

# 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](mailto:amoreno@ssgmain.org)  
[www.ssg.org](http://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

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

# Results and Next Steps

- Researchers shared their own experiences, hopes and recommendations at Town Hall and ground breaking.
- 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>

<http://www.laschools.org/new-site/healthy-spaces/shared-use-projects/fremont>

“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>

