



SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH
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Action Steps for Businesses: *A Guide to Developing Partnerships with Faith- Based and Community Organizations (FBCOs)*

Final

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Action Steps for Businesses: A Guide to Developing Partnerships with Faith-Based and Community Organizations (FBCOs)

We have found that these partnerships (FBCO and other community partnerships) allow us to save money on cost-per hire. Our partners are actually pre-screening candidates for us and pre-training them... We're seeing higher retention rates among people who come to us through these kinds of partnerships.

--Karen Shawcross, Bank of America¹

Today's competitive marketplace requires that companies conduct business differently in order to secure a competitive edge and thrive. Business leaders are shaping their business models, strategies, and products to respond to societal trends and processes. Many forward thinking companies are recognizing that community partnerships—including those with faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs)—can contribute to profitability by helping them to meet and exceed placement and retention goals. By actively partnering with FBCOs, companies are creating effective mechanisms to reach new customers, attract and retain employees, and differentiate their products and services from their competitors.

This guide, ***Action Steps for Businesses: A Guide to Developing Partnerships with Faith-Based and Community Organizations (FBCOs)***, is a practical tool for businesses that are interested in developing partnerships with FBCOs. This guide provides specific steps that businesses can take to develop and sustain successful FBCO partnerships. It contains essential information on what FBCOs look like, the value and benefits that they can bring to

¹ Marquant, F. and Feeley, T. (2002). Fast Forward: The Business Case for Workforce Partnerships. Report prepared for SFWorks: San Francisco, CA.

businesses, the services they provide to businesses and job seekers, and where they are located in the local community.

Examples from this guide are drawn from *Literature Review: Business/FBCO Partnerships*, research that Social Policy Research Associates conducted for the Department of Labor’s Center for Faith Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI).

This guide is divided into three main sections:

- **Section I. Frequently Asked Questions about FBCOs.** In a question and answer format, this section provides an overview of FBCOs, including the types of FBCOs that exist, highlights of key features of FBCOs that may be of particular interest to business partners, including how they operate, their staffing, size, and financial and human resources. In this section, we also discuss the benefits that businesses have gained through these partnerships.
- **Section II. Steps to Developing FBCO Partnerships.** This section provides detailed action steps that businesses can take to develop, manage, and sustain FBCO partnerships. It describes ways to prepare for working with FBCOs, strategies to gain staff buy-in, and ways to follow through to ensure that the FBCO partnership is working as intended.
- **Section III. Examples of Partnerships.** This section provides some examples of successful partnerships that businesses have formed with their local FBCOs, including the characteristics of the partnerships and how they were formed.

This guide will help businesses learn the essential steps to partnering with FBCOs to meet their labor needs.

Section I. Frequently Asked Questions

What is a faith-based and community organization?

We are a trusted broker. We are out for the community and not out for ourselves. We bring values and morals to the partnership. Businesses know that our agenda is not about us. Our agenda is about the community.
--Kurt Madden, *One-by-One Leadership*, FBCO Leader

FBCOs are vital community institutions that have a long history of providing holistic services to a diverse range of community

members. They vary widely in their organizational structure and affiliation but can be categorized in the following ways:²

- **Congregations** are affiliated with one or more of over 200 denominations (e.g. Roman Catholic Diocese, seminaries, multi-service providers such as Jewish Federations, etc). More than 50 percent of congregations provide some form of human/social services.
- **National networks** include groups designed to mobilize individuals and congregations on particular issues/topics, such as Habitat for Humanity.
- **Freestanding religious organizations** include independent, non-profit organizations spun off by a congregation to pursue a particular ministry, e.g. interfaith coalition of congregations.
- **National/Regional secular organizations** are non-profit organizations that have a particular community service/community development focus, such as SER Jobs for Progress, Urban League, Goodwill Industries, YMCA.

*There are **350,000 congregations** nationwide and their estimated yearly expenditures exceed **\$47 billion**.*

As an extension of their work to support families and individuals and move them towards self-sufficiency, many FBCOs have expanded their services to provide career services, such as job training, job coaching, and job search assistance. Further, in order to help new workers transition smoothly to new jobs, many FBCOs have successfully collaborated with other community organizations to leverage additional services or resources for housing, food, clothing, and counseling support. FBCOs are also making strong connections with local businesses to help them meet their staffing needs.

² Vidal, Avis. (2001). Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development. Prepared by The Urban Institute for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research.

Faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) include non-profit groups that (1) provide social services, (2) vary greatly in size and resources, and/or (3) identify themselves with various community initiatives and/or religious traditions or philosophies. Many times, the most effective FBCOs have been rooted in the community and for a long time have a history of strong service delivery.

What Makes FBCOs Valuable Business Partners?

FBCOs make outreach personal and purposeful [because] they use existing neighborhood outreach and communication mechanisms. They also rely on their networks of churches, community centers, and educational institutions to reach local residents.³

Businesses invest in FBCO partnerships because these partnerships can address workforce challenges and potentially boost commercial outcomes. FBCO partners can help businesses maintain their competitive positioning by identifying and screening highly skilled and thoroughly trained workers. As described below, when there is a strong job match, companies can reduce the high cost of turnover and the need for in-house training.

FBCOs also represent “hidden market opportunities” because they operate in underserved markets, engaging low income and racial and ethnic minority populations that represent a fast growing consumer sector. According to the Ford Foundation’s report WIN/WIN, low-income communities and minority populations comprise the fastest growing customer base in the country. These neighborhoods offer access to workers and a diversity of suppliers,

*Well-established community organizations offer improved access to lucrative, untapped markets because of the unmet demands for goods and services. In fact, the unmet demand is 25-60 percent and **inner-city consumers constitute \$85 billion in annual retail buying power**—more than the entire country of Mexico. (Weiser, 2006)*

³ Rock, JoAnn. (2002). Stepping Out on Faith: New York City’s Charitable Choice Demonstration Program. The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy. October 2002. Conducted for the Rockefeller Institute of Government.

resources that rarely register on the corporate radar.⁴ Further, FBCOs serve as strong bridges between businesses and consumers because of their extensive knowledge of the community.

For these reasons, many companies are partnering with FBCOs not only to gain access to these substantial, untapped markets, but also to attract and retain employees. For example, companies such as Unilever are making a concerted effort to reach an untapped market by employing community members in their sales force.⁵

Businesses also value FBCO partners for the following reasons:

- **Holistic, personalized, compassionate approach to service delivery.** FBCOs have the reputation for going to extraordinary lengths to serve their community members, by building trust, promoting personal healing, and helping their members achieve personal transformation. FBCOs create safe spaces for community members, where they can focus on improving themselves by reflecting, reevaluating, and creating a positive vision for their future. For businesses, these values mean that job seekers are likely to stick with job training programs, which could increase job retention.
- **Financial and human resources.** FBCOs can leverage local, regional, and national networks to support their mission so that both job seekers and businesses get the services they need. Additionally, FBCOs are effective at building strong communities of support so that they have access to extensive community resources such as volunteers to further support businesses in meeting their recruitment and hiring objectives.
- **Motivated job seekers.** Because of their extensive membership and broad geographic reach, FBCOs can reach job seekers that may not otherwise be easily accessible. Businesses trust that FBCOs will use their resources to support job seekers so that there is a strong job match and increased employee retention.

FBCOs are the third largest non-profit sector in the US, and estimated yearly expenditures exceed \$7 billion.

As of 2005, 53 percent of states are engaged in significant administrative activities to support government partnerships with FBCOs.

⁴ Adams, A.(1999). "Corporate Ethics Meet Bottom Line." Ford Foundation. http://www.fordfound.org/publications/ff_report/view_ff_report_detail.cfm?report_index=200

⁵ Unilever is international manufacturer of food, home care, and personal care products.

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- **Extensive community connections.** FBCOs have trusting relationships with the community, access to volunteers, and extensive community outreach. These connections can help businesses gain increased visibility and credibility not only among job seekers, but also among new customers from the community that the FBCO serves. Further, FBCOs have the power to pool local resources and build coalitions with a variety of community agencies, such as housing, economic development agencies, and public and private funders to help job seekers get the support they need to find jobs and stay in them.

What Are the Benefits to Partnering with FBCOs?

The most important overarching success factor for businesses is to create value for the community at the same time as you create value for businesses. For companies, the win can take the form of increased sales, reduced costs, diversification of risk, or improvements in reputation. For communities, the win can take the form of access to needed goods and services, jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities.⁶

Many companies are reaping the benefits of FBCO partnerships because they realize that these partnerships can positively affect their profit margin by expanding their customer base, stabilizing their workforce, and building positive community relations. For instance, FBCOs can help develop community support, and connect businesses to labor sources and potential business partners.

Other direct benefits of business/FBCO partnerships include the following:

- **Provide access to a broad, diverse labor pool.** FBCO partnerships can increase and enhance the pool of potential employees. Under-resourced communities in which FBCOs operate are characterized by high levels of unemployment and under-employment, making them **good**

⁶ Weiser, J. et al. (2006). *Untapped: Creating Value in Underserved Markets*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

sources of workers for companies struggling to meet their labor needs or increase their workforce. Examples of potential labor pools include ex-offenders, immigrants, single mothers, senior citizens, etc. FBCOs help businesses with hiring needs by providing **access to a high caliber of screened job applicants and training**, and supporting the transition of job applicants into the workforce.

- **Save money on hiring and training costs.** Partnering with FBCOs is also a cost-effective way to recruit, screen and train underutilized workers. Businesses can save money on recruiting and hiring because of the assessment, prescreening, and training services provided by FBCOs. This training includes training in soft-skills and “hard” or technical skills.
- **Contribute to increased employee retention.** For businesses that hire significant numbers of low-wage and entry-level workers, partnering with FBCOs that can address work/life issues can **reduce absenteeism and turnover and improve job performance.** After employees are hired, FBCOs continue to support workers to help them stay employed through ongoing counseling and supportive services (e.g. food, temporary shelter, clothes, childcare, transportation assistance).
- **Expand markets and create new business opportunities.** Because FBCOs have an extensive membership, companies can reach a wide range of potential **new customers.** Businesses have partnered with FBCOs to expand existing markets or enter untapped ones. FBCOs can offer businesses a wealth of information about local economies, such as sites, potential partners, and labor sources.
- **Enhance public image.** Community partnerships (FBCOs) can enhance businesses’ public image and improve their reputation among consumers. Partnering with FBCOs exposes companies’ activities in the community, which could affect consumers’ opinions about the companies’ business activities. Thus, these partnerships can **strengthen companies’ brand image, increase customer loyalty, attract and retain customers, and increase sales.**

Well-established FBCOs can offer companies a wealth of assets, including a pipeline of potential workers, pre-employment training, and post-placement support.

Below are examples of businesses that have benefited from FBCO partnerships.

CVS has hired over 30,000 individuals formerly on public assistance through partnerships with FBCOs and other public agencies. More than 18,000 of them are still employed in career-track positions. The **retention rate is 60 percent**, a high rate given that typical turnover rates in this sector exceed 200 percent per year.

TJX Companies, a large national retailer, hires well over 10,000 employees per year from its community partners, including FBCOs. Employees recruited from these partnerships have a 20-30 percent higher retention rate than other hires.

As the examples above indicate, FBCO partnerships provide opportunities to reach new workers, develop new ideas, and identify innovative human resource solutions to staffing challenges.

What Services Do FBCOs Offer Businesses?

Many FBCOs have extensive experience supporting businesses' workforce development needs. FBCOs make a strong effort to customize services by conducting outreach to businesses to identify business needs, such as hiring priorities and worker training. FBCOs also work hard to understand the skills businesses need for their workers by researching labor market information to ensure a strong match. As one business representative said about her experience with an FBCO,

Many people that have worked in the public sector long enough [tend to] be disengaged from the private sector. This is not the case with Jewish Vocational Services. They understand what we do; they are willing to learn about the needs of the business world. We have confidence that they will follow through.

--Carolyn Duvall, Vice-President for Employee/Labor Relations for Macy's Western Region.

Some of the core services that FBCOs provide businesses include:

- Recruiting, assessing, and screening job applicants (testing, resume scans, background checks).
- Posting job listings.
- Matching job applicants with appropriate jobs.
- Convening job fairs.
- Training employees in relevant trades/skills and soft skills training for potential workers.
- Supporting workers to enhance employee retention (by providing referrals to community resources, counseling, and access to supportive services such as childcare, transportation, work-related tools/uniforms, etc.)
- Providing information about tax credit programs, labor laws, and unemployment insurance.
- Providing interviewing facilities.

Find a local champion, or staff liaison, to coordinate the partnership and keep the lines of communication open.

In addition, FBCOs help businesses enhance retention strategies by providing employer workshops, supervisor training programs, and customized training and retention support to improve productivity and reduce turnover. For example, WIRE NET, a workforce intermediary organization, offers professional development programs for businesses through “business learning groups” that focus on productivity, workforce training, and worker retention. Employers choose topics each month and tour each other’s facilities to learn from one another.

What Are the Barriers to Developing Partnerships?

Despite the benefits to business and FBCO partnerships, many businesses face challenges to successfully developing, managing, and sustaining these partnerships. These challenges include:

- **Overcoming negative employer stereotypes of FBCOs and their constituents.** Many business representatives believe that the communities in which FBCOs operate are excessively dangerous places to work or that low-income workers lack appropriate skills and a strong work ethic. To overcome these stereotypes, businesses and FBCOs must

Integrate the FBCO partnership activities with other corporate community initiatives.

make time to learn about each other's organizations and business practices. (See below).

- **Committing resources to developing and managing external partnerships.** Some businesses are not prepared to commit the level of staff time and resources required to effectively develop and manage partnerships. Successful partnerships require a purposeful investment in staff time and resources to “move the partnership along.” Some businesses identify a staff liaison, or “champion” to coordinate the partnership activities, keep the partnership on the company’s agenda, and motivate staff participation.
- **Securing staff buy-in.** Some businesses also struggle to gain corporate buy-in from key staff who are instrumental to the success of the FBCO partnership, including supervisors, job mentors, and upper-management. To gain buy-in, it may be necessary to “sell” the partnership to key decision makers in the company.
- **Understanding the culture of FBCOs.** Miscommunication about partnership expectations may surface when there is a lack of understanding about FBCOs and their organizational culture. As mentioned above, FBCOs have distinct service delivery systems and program/reporting requirements. Workers from FBCOs may also require different supports, such as childcare and flexible schedules. As discussed below, an important step in developing FBCO partnerships is to get to know your partner’s culture, values, objectives, vocabulary, and decision-making processes.
- **Achieving sustainability and acquiring additional funding.** Many business/FBCO partnerships receive public and/or private funding to develop their workforce programs. When funding ends, businesses and FBCOs need to find additional funding to sustain the partnership. Some businesses “kick-in” additional resources to keep the partnership alive, or include additional businesses in the partnership to off-set the cost.
- **Surviving shifts in economic climate or labor market.** Business priorities may be affected by shifts in the economy and labor market. Companies that may have committed to hiring personnel from FBCOs may terminate partnerships when the economy slows down or business strategies change. To survive shifts in the economic climate, some businesses develop a sustainability plan with their FBCO partners.

It is important to adapt your business model to work with FBCOs and the workers that they refer.

Below we discuss the steps that businesses can take to work effectively with FBCOs and overcome these barriers.

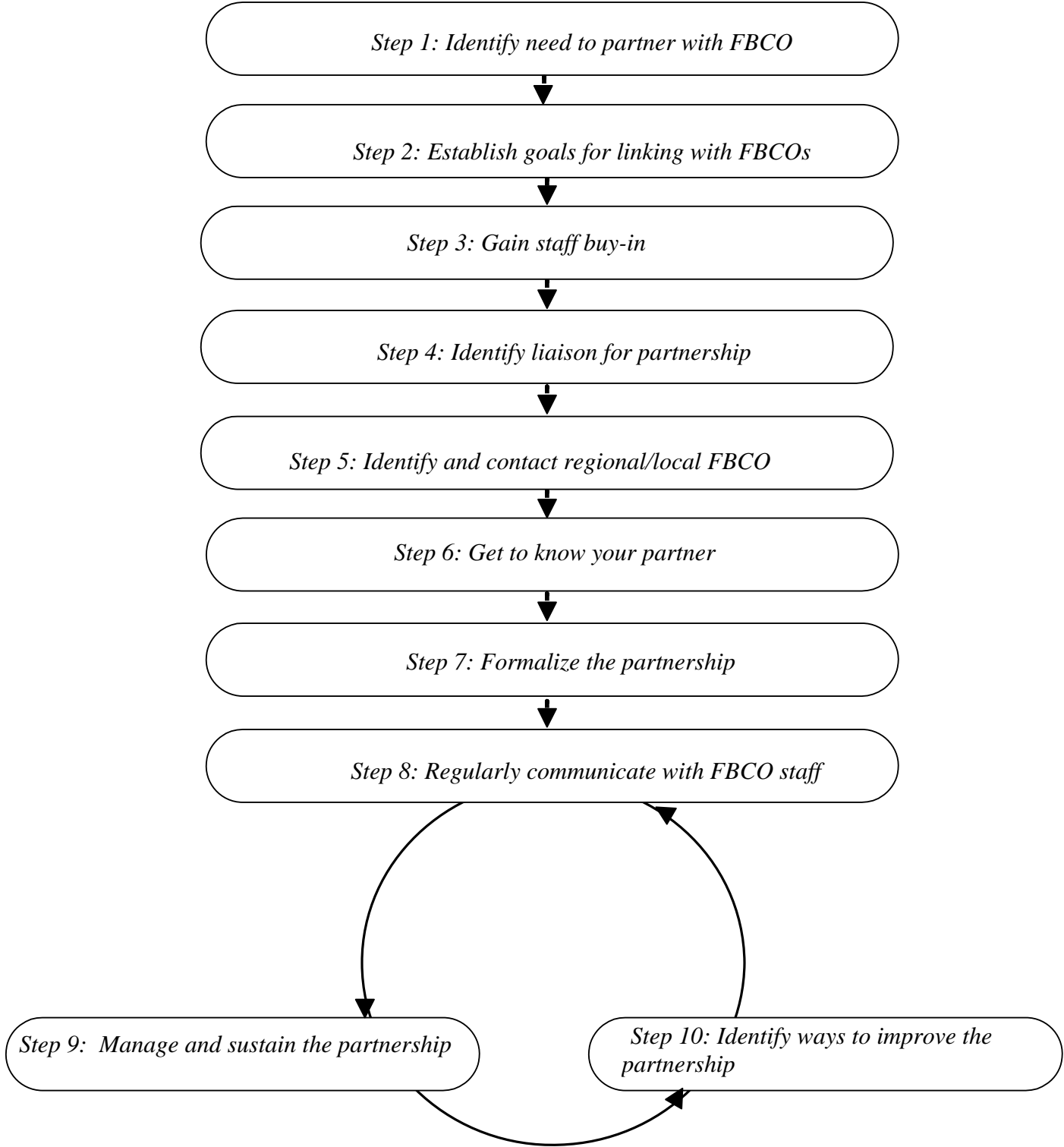
Section II. What Are the Steps to Developing FBCO Partnerships?

Companies are looking for new solutions in the new economy. By investing in innovative partnerships with community educational and training organizations, businesses across the country are able to tap into a source of reliable and capable workers and develop solutions designed by business for business.

–Hilary Pendington, President, Jobs for the Future, in WIN/WIN, Ford Foundation.

The steps to developing partnerships with FBCOs are depicted in Exhibit I. Although the exact sequence may vary locally, depending on the goals of the partnership, Exhibit I illustrates the common steps that businesses and FBCOs have undertaken to implement partnerships.

Exhibit 1:
Steps to Developing Business/FBCO
Partnerships



Step 1. Identify Need to Partner with FBCO

The first step to forming alliances with FBCOs is to look internally and identify your staffing and training needs throughout the company to determine whether FBCO partnerships are the most effective strategy for addressing those needs. This may require that human resource managers do the following:

- Examine the most pressing staffing issues and needs for the company, including recruitment, training, and retention.
- Prioritize staffing issues so that the most critical needs are addressed immediately (e.g. hiring may be more pressing than staff training.)
- Meet with department managers, upper-level managers, and supervisors to determine if there is a need to form community partnerships to address staffing needs.
- Research the expectations and concerns of managers and supervisors about FBCO partnerships and address those concerns prior to developing FBCO partnerships.

HR managers will need to work closely with other managers and supervisors to identify their hiring and training needs.

Once staffing priorities are identified, consider how FBCOs can contribute to your strategic business and human resource needs. For instance, your company may need to hire a large number of well-trained staff to fill entry-level retail positions. In this case, you may want to partner with FBCOs or other community-based organizations that have access to a large labor pool and that can provide customized training to new workers. For example, **TCF Bank**, based in Minnesota, partnered with Goodwill/Easter Seals to train single-mothers leaving welfare for entry-level banking jobs. Through this partnership, Goodwill offered a four-week training program in technical financial skills and soft skills training.

Another company—**Cascade Engineering** in Michigan—identified staff retention as an important human resource challenge. To address this challenge, Cascade partnered with Michigan’s Family Independence Agency (FIA) and local FBCOs to identify barriers that new workers face so that the company can connect them to community resources. With the help of FIA, Cascade helped develop a coalition of agencies to address a

number of barriers facing new workers. Coalition members included a local ministry called Angel Wings that provides transportation support and Kent Regional Community Coordinated Childcare to provide childcare.

Step 2. Establish goals for linking with FBCOs

The second step to partnering with FBCOs is to establish measurable goals and priorities for the partnership. Goals should reflect your company’s existing practices, values and culture, and accord with sound business practices. In establishing goals for the FBCO partnership, it may be necessary to review company policies and activities in human resources/recruitment, marketing, and product development so that the goals align with your key business priorities. Clearly articulating what you hope to gain from the FBCO partnership at the onset will guide you through the key decisions that lie ahead. Sample goals may include:

- Ø Getting accurate information to potential job seekers about work opportunities
- Ø Identifying screened and trained employees
- Ø Increasing placement and retention goals
- Ø Establishing new social networks
- Ø Increasing awareness of products and services among new customers

Step 3: Gain staff buy-in

The next step is to build internal support for the FBCO partnership by gaining buy-in from key corporate staff, including supervisors, upper-management, job mentors, etc. Support from key leaders is critical to ensure that your partnership moves forward and stays on the company’s agenda. To gain buy-in, the “collaborative entrepreneur” or your liaison could do the following:

- **“Sell” the partnership to key stakeholders** that are directly involved in the partnership (e.g. supervisors, managers) by highlighting key benefits. Your liaison could hold a series of meetings with key staff to let them know

*A **collaborative entrepreneur** is a visionary leader that brings together compatible organizations to meet business objectives.*

the details of the partnership and expectations for key staff members so that the partnership succeeds.

- **Solicit feedback from key stakeholders about the partnership** at the onset to stay on track and to foster a sense of ownership among corporate staff about the partnership building process and outcomes.
- **Formally recognize the important role of the coordinator/liaison** that is responsible for developing and managing the partnership. Recognition may include additional compensation, a service award, increased leadership responsibilities, formal mentoring role, etc.

Step 4: Identify liaison for partnership

Companies that are serious about developing community partnerships mobilize non-cash resources to support partnership activities. Successful business/FBCO partnerships are those that designate a liaison or “collaborative entrepreneur” who is responsible for developing, maintaining, and managing the partnership. The liaison is also responsible for identifying potential partner(s), managing the communication between businesses and community partners (i.e. holding regular meetings), and updating partners about progress towards meeting the partnership’s goals and objectives.

Find a champion to “sell” the partnership to corporate stakeholders.

Bank of America employs one part-time national staff member to support and coordinate its welfare-to-work initiatives, which involves close collaboration with FBCOs and other public agencies.

The University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Medical Center designated several staff members to develop and refine its training program with Jewish Vocational Services. The UCSF liaison participated in weekly meetings with the JVS liaison to stay abreast of training activities and participants’ progress.

Appendix: A
Online Resources for Locating FBCOs

Category	Name of Organization	Web Address/ URL
One-Stop Career Centers	America's Service Locator	http://www.servicelocator.org/
National Secular Organizations	Urban League	http://www.nul.org/
	SER Jobs for Progress	http://www.ser-national.org/
	Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (OIC)	http://www.oicofamerica.org/
	United Way	http://national.unitedway.org/
	Seedco	http://www.seedco.org/
	Goodwill Industries	http://www.goodwill.org/page/guest/about
National/Regional Faith-based Organizations/Networks	Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility	http://www.iccr.org/
	Catholic Campaign for Human Development	http://www.usccb.org/cchd/
	Partners in Community Based Development	http://www.lillyendowment.org/
	Community Development Credit Unions	http://www.natfed.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1
	Good Samaritan Ministries, Ottawa County, MI	http://www.goodsamministries.com/Web/about_us.asp
	Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN)	www.fastennetwork.org
National Denominational Groups	Catholic Charities	http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/
	Jewish Family Services/Jewish Vocational Services	Search by state and local sites

Category	Name of Organization	Web Address/ URL
	Lutheran Social Services	http://www.lsss.org/
	Salvation Army	http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/www_usn.nsf
Employment and Training Providers	Jobs for Life Center Locations	www.jobsforlife.com/affiliate-locations.htm
	Jobs Partnership Florida Business Services	http://www.jobspartnershipfl.org/partnerships.html
	Spanish Coalition for Jobs	http://www.scj-usa.org/
	Trinity Career Networking Group	www.trinitynetworking.org
Workforce Development Resources	WorkforceUSA.net	www.workforceusa.net
	America Works	http://www.americaworks.com/
	DOL's Business Services	www.doleta.gov/business/
	Office of Faith and Community Initiatives	http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/

Appendix B: MOU Template

I. Purpose of MOU

- Identify the main goals and purpose of the MOU.

II. Parties to the MOU

- Identify the names and addresses of the partner(s) as well as the agency or business they are representing in this agreement.
- Identify a contact person for each partner who will oversee the implementation of the MOU.

III. Duration of Agreement

- Partners should negotiate and agree on the length of the agreement.

IV. Services to be Offered by FBCO

- Identify each of the services that the FBCO or other public agency will provide and describe how those services will be provided.
- Identify whether the FBCO will provide the service directly or through a referral to another agency that has partnered with the FBCO.
- Indicate how referrals to businesses will be made. Include methods for referral and the point of contact at the FBCO for handling referrals.
- Identify other resources that will be made available to business partners as part of this agreement (e.g. ongoing case management, visits to worksites to check on worker’s progress, etc.). Below is a suggested matrix for services that FBCOs can provide to businesses.

Services Offered by FBCOs to Businesses

Service	Name of Agency	Provided Directly/Referral
Recruiting, assessing, screening job applicants		
Posting job listings		
Matching job applicants with appropriate jobs		
Convening job fairs		
Training employees in technical skills		

Service	Name of Agency	Provided Directly/Referral
Training employees in soft skills		
Providing supportive services to enhance worker retention (e.g. transportation, childcare)		
Providing information about tax credit programs, labor laws, unemployment insurance		
Providing labor market information		
Providing interviewing facilities		
Provide ongoing case management and counseling to workers to enhance their retention		

V. Services to be Offered by Business

- Identify services that businesses will offer FBCOs as part of this agreement, e.g. review job applications/resumes, hire trained employees, provide benefits, etc.
- Identify resources that businesses will contribute to the partnership, if relevant, including in-kind services. Below is a suggested matrix of the types of services that businesses can contribute to the FBCO partnership.

Services Offered by Businesses in FBCO Partnership

Service	J
Provide relevant job announcements	
Review job applications and interview qualified candidates	
Hire qualified job candidates	
Contribute to design of customized training	

Service	J
Attend regularly scheduled meetings with partners	
Identify contact person/liaison to coordinate with FBCO partner	

VI. Signatures

- The MOU should conclude with a signature page for all partners to sign to confirm their acceptance of the terms of the MOU.

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**Appendix C:
Building Consensus for Agreements in an MOU**

This worksheet provides guidelines for building consensus for agreements to include in an MOU. It can be used as part of *Step 7: Formalize the Partnership* to help reach a consensus for agreements among business and FBCO partners.

PURPOSE OF CONSENSUS BUILDING

- Generate full discussion of different perspectives on complex issues.
- Understand the interests of each partner.
- Makes it possible for people with varying interests to make decisions that are good for their organization and that each partner can “live with.”
- Involve all partners to strengthen their commitment to an agreement.

ELEMENTS OF CONSENSUS BUILDING

- Allow full discussion of all sides of an issue.
- At varying points during the discussion, test the extent of agreement among partners by calling for “a show of thumbs.”
 - *Thumb up* means the individual can support a decision, even if it is not his/her first choice.
 - *Thumb sideways* means an individual still has some questions or concerns about the decision but can live with it if necessary.
 - *Thumb down* means an individual does not agree with decision and cannot support it.
- Every individual that has a thumb down or sideways must state their concern, question, or reason for not supporting the decision.
- Supporters have an opportunity to try to address the stated concerns.
- Once everyone has indicated any concerns and supporters have addressed those concerns, call for another “a show of thumbs.”
- Consensus has been reached if all thumbs are up or sideways.