Community Engagement In Building a Clinic and Community Garden in South Los Angeles

Alexis Moreno, MAUP
Research Analyst, Research and Evaluation Unit
Special Service for Groups
Los Angeles, CA

amoreno@ssgmain.org
www.ssg.org
Presenter Disclosures

Alexis Moreno

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose
Introduction

In South LA, UMMA Community Clinic and Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust are developing a school-based Wellness Center and Community Garden at Fremont High School. Special Service for Groups (SSG) conducted a community engaged assessment to develop both programming and operations recommendations for the project. A findings report, with community recommendations in 10 major areas, was completed in Winter 2011.

CBAR Research Questions:

- What are the health needs?
- What assets exist within the community to support health and wellness?
- What can be done to ensure community uses the clinic and garden for maximum benefit?
Introduction (cont’d.)

We worked with community members--a group of 9 students and a group of 10 adults --through every stage of the research process, including design, data collection and interpretation and sharing results.

- Grounded research questions and methods in community members experiences and hopes

Mixed methods approach:

- 10 focus groups
- 14 key informant interviews
- Surveys: 1 adult survey (189 participants), 1 student survey (579 participants, in-class, lunchtime and on-line)
- Participatory photography project.
Learning Objectives

1. Getting Buy-In > Deep engagement of and ownership of assessment/project by community members
2. Using community organizing and popular education methods to increase community participation during and beyond the research process
3. Creating actionable recommendations with community members
“Buy-in” > Deep Engagement

The community was both enthusiast and skeptical about the project.

Our Approach

- Transparency: Roles, relationships, limitations

- Building Trust: Share who we are, why we care about this work, allow space/time for honest conversations. You are the experts in your own community, we are facilitators

- Allow conversation on “hot” topics- people want to be heard; Acknowledge anger and past experiences

- Engage with existing assets: Community Coalition, CADRE, parent groups, RAC

- Play to strengths of researchers: Reached the hard to reach: unaffiliated, neighbors, friends, relatives
Community Organizing and Popular Education methods

Organizing Concepts

• Political Anger: Focus group questions based on researchers own concerns and experiences

• Power Analysis: Who do we need to talk to? What groups are not normally included? Who needs to know about this project? Who has relational power?

Popular Education tools

• “Where I’m From” poetry exercise

• Participatory photography (youth) w/ site visits to clinic and garden

• Focus group training for adult community researchers
Creating actionable recommendations with community members

Youth
- We tabulated data and shared for students’ interpretation, e.g. Students selected clinic hours during school as top choice; student researchers said they want to get out of class.
- We backed them up with journal articles and other research findings related to topics identified through surveys.

Adult Researchers recommendations
- Emphasized respectful staff, up-front information on eligibility and costs and understanding how clinics work
- Expanded concept of community garden to include teaching residents how to grow at home, in containers
- Included recommendations about job training, social enterprise and local hiring
## Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Topic</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Conditions</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for older students to become peer health educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Access</td>
<td>Target outreach to boys and men Provide clear information on cost and eligibility in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Healthy Foods</td>
<td>Dedicated garden space for classes and student clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Community Ownership</td>
<td>Provide a pleasant and appealing aesthetic Hire staff from community, that will treat community respectfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Opportunities</td>
<td>Develop social enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral and Coordination with Fremont HS</td>
<td>Pre-consent form for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with High School Curriculum</td>
<td>Internship program and class activities Orientation for all teachers and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement and Outreach</td>
<td>Integrate students and community members as key players in outreach, community education and peer support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results and Next Steps

- Researchers shared their own experiences, hopes and recommendations at Town Hall and groundbreaking.
- Student health leadership group formed
- Community Advisory Group has been formed, will help prioritize recommendations for programs
- Report is being used to develop grant proposal to further develop this innovative model of joint programs
- Interest from local school district in using this approach at other school-based clinics
Resources

Fremont Community Engaged Assessment Report
http://tinyurl.com/FremontReport

Description of Fremont Wellness Center and Garden
http://www.ummaclinic.org/people-we-serve/fremont-h-s-clinic

“Where I’m From” poem/lesson plan
http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/%E2%80%9Cwhere-i%E2%80%99m-from%E2%80%9D-poems

Information on Photovoice
http://people.umass.edu/afeldman/Photovoice.htm

SSG Research & Evaluation project highlights
http://www.facebook.com/SSGresearch