps while being inclusive of the overall environment and needs of the community as a whole. Simply stated, our primary BOLD move was addressing real life situations and asking tough questions and expecting honest empirical feedback from all stakeholders.

Program Overview:

1. Innovation/Creativity: How did program improve organization?

The concept and design of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA), Tampa Bay Area Chapter's Leadership Conference was to show a return on the public's investment, which is vital in times when dollars are scarce and innovation is paramount.

- The Leadership Conference created a bridge of open honest dialogue between elected officials; employees of government, corporate partners, future leaders, and citizens.
- The need to address tough issues that face African Americans in leadership has always been a contentious conversation because of perceptions negative and positive, real and imagined; however, this conference design centered on eliminating these barriers to growth and opportunities.

How did the program/project/service, etc. improve the organization?

The program improved the organization by identifying a systemic need for members to receive specific, relevant, rigorous professional development that would afford them the opportunities to create new relationships that could serve as mentors, coaches, partners and potential leaders in the future.

- According to the evaluation feedback from participants both members and potential members revealed a need to develop a strategic plan that incorporated a key focus on professional development. This plan is currently being implemented by our organization.
- In a holistic approach to civil responsibility this program created an ongoing dialogue with corporate entities in the region. In fact, many of the corporate partners and potential partners view NFBPA as a resource base for identifying community service projects, volunteers and corporate sponsorship opportunities.
- The environment of the conference was engaging, non-threatening, and encouraging. This platform increased membership and exposed members and stakeholders to each others value added services and resources.
- Our corporate partnership structure resulted in significant cost savings averaging \$300 per person (which includes registration and meal cost).

Were new technologies used?

Technology was an essential component of the conference. Combining local expertise with university facilities created a platform where digital methods of communication were partnered with traditional panel discussions, power point presentation, video and social media outlets.

If yes, what methods and/or applications did you implement?

- We partnered with Jobing.com, an online human resource company that uses social media to help connect local employers with local job seekers. Whether it's tweeting jobs, enabling Facebook fans to share employment opportunities with their networks, or sharing photos of our community events, Jobing.com was committed to utilizing social media technologies to help our members and partners find better jobs and post career opportunities to improve the economic stability of our communities.
- St. Petersburg College partnered with us to provide their Collaborative Labs space to facilitate the training. This facility is a cutting edge one-of-a-kind meeting environment where new technologies are used to facilitate training. The 10,000 square foot facility is uniquely designed and equipped with state of the art technology such as smart boards, webinar access, virtual learning stations, and real time conference pictorials etc.

Was a private consultant used? No. If yes, describe their involvement; and identify the consultant and/or firm, including contact information. Not Applicable to this case study.

2. Outcomes Achieved

What customer/community needs and expectations were identified and fulfilled?

Our Chapter took the economic downturn as a prime opportunity to enhance our professional toolbox by designing a regional approach to collaborating and building strong partnerships that would engage all stakeholders, i.e. government workers, corporate citizens, college/ university partners, and citizens.

- The conference provided a venue for the community to observe multi level experts within the public sector arena and gain a better understanding and appreciation for the level of service and expertise the professional of their community held.
- The regional approach also allowed the NFPBA to engage local public servants and rising leaders at the lower levels of the public organizations and exposed them to the unique training experience. Many of these employees, line supervisors, team leaders, and mid-level managers do not have the opportunity or means to participate in a National Conference, but have gained valuable learning experiences from the local activity.

Has service delivery been enhanced?

Yes. The conference participants and presenters were able to connect the value of training and the return on the public investment as demonstrated by producing a highly qualified workforce aimed at delivering quality, responsive, and relevant services to the public.

- The leveraging of cultural relevant conversations to expand professional toolboxes.
- Strengthened internal and external stakeholder relationships.
- Improved regional communication among public sector professionals and elected officials.

Did the initiative improve access to your government? If yes, how?

Yes. Unlike other public forums, the Leadership Conference removed the hierarchical barriers among the ranks of public sector employees and included community stakeholders.

- It helped to develop and enhance professional relationship between government sectors.
- Created an active think tank for solutions and creative ideas.
- Eliminated the perception that government is not friendly.
- A venue to provide better access to government stakeholder.
- Exposed the stakeholder to the talent within government and its opportunities for professionals to think outside the box.

Has the health of the community improved as a result? If yes, how?

Yes, the NFBPA of Tampa Bay Area Leadership Conference has enlightened its members and partners of opportunities to engage in community services projects that improved community pride and enhance social responsibility. NFBPA members lead the following initiatives:

- **CareFest** St. Petersburg, a community wide clean-up project attracted more than 2500 local volunteers, resulting in county wide and state award recognition for volunteer recruitment.
- **Paint your Heart Out** a collaboration amongst the City of Clearwater, NFBPA, it's University of South Florida student partners and local businesses where more than 20 private residences were painted free of charge improving community pride.
- Exposure and participation in NFBPA's **Executive Leadership Institute (ELI)**. Awareness and understanding was gleaned by conference participants. Three NFBPA members were awarded scholarships by conference participants.

3. Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

What practical applications could you share if selected?

The practical application would be establishing an authentic approach to professional development where real life situations, tough questions and honest empirical feedback are shared in a risk-free environment. In today's society where minorities are being the majority population, models such as NFBPA's Leadership Conference are going to become paramount to bold initiative to support solid inclusive governments.

The magic in NFBPA models is that we focus on building a professional toolbox that encompasses these elements while engaging all stakeholders.

How applicable is the project/program/service to other local governments?

It affords individuals professional development autonomy instead of conforming to "workplace norms" thereby; resulting in innovative bold initiatives that produce highly qualified public servants.

What results/outcomes will you be able to share?

We will share the conference evaluation data; corporate participation testimony and community service project impact analysis.

Please include any performance measures if applicable? N/A

4. Case Study Presentation

The case study will be presented in the form of a power point that includes testimony and video coverage of conference participants, presenters, and sponsors.