AZ LeaderForce

Participating Organizations

- Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK), Phoenix, AZ
- Greater Phoenix Youth at Risk, Phoenix, AZ
- Homeward Bound, Phoenix, AZ
- Arizona OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center), Phoenix, AZ
- Helping Hands for Single Moms, Goodyear, AZ
- St. Vincent De Paul, Virginia G. Piper Medical and Dental, Phoenix, AZ

Please note that all data below was derived from the collaboration's nomination for the Collaboration Prize. None of the submitted data were independently verified for accuracy.

Formation

**Type of Collaboration:** Joint Programming to launch and manage one or more programs

**Geographic Scope:** County

**Collaboration Focus Area:** Human Services

**Population Served:** Economically Disadvantaged

**Year Collaboration was Established:** 2006

**Goals Sought Through Collaboration:**

- Develop a stronger / more effective "voice"
- Expand reach and/or range of services / programs
- Leverage complementary strengths and/or assets

**Reasons Prompting Collaboration:**

- Competition for funding, donors and/or clientele
- Advancement of a shared goal
- Response to a community need

**Who Initiated Collaboration:**

- Board member(s)
- Executive Director(s) / CEO(s) / President(s)

**Number of Participating Organizations:** >10

**Nature of Funder Involvement:**

- Suggested / encouraged the collaboration
- Funded implementation

**Were Partners Added or Dropped?:** Yes

**Consultant Role:**

- To develop a business plan or strategic plan for the collaboration
- To assist in identifying or assessing partners
The Collaboration for a New Century (CNC) was formed in 1999 by former Phoenix Suns owner Jerry Colangelo who understood that in order to improve poverty, basic human needs must be addressed more effectively through collaboration. Despite Arizona’s historic economic strength, the state continues to rate poorly on key quality of life indicators. CNC believes this is not acceptable and set out on a mission to raise awareness and increase involvement among business and civic leaders to rally around solutions. To pursue its vision, CNC needed a vehicle and AZ LeaderForce was born. CNC has invested in a strategic, multi-pronged leadership effort that:

- Raises awareness and cooperation toward a common purpose
- Identifies community-based efforts that are making a difference (“Blue Ribbon” agencies)
- Engages civic and corporate leaders in a meaningful way
- Focusses on collaborative activities and partnerships
- Challenges the entire community to get involved

By 2020, CNC - through AZ LeaderForce - hopes to engage 400 community leaders who will work with proven programs that will make a positive impact on the quality of life of an estimated one-half million low-income people.

AZ LeaderForce is a process of engaging a select group of business leaders to inspire, equip and meaningfully involve them in efforts to meet community needs. AZ LeaderForce has two goals: 1) Re-establish the ethic of community involvement and social responsibility, and 2) Increase capacity of the best human service providers. AZ LeaderForce provides the framework to develop a network of compassionate community leaders (“Coaches”) and human service partners (“Blue Ribbon” agencies) that are taking action. After four years, CNC has had 85 unique volunteers assisting 24 proven programs that help thousands of people.

What is a “Blue Ribbon” Agency? CNC identifies six non-profit agencies each year that have positively impacted the community, but need some strategic guidance. These agencies are chosen based on their track record for being innovative, community-based, holistic, collaborative, and outcome-focused. Each agency must also fit into one of six human service categories: child development, youth mentoring, affordable housing, job training/education, family support, and affordable health care.

What is an AZ LeaderForce Coach? A Coach is a community leader interested in sharing their expertise with a Blue Ribbon non-profit agency to help improve and expand the agency’s services. CNC partners four to six Coaches with an agency depending on their expertise and the agency’s needs. Coaches typically help with issues like strategic planning, organizational development, process improvements, marketing, staff and board development, technology, and finances. Coaches make a nine-month commitment to participate.

Coaches and agency staff also have the opportunity to interact with other successful community leaders and receive training on advanced leadership concepts by the University of Phoenix and other guest speakers. The experience is also linked with the successful completion of a hands-on impact project that will help further the agency’s mission.

Management

Management Structure: One Executive Director / CEO / President

Steve Capobres, CNC Executive Director, oversees AZ LeaderForce with assistance from Rodo Sofranac, University of Phoenix faculty member. To monitor success, CNC administers a pre- and post-survey of all participants to evaluate the experience. Follow-up interviews are periodically performed on all Blue Ribbon agencies to determine the longer-term impact of AZ LeaderForce. Assessment results are used by CNC’s Board of Directors to determine the value of AZ LeaderForce and improve the program. This information is also used to produce a final report.

Challenges

Challenges to Making the Collaboration Work:

- Lack of trust among partners
- Addressing lack of staff or allocation of staff resources
- Raising funds or integrating fund development to support the collaboration
- Accepting change
Overall, many volunteers have realized that you don’t have to be a social service expert to help and that good programs exist. The agencies liked the tailored aspect of AZ LeaderForce that ensured they received exactly the expertise needed. The biggest challenge was establishing clear expectations. Most volunteers tend to be aggressive in their desire to get something done faster than the ability of many non-profits to respond. Another major challenge was managing the process toward timely results. As projects were identified, the process was designed to allow flexibility to challenge participants. We discovered that accountability was necessary to make it work.

CNC has also worked to develop opportunities to involve past AZ LeaderForce Coaches by inviting them to additional training and social gatherings. In addition, CNC continues to engage past Blue Ribbon agencies by offering training opportunities for their staff, and holding a Blue Ribbon agency forum to foster continued efforts for these agencies to collaborate.

Impact

Internal Efficiencies and Effectiveness:

- Financial savings - Combined / coordinated marketing
- Financial savings - Coordination / consolidation of programming
- Greater ability to allocate resources to areas of need - Greater ability for each partner to focus on core competency
- Improved marketing and communications, public relations and outreach - Improved marketing and communications, public relations and outreach

Community Impact:

- Stronger / more effective "voice"
- Greater coordination of services (less overlap, duplication, fragmentation)

AZ LeaderForce has, and can, make a major impact on the community in three ways:

1. Increased Awareness: The experience increases the awareness of Coaches on the many issues the community faces.
2. More Community Involvement: LeaderForce has made it easy for anyone to jump right in and provide significant help to make an impact.
3. Lives Impacted (through agency capacity building): LeaderForce provided a direct impact on people. Private resources that are raised and operational improvements made will assist in serving more. For example, volunteers:
   - Raise thousands of private dollars.
   - Bring other colleagues to the table that donate services.
   - Provide agency staff training.
   - Streamline internal operations that increase productivity.
   - Pinpoint market opportunities for agencies to diversify their funding.

Some specific success stories include:
- 50 low-income families will continue to receive childcare in a center that was close to shutting down.
- 200 youth have been matched with a long-awaited mentor, double from past years.
- 1,000 turned out to “walk” and bring awareness to single mothers.
- A new health clinic has been built that provides the only free healthcare in Chandler.

CNC administers a pre- and post-survey that measures changes in participant knowledge and attitudes. Key success indicators and targets:
- 100% increase in the number who say they plan to volunteer at least once a month or more in future.
- 100% increase in the number who say they are now knowledgeable about non-profits and aware of issues.
- 90% overall participant satisfaction rate.

Model

CNC has discovered that there is substantial interest in AZ LeaderForce and has been encouraged to consider replicating the model in other communities. There can be tremendous benefits to facilitating business engagement in the non-profit community. We discovered that the common fear from participants was the perceived lack of common ground and experience between business leaders and social service agencies. However we have found that is not the case. We have learned many lessons on the benefits of working together that will have long-lasting impacts for the future.

Efficiencies Achieved
Arizona has an historic opportunity to promote prosperity for all. In meeting this challenge, the Collaboration for a New Century (CNC) believes it will require more community engagement and a willingness to collaborate:

1.) Broad-based leadership - cultivating community engagement:
We need leaders to step forward. To do this, CNC’s AZ LeaderForce initiative will take a select group of community leaders through an annual process that will inspire, equip and meaningfully engage them. Through this, it is hoped that CNC will help to re-establish the ethic of community involvement and social responsibility. A 2005 Arizona Republic article entitled “The Search Goes On For Leaders With Passion” by Jon Talton talked about the obvious need to grow new leaders, particularly from the business world. By cultivating collaborative strategies around effective programs, CNC hopes to find committed individuals who are willing to engage.

2.) Collaborative community services – providing a seamless, focused support system:
There are many efforts working toward good causes. Instead of duplicating, many could use some added assistance of influence and strategic intervention. Numerous communities have formed collaboratives across the country to create more responsive services. Locally, the United Way best summarized it as services that support learning, empowering and caring. CNC has more specifically defined it in six areas that it believes are essential: 1) child development; 2) mentoring (education); 3) affordable housing; 4) job training; 5) family support (addiction, counseling, etc.); and 6) affordable healthcare. By highlighting model or “Blue Ribbon” programs in each of these areas, CNC hopes to build collaboratives to strengthen and expand their impact.

3.) Focus on and support “what works”:
There are many efforts working toward good causes. But our community needs to know which programs are effective. Many researchers are pointing to an emphasis on “resilience” versus risk factors. St. Luke’s Health Initiatives recently released a report on building resilient communities and recommended cultivating natural caring relationships, strengthening the natural helping institutions from the bottom up, and building social support through learning networks. AZ LeaderForce has incorporated these principles.

In addition, if communities are going to support families, then new ways of crafting service delivery must be found. Efforts must go beyond cooperation and coordination to collaboration. In 1991, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services convened 26 practitioners and scholars from around the country. Their discussions were captured in a guide for integrating services, entitled Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services. They based its discussions on a vision of “communities where learning can happen and the creation of a ‘profamily’ system that expands the capacity of helping institutions to work together.”

CNC believes our community needs to invest in programs that are: 1) innovative; 2) community-based; 3) holistic; 4) collaborating; and 5) outcome-focused. By profiling its Blue Ribbon programs with this criteria, CNC hopes to serve as a “voice of reason” by increasing attention on what works.

To pursue this vision CNC needed a vehicle to show this in action - AZ LeaderForce was born. CNC believes by facilitating collaboration, promoting best practices, encouraging the integration of services, and challenging the community to get engaged, we believe we can make a difference. By linking business volunteers with non-profit organizations, this initiative represents a collaboration of many different people, organizations and talents. Additionally, each participating non-profit discovers collaboration opportunities with each other. LeaderForce provides a forum for all of our agencies to find common ways of doing business better. Several are working toward potential partnerships that will be of mutual benefit and will improve their ability to serve more families in need.

To evaluate its efforts, CNC administers a pre- and post-survey of all participants to evaluate the experience and measure changes in knowledge and attitudes. The pre-survey is given at the start of the program year in April. The post-survey is given when the program ends in December. Regular tracking sheets and exit interviews are also used to understand the impacts. The key result from AZ LeaderForce is the completion of a strategic project for each agency. The following projects have been completed:

2007
- Glendale Family Development Center: Strategic plan, capital campaign, and board development
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arizona: Marketing campaign to increase Hispanic mentors
- Community Services of Arizona: Human resources plan to improve organizational effectiveness
- Arizona Women's Education and Employment: Business plan for new earned revenue
- Save the Family: Child sponsorship program for increased revenue and community awareness
- Chandler Education Foundation, San Marcos Resource Center: New health clinic expansion plan

2008
- Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK): Recruitment materials, volunteer leads, toolkit of community resources
- Greater Phoenix Youth at Risk: New website, recruiting/retaining mentors, and facility expansion plan
- Homework Bound: Technology assessment and roadmap for upgrades
- Arizona OIC: Marketing, fundraising events, and office renovation analysis
- Helping Hands for Single Moms: First annual signature event to raise visibility and resources
- St. Vincent De Paul, Virginia G. Piper Medical and Dental Clinic: New shared vision and decision-making process for future expansion

2009
- Childhelp: Comprehensive marketing branding storyboard and video
- AZ Quest for Kids: Board development, new website plus social networking
Collaboration among these agencies naturally take place throughout the year as they begin to discover and share ideas. More specifically, the following collaborative efforts have taken place:

• All mentoring agencies that have participated are working together on the recruiting, training, orientation, and referral of potential mentors.
• In 2010, Habitat for Humanity has established a referral process with UMOM to give families a chance at homeownership coming out of a transitional shelter.
• As many of our 2010 agencies are looking at funding sustainability, all our sharing ideas and templates in developing their plans.
• The volunteer management system developed by Mission of Mercy has been shared with all 2009 agencies and many are taking steps to use the same model.
• In 2008, the St. Vincent De Paul shared their expertise in helping Homeward Bound rethink keeping its own on-site clinic open.
• In 2007, Community Services of Arizona provided a loaned executive to the Glendale Family Development Center to serve as Executive Director while they recruited the position.

AZ LeaderForce has, and can, make a major impact on the community in three ways:

Volunteer Impact
• Increased Community Involvement: Over 80% say they will stay engaged in the community on a more frequent basis.
• Increased Community Awareness: Over 80% say they are more knowledgeable about non-profits and the issues facing the community. This is double the awareness since the start of the program.
• Personal Satisfaction: Over 90% satisfaction rate.

Agency Impact
• Donated Services: 3,000 volunteer hours are donated that represent $300,000 of in-kind and donated services. Services include marketing, program development, strategic planning, technology assessments, facility improvement, volunteer management, event planning and board development.
• Agency Satisfaction: Over 90% satisfaction rate.
• On-Going Collaboration: Many participating non-profit organizations are developing partnerships of mutual benefit. Some volunteers have joined the board of their partner agency.

Community Impact
• Six proven agencies are assisted each year that work with our most vulnerable individuals
• Some examples of direct lives impacted from LeaderForce involvement include:
  50 low-income children continue to receive childcare in a center that almost closed.
  152 housing units will be completed to provide a permanent home for homeless individuals.
  200 youth have been matched with a long-awaited mentor.
  1,000 have turned out to “walk” and bring awareness to challenges facing single mothers.
  Thousands of Chandler residents are receiving free healthcare in a newly built clinic.

Evolution
When AZ LeaderForce was launched, CNC turned to the Valley of the Sun United Way for advice on which agencies to work with based on the criteria above. The United Way provided an initial list of 70 agencies for us to consider. CNC sought counsel from other professionals to narrow down its choices. Agencies are then contacted to inquire their interest in participating. Agencies that participate must agree to:

• Certify that its program is 1) Innovative; 2) community-based; 3) family friendly (flexible); 4) holistic; 5) collaboratives; and 6) outcome-focused.
• Support their volunteer team to learn about its agency and assist with the progress of their project.
• Commit a minimum of three individuals who can actively participate in the process. This should include ED/CEO (or designee), one board member, and a key staff person.
• Allow CNC to showcase the organization at Summits and future public relations opportunities.
• Continue to be part of an alumni network providing on-going volunteer opportunities and collaborative projects.

To achieve its goals and manage the process, CNC uses a combination of experienced existing staff and consultants. The team is comprised of Steve Capobres, Executive Director, and Rodo Sofranac, University of Phoenix faculty. Steve Capobres has been ED since 2005 and is a former Asst. Dir. of the AZ Dept. of Commerce and original Board member. Assisting with AZ LeaderForce, CNC has partnered with the University of Phoenix to provide faculty and support for teaching and facilitation, along with meeting space. The CNC Board is also actively engaged in oversight, many of which have gone through the program themselves. In addition, CNC periodically checks in with each agency for input.

Based on feedback, AZ LeaderForce volunteers have expressed it has met their expectations and they have gained much from the experience. From the agency perspective, they like the tailored aspect of LeaderForce that ensures they receive exactly the expertise needed. The biggest challenge has been establishing clear expectations. Most volunteers tend to be aggressive to get something done faster than the ability of many non-profits to respond. Another major challenge was managing the process toward timely results. As projects were identified, the process was designed to allow flexibility to challenge participants. While most liked this flexibility, we discovered that more structure was necessary to make it work.

CNC continues to fine tune AZ LeaderForce based on feedback. More recent improvements have included: 1) More complete descriptions on roles, 2) emphasis on commitment and expectations, 3) allowing volunteers to pick agency assignments later in the process after hearing about the agency, 4) spending the first sessions on team development, and 5) training returning “Champions” on how to lead the teams and guide the process. CNC has also worked to develop opportunities to involve past LeaderForce Coaches by inviting them to additional training and social gatherings. In addition, CNC continues to engage past Blue Ribbon agencies by offering training opportunities, and holding a Blue Ribbon agency forum to foster continued efforts to collaborate.

While we described how the success is measured previously, CNC believes the value of AZ LeaderForce can also be described this way:

**Coaches receive:**
• Practical techniques to help them become more effective workers, leaders, and citizens
• Exposure to community needs and access to a broad network of relationships
• Opportunities for continuing education on advanced leadership concepts
• Personal satisfaction from using their skills in real world situations to help those in need

**Employers receive employees who:**
• Strengthen their professional skills, problem solving and leadership competencies
• Understand the value of collaboration and how to function well as a team member
• Give the company considerable exposure and interaction with other proactive community leaders
• Understand the value of service and what it means to give back to your community
• Have benefitted from continuing education opportunities

**Agencies receive:**
• A fresh perspective on their operations through an internal assessment of their organization
• Training on advanced leadership concepts
• Practical techniques to help them become better workers, partners, and service providers
• Substantial contributions of time/talent from skilled volunteers culminating in completed projects
• Increased visibility and opportunities to engage in new partnerships with a variety of stakeholders

**Communities receive:**
• Residents who understand the need to continue to make a difference where they live and work
• A network of stronger community-based agencies that provide critical human services
• The unlocking of local resources from within the community that can help strained local budgets
• A renewed sense of community by the good will that AZ LeaderForce generates