

Literature Review: Business/Faith-Based and Community Organizations (FBCO) Partnerships

Background

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the vital role that FBCOs can play in providing employment and training services to job seekers while helping businesses meet their objectives. Many forward thinking companies are recognizing that community partnerships can also contribute to profitability in that it helps them meet and exceed placement and retention goals. The Literature Review provides an overview of the partnerships that FBCOs have formed with businesses, how those partnerships are evolving, and how they are benefiting both parties. Drawing on the findings from the Literature Review, the Action Steps for Businesses guide is a practical, user-friendly guide for businesses that are interested in working with FBCOs. This step-by-step guide includes procedures for developing effective FBCO partnerships, and highlights the resources needed to develop, maintain, and sustain these partnerships.

Principal Conclusions

- While the desire to affect social change is a strong motivator for business/FBCO partnerships, most businesses felt that the primary reason they partner with FBCOs is to enhance their bottom line.
- FBCOs have extensive community connections that allow them to reach and mobilize a sizable labor pool. As trusted community institutions and service providers, they gain the respect of both job seekers and businesses.
- Partnerships with FBCOs help businesses identify a pool of high quality job applicants who are eager and motivated to work.
- Partnering with FBCOs can contribute to increased employee retention because FBCOs provide a wide range of supportive services such as counseling, childcare assistance, mentoring, emergency shelter, and other services.
- For businesses, hiring staff can be costly, so partnering with FBCOs can streamline the recruitment process. FBCOs can pre-screen job applicants and provide relevant training in “soft” and “hard” skills, thus saving businesses money on recruitment, training, and hiring expenses.
- A common way in which businesses collaborate with FBCOs is through the provision of training services. Businesses may work closely with FBCOs to design training programs that are tailored to their work requirements, or FBCOs can solicit a company’s input in designing the training themselves.
- FBCOs and businesses have established a number of training partnerships, including soft-skills training and basic education, technical skills training for specific vocations, and incumbent worker training with a focus on career ladders for entry-level employees.
- Partnering with FBCOs can enhance the businesses’ reputations in the community, which can result in a strong strategic business advantage.

Employer and FBCO partnerships face a number of challenges as well, including:

- Negative stereotypes that businesses may have of FBCOs and its constituents;
- Businesses not investing sufficient time and resources to develop and maintain the partnership;
- Difficulty for businesses to secure buy-in to partnership from key personnel;
- Businesses not fully understanding the culture of the nonprofit sector, its service delivery models and its program requirements;
- The ability for both partners to sustain the partnership and develop a funding strategy; and
- The difficulty in surviving shifts in the national, regional, and local economic climate and labor market.

Policy Implications

- Through partnerships with FBCOs, businesses can channel their recruitment efforts towards targeted populations, such as disadvantaged youth, low-income individuals, dislocated workers, veterans, and people with disabilities who could fill appropriate career tracks.
- FBCOs can help businesses enhance retention strategies by providing employer workshops, supervisor training programs, and customized training and retention support to improve productivity and reduce turnover.
- Businesses and FBCOs must determine partnership goals and develop a plan for sustainability that corresponds to their needs and should access One-Stop resources to further sustain these partnerships.
- FBCOs require access to funding and technical assistance to build their organizational capacity so that they can use their advantage to meet the needs of businesses and other community partners more effectively.