



The African Community Organization of Windsor

African-Centered Partnership Project:

Building Bridges Across Differences

Strategic Plan



INITIAL STEPS

The Building Bridges Across Differences project was the first federally funded project for the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) in collaboration with multiple community partners. The purpose of this project was to consider how the African community in Windsor-Essex, can develop partnerships with other organizations, as well as the mainstream Canadian community, with the overall goal of building ACOW's capacity. Drawing upon the unique strengths and values of the African community, this project aimed to improve understandings of African communities and organizations in Windsor-Essex through steering committee meetings, community focus groups, and community forums.

NEXT STEPS

Project key findings, focus group recommendations and priority setting activities were the drivers in establishing the strategic priorities. These strategies will guide ACOW with addressing gaps at multiple levels, including societal, African-Canadian community, the organization of ACOW, and service-delivery and coordination levels.

1. ACOW will build leadership and advocacy capacity.

- A strengths-based leadership model will be implemented to further develop capacity and sustainable programming.
- ACOW leadership and members will increase awareness about the organization and their function in the community. First steps will include the development of a communication strategy led by members and targeted to the entire African-Canadian community.
- ACOW will be involved in more advocacy work in the mainstream Canadian community by:
 - Pushing for more diversity in services (i.e. police, schools, banks, the City of Windsor) to be more representative of the African-Canadian community.
 - Acknowledging and rewarding organizations and employers who promote multiculturalism in their workforce.
 - Strengthening relationships with government and politicians by encouraging participation in ACOW activities and providing support and resources.

2. ACOW will increase capacity for service planning, development, and delivery.

- Anti-Racism services and workshops will be hosted in a welcoming space, addressing racism faced by members of the community and how to respond against racism.
- Funding sources will be secured to establish an African-Centered "one-stop point of service" with special attention to the unique needs of the African-Canadian community. Suggested services include, but are not limited to, immigration and settlement services, employment, housing, food bank, language, counselling, and dealing with racism.



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- Funding sources for social entrepreneurship and vocational skills training will be secured to increase the economic capacity within African-Canadian community.

3. ACOW will increase collaboration with other mainstream services to share resources and to utilize African cultural strengths and skills.

- Collaborative events and programs will be planned to recognize the strengths and skills of the African-Canadian community and to connect the mainstream community with the talents of individual members. New partnerships will be formed, modelling clear and open communication through multiple channels in multiple modes to build trust and mutual respect.

4. ACOW will increase collaboration with other mainstream organizations and services in Windsor-Essex to address racism, lack of culturally sensitive services, and lack of representation.

- ACOW will support its community members by challenging misconceptions about Africans through education, collaboration, and the creation of welcoming public spaces.
- ACOW will collaborate with other organizations by working more closely with: social services tied to child apprehension and foster care; police services to create positive relationships; education institutions to Africanize curricula and address racism in school environments; and, workplaces to hire more African-Canadians.