

RIAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Rio de Janeiro, May 20 and 21, 2008

Panel 2 – Presentation Summary of Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS)

Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS) started nearly 15 years as small project supported by a bank loan and personal gifts to reclaim high school dropouts. Over time, the organization has become part of the fabric of the community - supported at all levels of government and still supported by some of the original benefactors. In addition to working within major initiatives such as The Corporation for National Services, Youthbuild and Charter School alliances, ISUS, in its own rite, has created successful partnerships with education, labor, justice and human services, business and industry. The lessons learned in crafting these relationships and witnessing masterful partnerships forged by other organizations yielded the following observations.

Questions:

- **What are key strategies for promoting intergovernmental partnerships between agencies serving youth? What are strategies for promoting partnerships between governments and their social partners? What are critical elements of partnerships and how does each partner contribute?**

Five principles that the most successful partnership-builders I know practice:

- ✓ Understand a potential partner's mandate, vision and challenges
 - ✓ Create strategies and alliances that play to the strengths of the partners.
 - ✓ Under-promise and over-perform.
 - ✓ Build long-term relationships that add value and grow in trust and commitment over time
 - ✓ Are deliberate about contributing solutions and adding value
- **What incentives are most effective in sustaining these relationships?**
 - ✓ Give partners outcome data to demonstrate both their and your effectiveness.
 - ✓ Give credit to partners within the circles they value - rarely requested but usually greatly appreciated. It could be as basic as writing articles from the perspective of the partner or submitting the partner for an award or asking the partner to participate in a high visibility event.
 - ✓ Leverage funds for common priorities
 - **At what stages is partnership involvement most valuable: Implementation? Design? Diagnostics?**

It depends on the partner's role, but probably the design phase is most valuable, so that the initiative does not miss the mark. But design and redesign should be ongoing or strategies become obsolete.

- **How are training programs targeted to provide training for in-demand industries and occupations?**

As practitioners, with social entrepreneurial leanings, ISUS stays current on area labor market projections and trends within industries, as well as, emerging opportunities. Thinking just a little ahead allows an organization to position itself with the right talent, the right credentialing, the right partners, and the right implementation strategy. This anticipation improves the likelihood of having the youth trained with skills that match the needs of the workforce.

- **Which results, in terms of generation of productive and decent work for youth, were obtained or could be expected from the promotion of inter-governmental and public-private partnerships?**

Example of inter-governmental and public-private partnership that created high-impact results

- ✓ City has one of the highest school dropout rates in the State, deteriorating neighborhoods and construction companies have labor need.
- ✓ Non-profit organization works with construction partners to design training program (funding includes, gifts, grants and loans)
- ✓ Non-profit organization recruits dropouts to complete high school and learn construction skills
- ✓ Youth acquire high school diplomas (Education funds), industry certifications (Labor Funds), and practice their construction skills in the context of rebuilding urban neighborhoods (Housing funds, Bank loans, private grants)
- ✓ Hospital offers challenge grant to City for further rebuilding of its neighborhood. (City uses Federal Entitlement Funds)
- ✓ Major neighborhood revitalization, including residential and commercial development
- ✓ Graduates hired by construction and other businesses involved in revitalization project.