

## FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, CHARITABLE CHOICE, AND GOVERNMENT

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*This article discusses the positive and negative aspects of "charitable choice." Although the author challenges the validity of the "separation of Church and State" argument against charitable choice, perhaps the most popular argument against this concept is that it violates the separation of Church and State principles. On the other hand, the greatest value of the charitable choice concept is its inclusion of diversity and the resulting governmental responsiveness because of such diversity. The American public is becoming more diverse, and in turn, social issues concerning various communities are becoming more complex. In such an environment, a rich variety of inputs from diverse groups should be encouraged by public agencies. No one single entity (not government, education, or business) can solve all society problems alone. The WHOLE community—faith-based organizations, education, and public and private agencies, together—must all play a role in finding solutions and committing to action.*

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**The American public** is becoming more diverse, and in turn, social issues concerning various communities are becoming more complex. In such an environment, a rich variety of inputs from diverse groups should be encouraged by public agencies. No one, single entity (not government, education, or business) can solve all society problems alone. The WHOLE community—faith-based organizations, education, public and private agencies, together—must all play a role in finding solutions and committing to action.

President Bush's advocacy for the "charitable choice" concept addresses partnerships between faith-based and governmental organizations. This article, first, defines and describes faith-based initiatives and

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charitable choice, and gives a brief historical perspective of these concepts. Following the definition and background information is a discussion of the possible opportunities for faith-based and government partnerships that would be greatly enhanced by the Charitable Choice concept. The next section presents the negative considerations associated with the charitable choice concept. Examples of two government innovations that have successfully implemented such partnerships are then presented. The final section presents a participatory action research model, which demonstrates how faith-based organizations/programs in partnership with governmental organizations can help with the delivery of services and taxes, as well as with other solutions to major problems in the society.

### **FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES AND CHARITABLE CHOICE**

Soon after President Bush took office in January 2001, he launched a major drive to provide public funds for churches and other religious ministries that provide social assistance for Americans in need. When there was evidence of social needs in America, Bush wanted his administration to look first to faith-based programs and community groups, which have proven their power to save and change lives. He did not simply want the government to fund the religious activities of any group, but when people of faith provided social services, the government would not discriminate against them in its competitive distribution of tax dollars. Bush's faith-based initiatives represent a central principle that would define his approach to domestic policy.

In an effort to implement his approximately \$8 to \$10 billion plan, Bush created church-state partnerships with a series of policy directives starting with two executive orders. First, he established the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and directed its staff to coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations. The second order removed those "bureaucratic barriers" that served as safeguards for old separation of church and state rules, and regulated public funds for religious groups in the past. President Bush also established faith-based "centers" in five cabinet-level federal agencies to assist with the work in the White House faith-based office. The five centers were the Departments of Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education. Under the plan, financial assistance would be provided to fund faith-based services in the

areas of after-school programs for children, job training, drug treatment, prison rehabilitation programs, and abstinence programs.

Bush's efforts represent an aggressive move to support and expand charitable choice. Charitable choice is a set of rules about how state government buys social services. "These rules require that state governments contracting with private sector organizations cannot discriminate against faith-based social service providers because those providers are religious. . . . It creates a level playing field between secular, and [religious] organizations that want to compete for government contracts to underwrite their community service efforts" (Sherman, 2001, p. 9).

Charitable choice has five basic principles. It

- prohibits government from excluding faith-based providers from competing on an equal basis for government funds because they are religious;
- obligates the government to protect the religious character of groups that receive government funds;
- protects the religious liberty of people who need government-funded assistance by expanding their service options [so if a client objects to receiving social services from a faith-based provider, under charitable choice, the government must ensure that he/she obtains assistance from another organization];
- honors the constitutional rule that government not be biased for or against faith-based groups or fund inherently religious activities like sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization; and
- prohibits discrimination against beneficiaries on the basis of religion, race, gender, age, disability, and so on (*Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions About Charitable Choice*, 2001).

The charitable choice concept originated with Attorney General John Ashcroft during the drafting of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. Presently, it applies to other domestic programs including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (1996), Welfare-to-Work (1997), Community Services Block Grant (1998), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) drug treatment (2000). Prior to 1996, it was not unusual for religious groups to receive government funds for the purpose of providing social services, but these groups receive such funds under rigid constitutional regulations. Because of such regulations, many states have been very slow to implement the charitable choice concept, and religious organizations have also been slow in their activities to partner with the government.

### **FAITH-BASED AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS: THE OPPORTUNITIES**

Public agencies and faith-based organizations share a common goal. The government's desire for effective social services is congruent with the religious organizations' ability to change and improve lives. The charitable choice construct allows private citizens and communities to become involved in the delivery of social services through the organized structure of a church and/or other religious entities. The church and other faith-based groups, then, are simply organized vehicles through which our government can ensure community involvement.

From the churches' vantage point, such collaboration could mean added resources to underwrite current programs (that is, the enhancement or expansion of such programs), and/or the implementation of new ministries. Collaboration with government could also provide ministry leaders with opportunities to get connected to new networks, such as new partners in the business community, other nonprofits, or potential donors from the philanthropic sector. Also, once the government-church relationship has been established, satisfying the reporting requirements of the government contract could actually help to improve a church's internal administrative structure, such as improving the record-keeping and accounting system. In addition, public agencies may be able to provide religious groups with technical skills, or in-kind donations, such as office furniture and computers (Sherman, 2001, pp. 14-15).

There are several reasons to involve whole communities, that is, private citizens, businesses, educational institutions, as well as faith-based groups, in the activities of government. First, from a leadership and/or management perspective, including input from a variety of sources can improve rational decision making. Charitable choice initiatives will permit "bottoms-up" organizational input from religious groups, which in turn, can increase the probability that the quality and number of alternative ideas and approaches to a particular problem and/or goal will increase at an exponential rate. By including diverse recommendations and opinions from private citizens, the business community, educators, as well as religious groups, public managers will have the benefit of the most comprehensive evaluation of alternative ways to achieve goals and solve problems "(and the most comprehensive evaluation of the consequences of each alternative considered) possible" (Wilson, 1996, pp. 1088-1090). Better decisions and more responsive policies are made when the number and quality of possible alternatives and consequences associated with a

decision or policy are increased through the involvement of diverse groups (Wilson, 1996, pp. 1088-1090).

Second, partnerships between government and educators, the business community, as well as religious organizations can improve upon the capacity of the political system to be responsive. Civil servants' abilities to respond to environmental demands are greatly improved by such collaborations. Collaborations and partnerships between public agencies and diverse community groups mean that the community is involved in the work of government. More discussion of "responsiveness" is presented later.

Community involvement, through the implementation of charitable choice initiatives, allows faith-based groups to coproduce services and goods needed by the community. In the coproduction of goods and services, the citizens are participants, not merely consumers. As participants, they learn about how a public administrative function is organized and operated; they begin to understand the processes and structures needed to implement public policy.

In addition, the involvement of the religious community in the ongoing activities of public agencies can prove to be a saving to government. Church volunteers can be trained to perform some of those ongoing operational duties of a public agency. Changing demographics (diversity), resulting in an increase in public goods and service demands, is one of the most significant environmental change facing public agencies today. This change is coupled with a scarcity of resources. Public agencies are required to do "more with less." Properly trained and/or educated church members can be used to perform those duties for which agencies do not have the funds to hire additional staff. The following examples help demonstrate the effectiveness of government in the coproduction of services and of how church members were trained to provide mentoring teams to families making the transition from welfare to work.

### OTTAWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Ottawa County, Michigan's Good Samaritan Ministries' partnership with the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA) often has been cited as a model of excellent government-faith collaboration. "Good Sam" originally received \$99,000 to mobilize and train churches to provide mentoring teams to families making the transition from welfare to work under Michigan's Project Zero initiative. The ministry matched more than 50 churches with TANF (welfare) families and, according to

Governor Engler, played a key role in helping Ottawa County become the first locality in the nation to move all able-bodied welfare recipients into jobs. In the past few years, Good Sam has continued to train churches for relational, holistic ministry among some of the hardest-to-serve welfare families. In 1999, it also secured a small contract with FIA for its "Carlink" mentoring initiative. This effort grew out of the ministry's awareness that lack of reliable transportation was a barrier to poor people's attempts to secure and retain employment. Through CarLink, Good Sam solicits donations of used cars, then gives them to clients needing transportation. Each recipient is also matched with a mentor from the church in the few months preceding the donation; the mentor offers budget counseling and practical support. In 9 months, 35 families became car owners through the program (Sherman, 2001, p. 20).

Another advantage of charitable choice initiatives, involving faith-based organizations and government partnerships, is that church members' participation in civil services can improve on their sense of ownership or responsibility for government action. Church members will feel a certain level of control over those activities affecting their lives and environment. They will feel that they are principal actors in government rather than being acted on by government. Government and faith-based collaborations will allow church members to fulfill their moral obligation to take part in government (Wilson, 1996, pp. 1088-1090). The example below demonstrates this sense of ownership and moral contribution of the faith-based participants.

### SHASTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Shasta County, California, FaithWORKS! Initiative is a major example of collaboration between the faith community and government in California. FaithWORKS! won a \$125,000 contract in 1998 to match TANF families with mentors from the faith community who could provide emotional support and coaching. The ministry currently holds a \$227,000 contract with the Department of Social Services to provide mentoring to an even larger number of individuals (they served 576 people in 2000). Almost all the mentoring volunteers are drawn from the faith community. Some mentors focus on job readiness issues, others on job retention issues, depending on the client's needs. The ministry also offers a "drop in" center where clients can stop by for a chat with staff. The program has become so highly regarded that other government agencies and secular social service

organizations refer clients to FaithWORKS! for help. Executive Director Mike Evans reports that there have been no church-state problems. "Really, we are seen as a sort of 'Chaplain' to the social services community," he says (Sherman, 2001, p. 18).

### FAITH-BASED GROUPS: THE OPPOSITION

There are those who argue vehemently against any partnerships between religious groups and governmental agencies. One major objection is grounded in the advocacy for the separation of Church and State. This argument loses some validity when one considers the number of subtle ways in which the Church and State work collaboratively. In a number of areas within the American culture, Church and State collaborate to give legitimacy and authority to a public good. For example, the religious phrase "In God We Trust," is used on a State product, that is, money. The production of money is a State responsibility. However, the use of these religious words on money demonstrates the State and the Church share belief in the supremacy of God. Likewise the American flag symbolizes unity, a Republic, and Statehood. The pledge to the flag includes the following statement: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God." Our pledge to the flag demonstrates that both Church and State recognize God as the highest authority. Last, in our Courts of Law, one is asked to swear (with his/her hand on the Bible) that he/she is "telling the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth so help you God." Our courts are systems of the State, and yet, only when one swears to God, with his/her hand on the Bible (a religious item), should his/her testimony be accepted as the truth. The point of this discussion is to point out several areas in the American culture where the Church and State work collaboratively to imbue certain values, and to reiterate, to give legitimacy and authority to a public good and/or system.

The argument for the separation of Church and State, relative to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, however, is concerned with American citizens' right to decide whether to support religious ministries. Opponents feel that charitable choice is a violation of the First Amendment because American citizens will no longer have the freedom of deciding on their own whether to support religious organizations. The concept of charitable choice would force taxpayers to subsidize religious groups they may or may not believe in.



President Bush, on the other hand, believes that when it comes to social needs in this country, to reiterate, it is the faith-based programs and community groups that have proven their power to save and change lives. The paradox of the charitable choice effort lies within the contradiction that faith-based organizations have been able to change lives through proselytization; however, governmental funds should not be used for this purpose. Opponents of charitable choice posit that President Bush cannot sincerely believe that he will change lives by funding religious organizations, and at the same time maintain the stance that he is not funding religion.

Another tax issue involves the notion of possible discrimination. Churches can legally discriminate against hiring certain people because of their religious beliefs. Under charitable choice, religious groups contracting with government can retain the right to use religious criteria in employment decisions. A church can choose to hire only those who agree with its Statement of Faith, but it may not discriminate in its hiring on other grounds, such as race, age, gender, and/or disability.

Other opposition of the charitable choice concept embodies the fear that those groups that receive government funds for the purpose of providing social services to the needy will also be free to proselytize those persons who are seeking such assistance. In other words, religion will be forced on those who are coming to certain religious groups for services. (Of course, as was pointed out above, this belief is not congruent with the objective of the initiative.)

Fourth, the kind of partnership between Church and State as suggested by the charitable choice may mean an increase in the regulation of churches. The government will be obligated to regulate what it finances. It will be obligated to ensure that certain tax dollars are used appropriately.

Fifth, some opponents believe that once the religious organizations and government are working in partnership, and the churches are receiving public funds, congregational members may reduce their contributions to the churches. In other words, the governmental contributions may encourage church members to give less than they did when the public subsidy was not there. Some opponents also believe that charitable choice will pit religious groups against each other. These groups will start to compete with each other for government funds.

President Bush has promised that he will not favor some religions over others. And at the same time, he announced that he would not allow government funding for the "Nation of Islam" because he believes that this



group "preaches hate." There is a fear that charitable choice will favor some religious groups over others.

Finally, those who oppose any governmental and religious groups partnerships as would exist under Bush's faith-based initiatives do not believe that religious groups will offer better social services and/or be more effective in their delivery of service than the secular providers. They argue that there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that religious organizations are more successful than secular groups in providing aid or producing better results. And because there is little or no empirical research available, they feel it is very unwise to implement a major federal initiative such as charitable choice. Although there are no studies (to my knowledge) that demonstrate the superiority in the deliverance of social services of religious organizations over public agencies, the positive factors emanating from the faith-based initiatives outweigh, by far, the negative considerations. In addition, two examples of how a partnership between faith-based organizations and governmental agencies can be very successful were presented above. Also, the participatory action research model presented below is evidence that faith-based organizations can provide significant help with attempts to solve major societal problems.

### PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Several faith-based organizations have become interested in the recidivism rates of young men in California. Among these churches in Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, and San Diego, respectively, are the following: Los Angeles Metropolitan (LAM) churches, Congregation Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE), and United African American Ministerial Action Council (UAAMAC). Although these congregations are concerned about recidivism rates of all offenders in California, they are especially concerned about this problem among young African American males between the ages of 19 and 29.

Action research (AR) has been the strategy/methodology used by these organizations to address this very serious societal problem. As an observant/participant, this author was able, firsthand, to be involved in the strategizing and development of a faith-based program designed to reduce recidivism in San Diego County. My role was that of a "professional action researcher" who analyzed, evaluated, and documented the work of the partners.

Greenwood and Levin (1998) describe action research as follows:

AR is social research carried out by a team encompassing a professional action researcher and members of an organization or community seeking to improve their situation. AR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just or satisfying situation for the stakeholders. Together, the professional researcher and the stakeholders define the problems to be examined, co-generate relevant knowledge about them, learn and execute social research techniques, take actions, and interpret the results of actions based on what they have learned. (p. 4)

Stringer (1996) provides a similar definition:

Community-based action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems. This approach to research favors consensual and participatory procedures that enable people (a) to investigate systematically their problems and issues, (b) to formulate powerful and sophisticated accounts of their situations, and (c) to devise plans to deal with the problem at hand. (p. 15)

The model for a General Education Development (GED) program began in Los Angeles County. In 1995, members of the Los Angeles Metropolitan (LAM) Churches began to raise concerns about the lack of young men involved in the lives of their congregations. They knew that incarceration played a major factor in the absence of men in the church. Church leadership began to take a more academic approach to the rise in incarceration, especially of nonviolent offenders. They gathered research that demonstrated that changes in criminal justice policy, rather than changes in crime rates, have been the most significant contributions leading to the rise of state prison population. A legislative study of the California prison population concluded that as many as a quarter of incoming inmates to the prison system would be appropriate candidates for diversion to community-based programs. The study estimated that diverting such offenders would save 17% to 20% of the corrections operating budget for new prison admissions (Petersilia, 1997, p. 8).

In contrast to other criminal justice policy, church leaders felt that public policy could also be implemented that could decrease the prison population. They were especially interested in reducing the recidivism rates of nonviolent offenders. In a 1998 Justice Policy Institute report, *America's One Million Nonviolent Prisoners*, more than one million nonviolent offenders were incarcerated in America. The report revealed that over the

past 20 years the nonviolent prisoner population has increased at a much faster rate than the violent prisoner population. Since 1978, the number of violent prisoners entering America's prisons has doubled, the number of nonviolent prisoners has tripled, and the number of persons imprisoned for drug offenses has increased eightfold. In 1998, 77% of the people entering prisons and jails were sentenced for nonviolent offenses.

The report showed the huge costs of imprisoning more than one million nonviolent offenders. The money that federal, state, and local governments spent in 1998 to incarcerate nonviolent offenders (\$24 billion) was 50% larger than the entire federal welfare budget (\$16.6 billion). And America is spending more money building prisons (\$2.6 billion) than universities (\$2.5 billion—[www.cjcb.org/ipi](http://www.cjcb.org/ipi)). These facts motivated LAM to begin a public policy campaign that included a recidivism intervention. There are many factors influencing recidivism, including criminal history, literacy/education, employment, housing accommodations, family, recreational/leisure activities, drugs, emotional and mental state, attitudes, and so on. Although the church leaders knew that literacy/education was not the sole determining factor affecting recidivism, they learned from research that education played a dominant role in the criminal activities of nonviolent offenders. For example, church leaders knew that education had been identified as one of the significant "treatment" targets by the Andrews and Bonta's (2000) Level of Service Inventory (LSI). The LSI is a measurement instrument that provides "a way of systematically bringing together risk and needs information important to offender treatment planning and for assigning levels of freedom and supervision . . . [Among incarcerated offenders the instrument] successfully predicted . . . parole outcomes, institutional misconducts, and recidivism one year following the offender's release" (pp. 1-3).

They understood the importance of literacy/education in securing employment. Upon release, ex-offenders are more likely to engage in criminal acts if they cannot find work. Such acts then will likely result in recidivism. In addition to educational services, the churches planned to develop other social programs as well (such as job training, substance abuse and personal counseling and services, housing referrals, etc.). The churches won the support of the Los Angeles County District Attorney. With input from the LAM members, he agreed to draft legislation to support churches providing the educational services for ex-offenders. Assembly Member Carl Washington introduced Assembly Bill 743 in the California State Legislature. LAM engaged in a 3-year battle with local, county, and state elected officials to finally win passage of the Bill.

This Bill established a 5-year pilot program to authorize the Courts to require any adult who has been convicted of a nonviolent or nonserious offense to participate in a program designed to assist the person in obtaining the equivalent of a 12th-grade education as a condition of probation. The Bill also would authorize the Courts to require a probationer to participate in a literacy or General Education Development program.

Section 1203.1abc was added to the Penal Code to read as follows:

- (a) In addition to any other terms of imprisonment, fine and conditions of probation, the court may require any adult convicted in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5, or a non-serious felony, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 1192.7, to participate in a program that is designed to assist the person in obtaining the equivalent of a 12th grade education. In the case of a probationer, the court may require participation in either a literacy program or a General Development (GED) program.
- (b) A probation officer may utilize volunteers from the community to provide assistance to probationers under this section.
- (c) This section shall be operable in Los Angeles County as a pilot project upon approval by a majority vote of the county's board of supervisors to be conducted in two courts within the County of Los Angeles. It shall be operable in other counties only upon approval by a majority vote of a county's board of supervisors.
- (d) A county probation department may utilize the volunteer services of a local college or university in evaluating the effectiveness of this program. In the County of Los Angeles, the California State University at Los Angeles (CSULA) shall evaluate the program and submit a report to the Legislature regarding the success or failure of the program. CSULA shall bear the costs of the evaluation and report.
- (e) This section shall not apply to any person who is mentally or developmentally incapable of attaining the equivalent of a 12th grade education.
- (f) Failure to make progress in a program under subdivision (a) is not a basis for revocation of probation.
- (g) This pilot program shall be deemed successful if at least 10 percent of the persons participating in the pilot project obtain the equivalent of a 12th grade education within three years.
- (h) It is the intent of the legislature that any increases in adult enrollment resulting from the implementation of subdivision (a) shall not be included in the apportionment of funds for adult education pursuant to Sections 52616.17 to 52616.20, inclusive, of the Education Code.
- (i) This section is repealed effective January 1, 2004, unless it is extended permanent by subsequent legislation.

In summary, a faith-organization was responsible for a public policy outcome, that is, a law that would significantly change the way the Courts could handle nonviolent offenders!

AB 743 was a major victory for the LAM organization. And although it cannot, at this stage, boast of a reduction in recidivism or a 10% GED graduation rate as yet, there are many positive aspects of LAM's efforts emanating from this Program.

In addition to demonstrating the ability of churches to understand the processes and structures needed to initiate and implement public policy, this law was also the impetus for faith-based educational and social services. The churches proceeded to organize themselves for the purpose of providing GED courses, along with other "wrap around" services (such as substance abuse counseling, employment training, job referrals, housing, etc.) for those ex-offenders who would become participants in the program. As participants in public service, LAM members learned about and performed many public personnel and administrative functions, such as training and hiring staff and program design and implementation. LAM members also became more knowledgeable about bureaucratic structures, processes, and behaviors. In addition, it is very important to note that AB 743 had no monetary appropriation, therefore the organization had to develop knowledge and expertise in fundraising activities as well.

LAM's involvement in this work was valuable for many reasons. Prior to the interest and work of LAM, no other entity/organization had initiated such an effort. LAM's efforts spoke to the value of diversity in public administration. LAM provided the District Attorney's (DA) Office with research and an innovation perspective on incarceration. LAM members identified a possible solution to recidivism and/or the incarceration of young men from a perspective that had not been considered before.

According to Meier (1993), students of representative bureaucracy suggest that bureaucracies broadly representative of the general public should produce policy outputs that meet the needs of all citizens. Also, in Selden's (1995) study, scientific support is provided for the link between diverse participation in public policy and the resulting public policy outcome. She examined the relationship between minority employment in public agencies and public policy outcomes, which are themselves consistent with minority interests. Selden's work took place within the context of the Rural Housing Loans Program, Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), U.S. Department of Agriculture. This program, which was established by the Housing Act of 1949, provides low to moderate income to residents of rural counties with the opportunity to acquire government-backed loans for housing purchases and repairs. FmHA county supervisors had absolute discretion regarding the selection of recipients of the housing loans, based on their reviews of loan applications and interviews

with applicants. The research indicated that supervisors' race or ethnicity strongly influenced the propensity of supervisors to see themselves as representatives of minority interests, which in turn increased the number of loan approvals going to minorities. Her results strongly supported the hypothesis that bureaucratic power is more responsive to the public demands when its characteristics (including race and gender) are representative of the general populace.

Together, LAM members and the DA's Office demonstrated more of a representative bureaucracy than had existed previously, and together they produced public policy that addressed the needs of many incarcerated persons.

LAM's actions supported the work of several scholars (McLeod & Lobel, 1992; Rice, 1994) who posit that work group diversity promotes creativity and innovativeness in the quality of ideas, problem solving, and decision making. Because of LAM's input, a huge need of the offenders (that is, education) was addressed. This, however, was only a small accomplishment compared to the bigger needs of taxpayers, that is, to reduce the costs of incarceration. LAM's plans to provide educational and social services for these offenders could be a great savings to the citizens of California.

San Diego County was also in need of a GED program. The county's inmate population had increased by 74% from 1.56 to 2.72 million from 1975 to 1995. The county's crimes had increased by 29% from 103,262 to 133,027. Sheriff's inmate population had increased by 400% from 1,119 to 5,252. (Data source: population & crime—San Diego Associations of Governments, [www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty](http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty).)

AB 743 mandated that the literacy program would be operable in the County of Los Angeles, and in any other county, upon approval of a county's board of supervisors. Another faith-based organization, the UAAMAC, benefiting from LAM experiences, began the political process of implementing its own GED project in San Diego. The UAAMAC started its campaign for a GED project with a prepublic forum. One major goal of this event was to call for the responsiveness of public officials.

Such a meeting provided an opportunity for the UAAMAC leadership and volunteers to introduce the GED project, as well as provided an opportunity to extend an invitation to the appropriate politicians to the public forum at the Bayview Baptist Church, December 1999. This forum was designed to call attention to the problem (recidivism), and to announce the work of the UAAMAC relative to the problem.



**TABLE 1**  
**Agenda for 1st Public Forum**

<i>Agenda Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
I. Praise and Worship	
A. Prayer	
B. Choirs	
II. Call to order	UAAMAC volunteer
III. Purpose of meeting	
IV. Ground rules for meeting	UAAMAC volunteer
V. History of UAAMAC	Winters, UAAMAC President
VI. GED—historical perspective	UAAMAC volunteer
VII. Request support from public officials for San Diego GED project	6 UAAMAC volunteers
A. Police chief	
B. District Attorney	
C. Councilman	
D. Mayor	
E. County sheriff	
F. Congressman	
VIII. Public officials are escorted out	
IX. Discussion of next steps by UAAMAC	
X. Adjournment	

NOTE: UAAMAC = United African American Ministerial Action Council; GED = General Education Development.

The Public Forum introduced UAAMAC members and volunteers. Among the invited participants in the forum were the mayor, city councilman, the police chief, the county sheriff, and the district attorney, and others. The public forum was the official “kick-off” of UAAMAC’s GED project. See Table 1 for the established agenda for this day.

An explanation of the history and the use of volunteers were significant activities to include in the agenda (see Table 1). Public officials, as well as UAAMAC volunteers, must have a historical understanding of why the UAAMAC decided to address this particular issue. In the Black community there are a myriad of social problems that need the community’s attention. The imprisonment of young men, however, may be the root of many other problems (such as unemployment, etc.).

It was very important to give the volunteers a significant roll in the initial activities of the project and other UAAMAC activities. This was an effective managerial strategy—generally people are committed to those things that they had a part in creating. Involving the volunteers at the very beginning improves the leadership’s chances that the volunteers will be



**TABLE 2**  
**Specific Questions for Public Officials**

All of the listed public officials were asked the following two questions:

1. Will you support UAAMAC's desire to create a mandate that ex-offenders make progress toward a GED as a condition of successful completion of probation as outlined in Assembly Bill 743?
2. Will you work with UAAMAC in an effort to convince the County Board of Supervisors to pass a resolution authorizing the implementation of Assembly Bill 743 in San Diego County as forth in AB 743?

Specific other questions were designed for the mayor, councilman, and congressman

Mayor: Will you work with UAAMAC to have the City Council pass a resolution endorsing the implementation of AB 743?

Councilman: Will you introduce a resolution in City Council endorsing the implementation of AB 743?

Congressman: Will you help identify National Demonstration Project Funding at the United States Department of Justice to help pay for any additional cost that local law enforcement might encounter in the implementation of AB 743?

NOTE: UAAMAC = United African American Ministerial Action Council.

committed to the project. This was especially important because, ultimately, the volunteers will carry out the largest portion of the implementation processes. The use of volunteers provides the public with the accurate image that the GED project is a faith-based initiative (including lay persons from the community, not just ministers) and that on this issue there is "unity of direction." In addition, the public officials see a new political strategy in the African American community. They see political organization, and they began to see a shifting paradigm—the community understands and demands that public officials be responsive to their needs. The community is calling for the public officials' accountability to them as a strong constituent in the political process; they are becoming more proactive instead of reactive to the political process.

Another strategy employed by the UAAMAC members designed to ensure the responsiveness of the public officials was to produce large numbers of community members at such public forums. Prior to this meeting, flyers, church announcements, word-of-mouth, and other techniques were used to increase the attendance of community members. Large numbers translate into images of unity, organization, and voting power for politicians. All public officials understand (and respond to) voting power. This public forum pulled together approximately 500 people from the community. One last point to emphasize: Politicians (as well as other

TABLE 3  
The Evaluation Process

- 
- I. Call to order/prayer
- II. Evaluation
- A. Turnout—How effective were the following:
1. The recruitment of members from local churches?
  2. Outreach to power centers in local church?
  3. Coordination between pastor and leadership teams?
  4. How can we be more effective in the future?
- B. Review the preparation for action
1. Understanding the purpose and ingredients of the action.
  2. Know the facts
  3. Review strength and weaknesses of agenda for elected officials
  4. Role of pastors, volunteers, and staff
  5. Media relations
- C. The action
1. Discussion of the processes, concerns, and feelings of the co-chairs (volunteers)
  2. Analysis of elected officials' behavior
  3. What actions were effective and what ones were not
  4. Analysis of reaction of audience. Were other community/church members excited about what occurred? Was there a "buy-in" on this action?
  5. Strategies for recruitment of more churches
  6. Media strategies—including involvement of the editorial board of the *Union-Tribune*.
  7. Follow-up letters to councilman, police chief, congressman, and so on.
- D. Adjournment
- 

ministers, community members, and the media) are more likely to attend a public forum if the convener of the forum can ensure a large turnout. Large crowds will spark interest and excitement in individuals—the greater the numbers the better. Table 2 lists the specific questions asked of each public official.

In an effort to control the possibility of long speeches from the politicians, specific questions, requiring short and quick answers, were created. Immediately following the above described public forum, the UAAMAC called a debriefing/evaluative meeting for leaders and volunteers. The agenda and content for this meeting is presented in Table 3.

The described debriefing session was very important. It allowed group members to evaluate what went well, as well as areas that could be improved. In addition, such a meeting served as a retooling and strategic planning opportunity for greater success the next time.

## THE STAKEHOLDERS

The UAAMAC initiated the GED project in San Diego County. It will provide literacy/GED classes and "wraparound" services for the participants.

### SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors was one of the first solicited partners. Supervisor Ron Roberts directed that a pilot program be developed to improve the general education and literacy among nonviolent offenders in San Diego County. The intent of this program was to address the strong correlation between criminal behavior and the lack of education and literacy skills. The County Board of Supervisors and District Attorney were sources of great political support and bureaucratic legitimacy for the UAAMAC, as well as the impetus to draw the other stakeholders to the table for further discussion and collaboration. The GED project itself was a new and interesting idea; however, a partnership between a group of ministers and a public bureaucracy was a challenging proposition.

In a January 11, 2000, memorandum to the County Board of Supervisors, the supervisor made the following recommendations relative to the GED initiative:

1. Make Penal Code Section 1203.1abc relating to criminal offenders operable in the County of San Diego.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to
  - A. establish a 5-year pilot program designed to improve general education and literacy among nonviolent offenders in San Diego County;
  - B. utilize volunteers from the community, including the UAAMAC, to assist with development and implementation of the pilot program;
  - C. solicit volunteer services of a local college or university in evaluating the effectiveness of this program; and
  - D. explore state, federal, and private funding options and return to the board during fiscal year (FY) 2000-2001 budget deliberations with cost estimates and identified funding for the pilot program.

The San Diego DA's Office assumed the leadership role in developing the Literacy Project pilot program. This office created a working committee of dedicated personnel from the San Diego DA's Office, the UAAMAC, Probation Department, the San Diego Community College District, the courts, public defenders, the San Diego Council on Literacy, and San

Diego State University. The DA's Office had the following responsibilities:

- Obtain the support from the bench, defense bar, and local communities to implement the literacy program;
- identify a program source (e.g., community college) to create a literacy program that is designed to improve general education and literacy among nonserious offenders;
- identify a population of criminal defendants who commit and plead guilty to nonserious felonies pursuant to PC 1203.1abc; and
- establish protocols and procedures with the court, probation, DA, and defense bar.

The above activities represent the responsibilities of the DA's Office during Phase I of the GED Initiative. During Phase II, however, the office's responsibilities include

- examination of other resources for literacy and GED education, and
- identification of additional population of defendants for program expansion.

The courts were to verify eligibility and order defendants to attend the Literacy Program rather than incarceration.

The Public Defender's Office would promote and introduce the Literacy Program to eligible defendants, and explore and discuss with defendants the wraparound services associated with the program.

The Probation Department would maintain records of each defendant's performance, attendance, and continued eligibility in the program. This department would also administer tests to determine the defendant's likelihood of recidivism and to maintain detailed data about each defendant's performance, attendance, and continued eligibility for the program.

The San Diego Council for Literacy would assess the defendants' literacy levels and educational eligibility for the program. It would facilitate the cooperative efforts of local literacy programs on behalf of the county-wide literacy effort.

In the State Legislature. Assemblymen Juan Vargas would work very diligently to get funding for this project.

The San Diego Community College District would provide the literacy project's instructors, curriculum, books, and school materials. Their combined expertise would guide and assist the DA's Office in expediting implementation of the program with the lowest possible cost.

San Diego State University would provide the project evaluator.

Although the work is in its infancy stage, the UAAMAC, like the Los Angeles Metropolitan churches, would become a producer of social and educational services for a significant population of people. Their efforts will greatly complement the activities of other social agencies responsible for such work. And perhaps most important, one major result of their work could very well be the reduction of recidivism that will, in turn, greatly reduce the tax burden of private citizens for prison institutions.

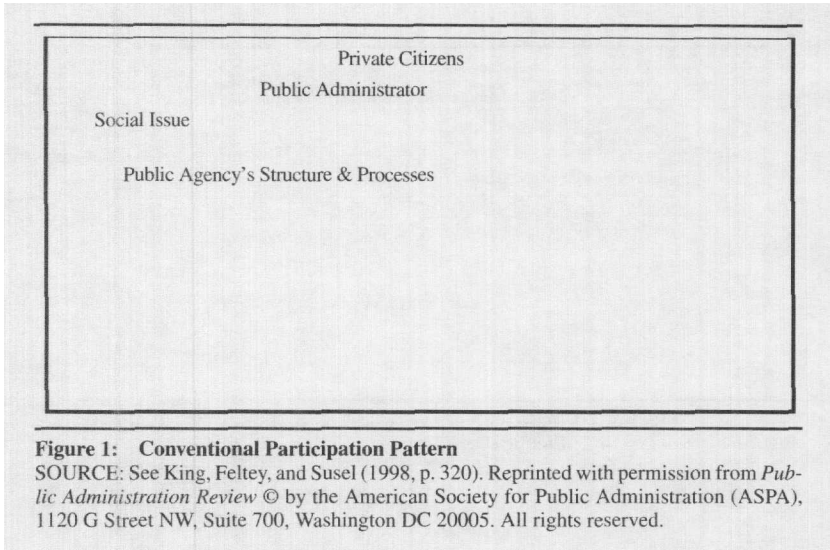
### CONCLUSION

For many minorities, the church is the only formal organization to which they belong. Considering this fact, then, while also being knowledgeable about McLeod and Lobel's (1992, p. 228) theories that "work group diversity promotes creativity and innovativeness in the quality of ideas, problem solving, and decision-making," allows one to readily see the value of public and faith-based organizational partnerships. Diversity (and therefore the emanating decision-making advantages) in public agencies is improved on at an exponential rate when public agencies form partnerships with faith-based organizations. The use of faith-based organizations as partners with public agencies in the delivery of social services could assist bureaucracies in developing their capacities to expand communication accessibility by creating appropriate settings and environments to hear and attend to diverse input.

The theory of "neutral competence" in public administration allows administrators to deny that they are representing their own interests and agendas. The truth is that public administrators, like persons in other professions, undergo a socialization process (through their education and "on-the-job" training), which imbues them with particular values. These values then, in turn, determine their behavior in the implementation process. Their implementation process, in turn, determines particular outcomes. A true representative government can be enhanced when other groups, such as faith-based groups, are allowed to assist career bureaucrats with the implementation and/or service-delivery processes.

Major themes in public administration theory include concepts of responsiveness and democratic accountability. As was previously discussed, governmental partnerships with faith-based organizations in delivery of public services can improve responsiveness and democratic accountability. Just as diversity is a rationale for representative bureaucracy,





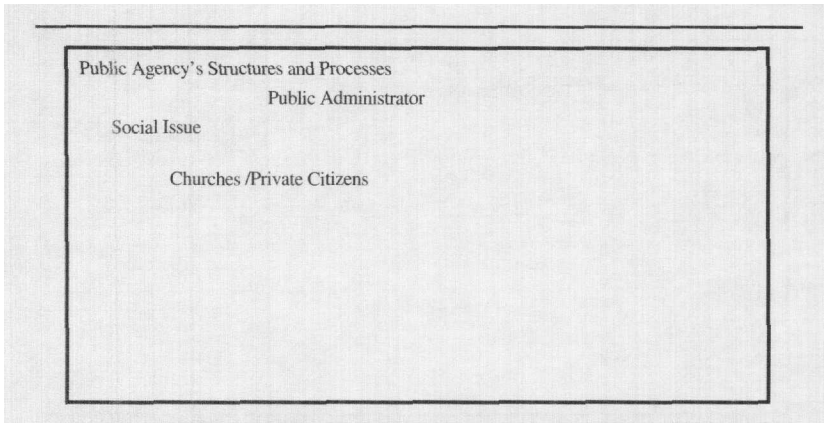
**Figure 1: Conventional Participation Pattern**

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the combined efforts of faith-based organizations and public agencies in the implementation processes of social programs can ensure greater accountability.

Charitable choice allows the religious community to become involved, which in turn could improve another constituent groups' perception of governmental responsiveness and effectiveness. There is a conventional way that private citizens have had their participation in governmental activities minimized or eliminated. Public participation processes have four components: (a) the social issue; (b) the public agency's structures, systems, and/or processes; (c) the bureaucrats/administrators within the agency; and (d) the public. In the conventional participation patterns the public agency's structures and processes, the public administrator and the private citizens are arrayed around the issue. "The citizen is placed at the greatest distance from the issue, the administrative structure and processes are the closest, and the administrator is the agent between the structure and citizens" (King, Feltry, & Susel, 1998, p. 320). Figure 1 illustrates the traditional participation pattern of these four components.

"[The agency's] processes and structures are the politically and socially constructed frameworks within which the public administrator must operate. These frameworks give the [public administrator] the authority to formulate decisions only after the issue had been defined" (King et al., 1998, p. 320). Although the administrator plays the role of the expert relative to the issue, he and/or she "has no real power to redefine the



**Figure 2: Context of Authentic Participation**

SOURCE: See King, Feltey, and Susel (1998, p. 321). Reprinted with permission from *Public Administration Review* © by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), 1120 G Street NW, Suite 700, Washington DC 20005. All rights reserved.

issue or to alter administrative processes to allow for greater citizen involvement” (King et al., 1998, p. 320). The administrator, however, can use this process or structure to maintain his or her centrality to the issue, and to control the ability of the citizen to influence the situation.

Without charitable choice, bureaucratic barriers (structures) stand in the way of “authentic participation” (that is, participation that works for all parties and stimulates interest and investment in public service) of faith-based organizations in the delivery of social services. These barriers were safeguards for the old separation of church and state rules (processes), and they were the source of authority for the administrators to make decisions about to whom to give financial support. Charitable choice, however, will call for a new paradigm shift. Faith-based organizations will move in closer to the issue—delivery of social services. Charitable choice will allow for the authentic participation of churches and other religious organization in the activities of government. It will place faith-based groups closer to the social issues and the administrative structures (old bureaucratic rules) furthest away (King et al., 1998, pp. 318-321). Figure 2 shows how this suggested pattern might look.

In conclusion, the inclusion of religious groups in delivery of governmental goods and/or services can have very positive managerial and political ramifications, resulting in better decisions and greater responsiveness, respectively. Responsiveness, in theory at least, is a dominant value



in public administration. Charitable choice can ensure such "value added" to government.

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