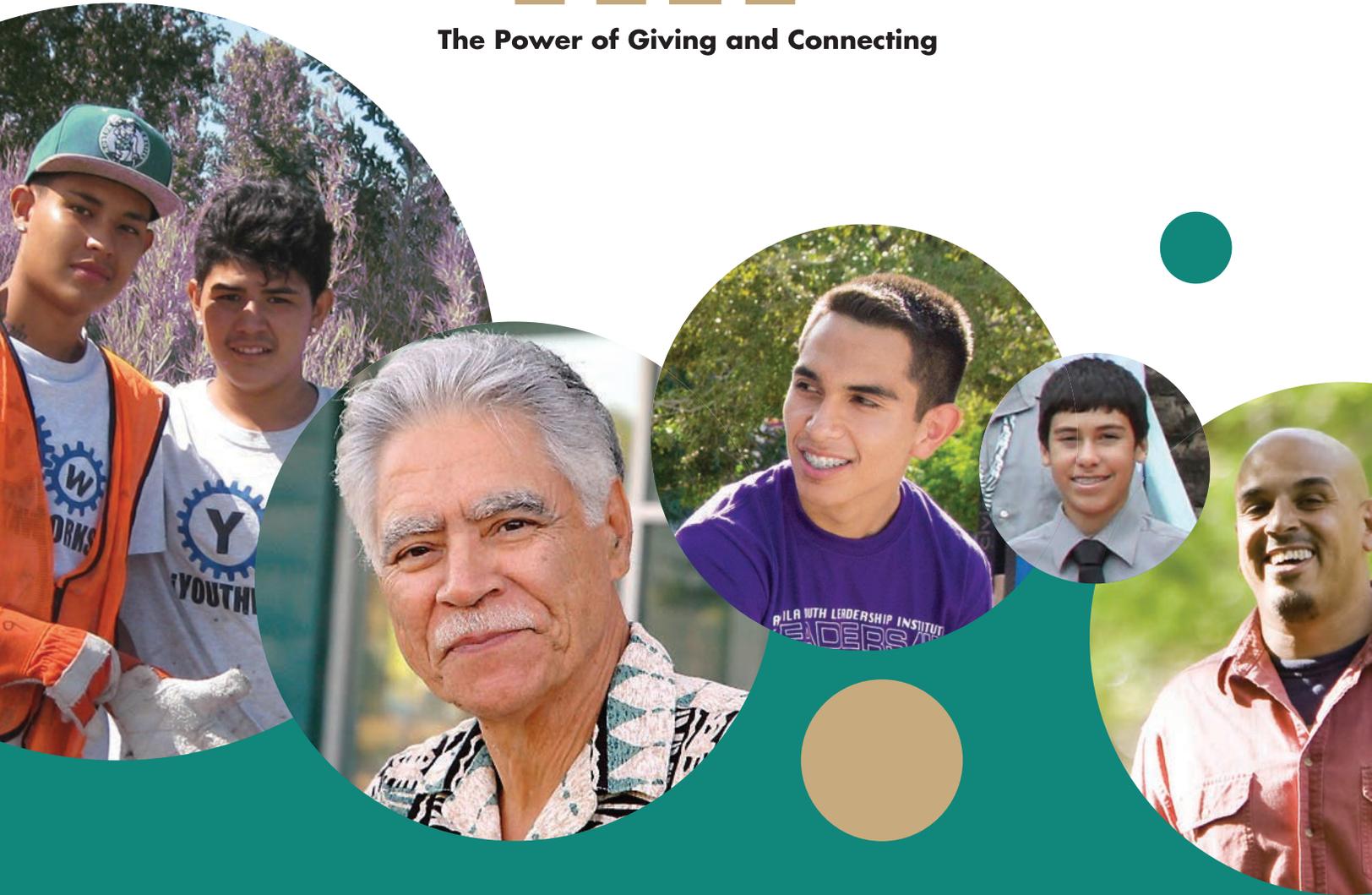


HISPANICS **IN** PHILANTHROPY

The Power of Giving and Connecting



# KEEPING THE PROMISE

Evolving Nonprofit strategies in the U.S. Southwest  
Help Latino Men and Boys to Harness Potential

– 2016 –

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with  
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## **Acknowledgements:**

Hispanics in Philanthropy would like to deeply thank its partners in this initiative:

**Arizona Community Foundation**

**Con Alma Health Foundation**

**McCune Charitable Foundation**

**NEO Philanthropy**

**The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

**The W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

Whose collaboration was essential for the 2014-5 success of the Southwest Latino Men and Boys Initiative in New Mexico and Arizona.

## **About Hispanics in Philanthropy**

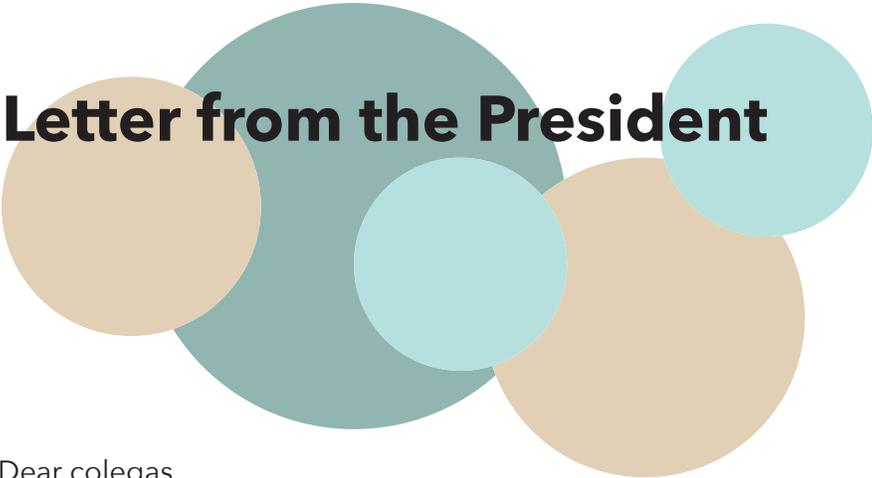
HIP's mission is to strengthen Latino leadership, voice, and equity. HIP brings together grantmakers to find solutions to the structural underfunding of one of the nation's greatest resources: the growing U.S. Latino community. In doing so, HIP provides information, referrals and advice to foundations seeking to support Latino leadership and capacity building; supports Latino leaders in philanthropy, from the newest to those already in the top tier; seeds capacity building for Latino nonprofits at the local level; and promotes philanthropic collaboration and investment in areas of critical need, including aging, LGBTQ, Latino men and boys, education and other issues.

**For more information, please visit**  
**[www.hiponline.org](http://www.hiponline.org)**



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# Letter from the President

Dear colegas,

Much has happened in the past couple of years in the field of Young Men and Boys of Color - from the White House My Brother's Keeper to philanthropic programs around the country. We are now proud and hopeful as we see partners stepping up to tailor programs that harness the strengths of Latino culture and belief systems and create pathways to success for increasingly vulnerable young men, their families and their communities.

Since Hispanics in Philanthropy issued its groundbreaking report, "The Right to Dream: Promising Practices Improve Odds for Latino Men and Boys," in 2014, we have collaborated with philanthropic leaders, such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to fund and build the capacity of a variety of programs, documenting promising practices and laying the groundwork so future efforts can go to scale.

We believe this supplement to our original report, with six successful case studies, will provide insight into specific innovative approaches that engage Latino Men and Boys to break out of the school-to-prison pipeline, and contribute to leading their communities and building the America of tomorrow. In this effort, we are grateful to the support of partners in both urban and rural areas of Arizona and New Mexico, where the six case studies were based.

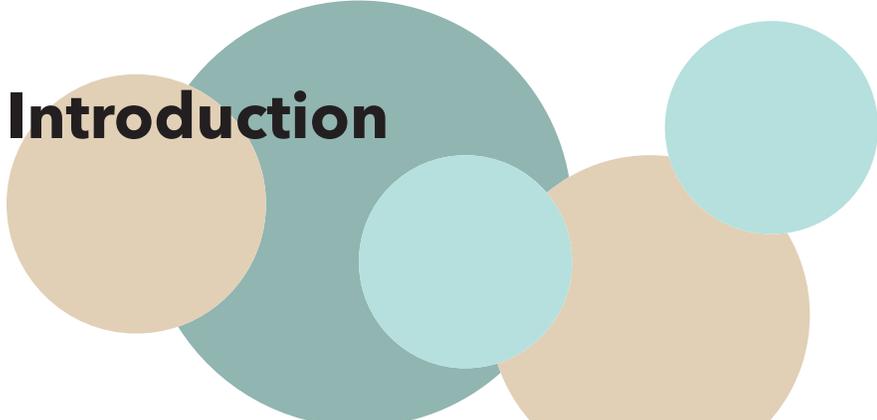
There can be no doubt that, despite the attention of the past two years, the need is very great for funding these life-saving programs while building the capacity of community-based organizations that are best equipped to identify and help at-risk youth and young men. It is no secret that Latino young men continue drop out of school more often, spend more time in jail, earn less money, and die younger.

Government policymakers are slowly making progress to reduce school suspensions and decriminalize those convicted of minor drug offenses and other nonviolent crimes. But there hasn't been enough strategic funding to help nonprofits provide young Latino men and boys with programs that speak to the best of their community and cultural values, and equip them with life skills, mentors and community support.

At Hispanics in Philanthropy, we see an incredible potential to continue and expand work that, in many Latino communities, is only just beginning. We see space to create coalitions, to implement and integrate the most effective practices, with partners that want to power change at the crossroads of poverty, families' well-being, education, community leadership and labor force development. But, in the end, we never lose sight of the fact that we're here to help people.

After all, Latino men and boys deserve the right to dream about what their futures can hold. It is up to us to keep the promise, and provide pathways for them to realize those dreams.

Diana



# Introduction

In recognizing society's responsibility to assure a creative and capable leadership of the future and an unparalleled workforce to carry us forward, U.S. nonprofit funders and organizations have focused on reaching out to help underserved young men and boys so they may rise to the challenge. Latino men and boys comprise close to nine percent of the total United States population.<sup>1</sup> They represent not only the fastest growing demographic group in the U.S., but also the youngest.

Hispanics in Philanthropy established a Focused Initiative on Latino Men and Boys three years ago and has promoted their inclusion in the overall Men and Boys of Color movement, as well as the tailoring of programs to suit their specific needs and aspirations in culturally empowering ways. This report builds on those ongoing efforts, offers specific applied practices, and case studies to showcase some of the most effective strategies and promising practices to reach more Latino Men and Boys and equip them for the future.

## Why Latino Men and Boys?

Latino men and boys are more likely than the general population to be impoverished, live in unsafe communities, suffer poor health outcomes, have lower educational attainment, be employed in low-wage jobs, and be targeted for incarceration and deportation.<sup>2</sup> Given their representation in our communities and our future workforce, the Latino men and boys of today will undoubtedly influence the extent to which the U.S. will succeed tomorrow. Yet, the plight of Latino men and boys has been largely under-researched, and projects to decrease disparities and improve outcomes for them have been underfunded.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *Population Quickfacts: United States*. Retrieved February 29, 2016, from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/RHI725214/00>

<sup>2</sup> Reyes, B. & Nakagawa, M. (2010). Young Latino and African American Males: Their Characteristics, Outcomes and Social Conditions. In Edley, C. & Ruiz de Velasco, J., *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve The Health of Boys of Color* (pp. 36-63). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

As part of Hispanics in Philanthropy's commitment in this program area, in March 2014, it published "The Right to Dream: Promising Practices Improve Odds for Latino Men and Boys," a report identifying many of the structural challenges faced by Latino men and boys, as well as several promising practices to improve their lives.

In 2015, with matching funds from a group of foundations investing in New Mexico and Arizona, HIP launched the Southwest Latino Men and Boys initiative, supporting six Latino-led, Latino-serving grassroots nonprofits working on programs specifically designed to improve the lives of Latino men and boys.

The six organizations were:

- AGUILA Youth Leadership Institute, Inc.
- Amistades, Inc.
- La Plazita Institute, Inc.
- La Red del Rio Abajo (a network of 10 Albuquerque nonprofits, via grant recipient Enlace Comunitario)
- SouthWest Organizing Project
- YouthWorks

Core support for this program was provided through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Forward Promise initiative. A pool of matching funds was committed by the Arizona Community Foundation, the Con Alma Health Foundation, HIP, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

In addition to providing funding, HIP hosted a number of grantee convenings to build organizational capacity and create a supportive learning community among the agencies. Support from HIP enabled organizations to implement new, or expand existing initiatives focused on improving outcomes for Latino men and boys. The projects touched on a wide range

of issue areas including interventions to increase high school graduation rates, implementation of career training initiatives, and trainings to increase cultural competency of health professionals.

Amid the great diversity and range of issue areas, as well as the different sectors of Latino men and boys targeted by each project, there were also commonalities in the practices implemented by the grantees. This report documents those practices that were most prevalent in each initiative through individual case studies.

## Context

Latino men and boys are an integral part of the fabric of communities throughout the U.S.; they have countless strengths that contribute to the overall well-being of their families, neighborhoods and the economic and cultural prosperity of our nation. Although there is much that unites Latinos in the U.S., they do not represent a monolithic group. Some Latinos have always lived in the U.S., while other Latinos migrated (many generations ago or more recently) to the U.S. from 20 Latin American countries. There is significant diversity in terms of religious affiliation, political orientation, access to wealth, racial and indigenous identities, immigration status and level of acculturation among Latinos.

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*“Statistically speaking, the prospects of Latino young men and boys are dismal in contemporary American society. But the statistics don’t speak to the resiliency, resourcefulness and values that we consistently find in our youth when time, attention and resources are invested in them.”*

– Henry Rael, Program Officer, McCune Charitable Foundation

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HIP’s 2014 report, “The Right to Dream: Promising Practices Improve Odds for Latino Men and Boys,” identified five factors that are contributing to the structural barriers that Latino men and boys face. The report explored how: 1) the Great Recession of 2008

diminished the middle class, leaving Latino families increasingly poor; 2) “tough on crime” school policies disproportionately target Latino boys, pushing them out of school and into the prison pipeline; 3) Latino men are being incarcerated at inequitable rates; 4) environmental risks disproportionately impact low-income communities of color; and 5) the broken immigration system leaves many Latinos in a vulnerable state.

The six Southwest Latino Men and Boys grantee organizations have expertise in how those issues impact Latino men and boys in their local communities, which served as impetus for the projects discussed in this report.



# About Promising Practices

Although the six nonprofit organizations share a deep commitment to improving the lives of Latino men and boys, each group targets a different sector of this diverse community.

For some organizations, the interventions come relatively early, to help high school students graduate and successfully transition to college. For others, the interventions focus on disconnected Latino young men who have dropped out of school and have been through the legal system, or “adjudicated.” They receive training to gain employment, life skills, and other essential services. For still others, the interventions are aimed at changing policies that negatively impact Latino students, as well as helping providers to improve access and effectiveness of services for Latino men and boys.

Nonprofits submitted written reports and participated in one- to two-hour interviews about their projects. The lens for examining the projects highlighted in this report is one of practice-based evidence. Practice-based evidence values the on-the-ground experience of those individuals working to implement projects. It assumes that practitioners and the community-based organizations where they work determine the best strategies to successfully implement their programs and meet their communities’ needs. The approaches that agencies use may also be informed by theory, but generally they are arrived at more organically -- rooted in knowledge of their local community and informed by their resources. Practice-based evidence can be replicable, but it should be individualized to fit the needs of a local community.

All of the nonprofits collected important program-related data and some conducted evaluation surveys and interviews. However, this report refrains from identifying the promising practices as “best practice” or “evidence-based-practices” because further study and more rigorous evaluation would be required to apply those standards.

By documenting additional successful applications of the nine practices identified by HIP in 2014, this new report further validates their promising potential. The original nine practices identified are:

- **Building Assets with Latino Families:** Families receive the tools necessary to identify—and then reach—their financial and professional goals.
- **Seizing Opportunities to Shift Youth to Higher Paying Sectors:** Youth transition from underpaying job prospects to higher paying career opportunities with a mix of job training, skill development and education.
- **Building Pathways to Careers:** Community-bolstering practices such as grassroots education, organizing and outreach work teach young men job skills and fair workplace practices, and lay a foundation for careers in social justice.
- **Schoolhouse as an Incubator for Democracy:** Engagement around school issues serves as a stepping stone for Latino families to learn advocacy strategies, which can then be applied to the broader community.
- **Inviting Latino Families into the Classroom:** Latino youth are more likely to succeed academically when they’re supported by their families; in this Latino values-based practice, important personal relationships are considered integral to the students’ long-term educational goals.
- **Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline:** Empowered working-class Latino families and adjudicated youth take advantage of expanded educational opportunities, creating a place at the policymaking table with school districts, police departments and elected officials.
- **Prisoner Reintegration:** Using cultural and spiritual tools to develop healthy social skills and working to analyze the roots of violence in their lives, adjudicated Latino men and youth are able to rediscover their self-worth both inside and outside of detention.

- **Developing the Leadership of At-Risk Young Immigrant Men:** Latino men build relationships, confidence and leadership capacity, and then serve as rich resources to their communities.
- **Addressing Cultural Barriers to Health Access:** Creative, culturally-based strategies work to dislodge the stigma of mental health issues while increasing access to health services for Latino men and boys.

In addition, this report highlights six new overarching and specific applications of the promising practices, which emerged across the grantee nonprofit organizations. These applied practices are:

- **Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships:** Leveraging relationships with nonprofit and public entities strengthens projects and communities through increased opportunities and essential services.
- **Weaving Latino Culture Throughout Programming:** An emphasis on Latino cultural values and history helps organizations develop more robust programming and reinforce cultural identity and the sense of self-worth for Latino men and boys.
- **Incentivizing Participation:** Offering financial incentives to Latino men and boys increases project participation, compensates people for their time, and assists families who are vulnerable to poverty.
- **Youth Mentorship:** Formal and informal mentorship creates a wellspring of positive male role models in the lives of Latino youth.
- **Staying Engaged with Latino Men and Boys:** Program design encourages engagement through long-term initiative opportunities.
- **Personalized Case Management:** Success rates increase when Latino men and boys are offered diverse packages of tailored assistance to access resources and navigate systemic barriers.

The nonprofit organizations featured in this report implement a variety of these practices within their individual projects. As the case studies demonstrate, the promising practices are implemented differently by the agencies. These different applications reflect the distinct Latino target population and types of initiative (e.g, policy advocacy vs. direct service). The approaches emerged at the organizational level, rather than as an attempt to replicate a program

model devised elsewhere, which also contributed to variations in how the practices were applied.

This report provides an opportunity for funders to deeply understand specific, successful, local efforts throughout the Southwest to improve life outcomes for Latino men and boys. It also enables grassroots

The following chart locates the promising practices and applied practices that appear among the six Southwest Latino Men and Boys initiative nonprofit projects. Rather than using a simple X, the key symbol denotes practices that were identified as foundational to the project's success in the nonprofits' reports and interviews. Those key promising practices are discussed in greater detail within each individual case study.

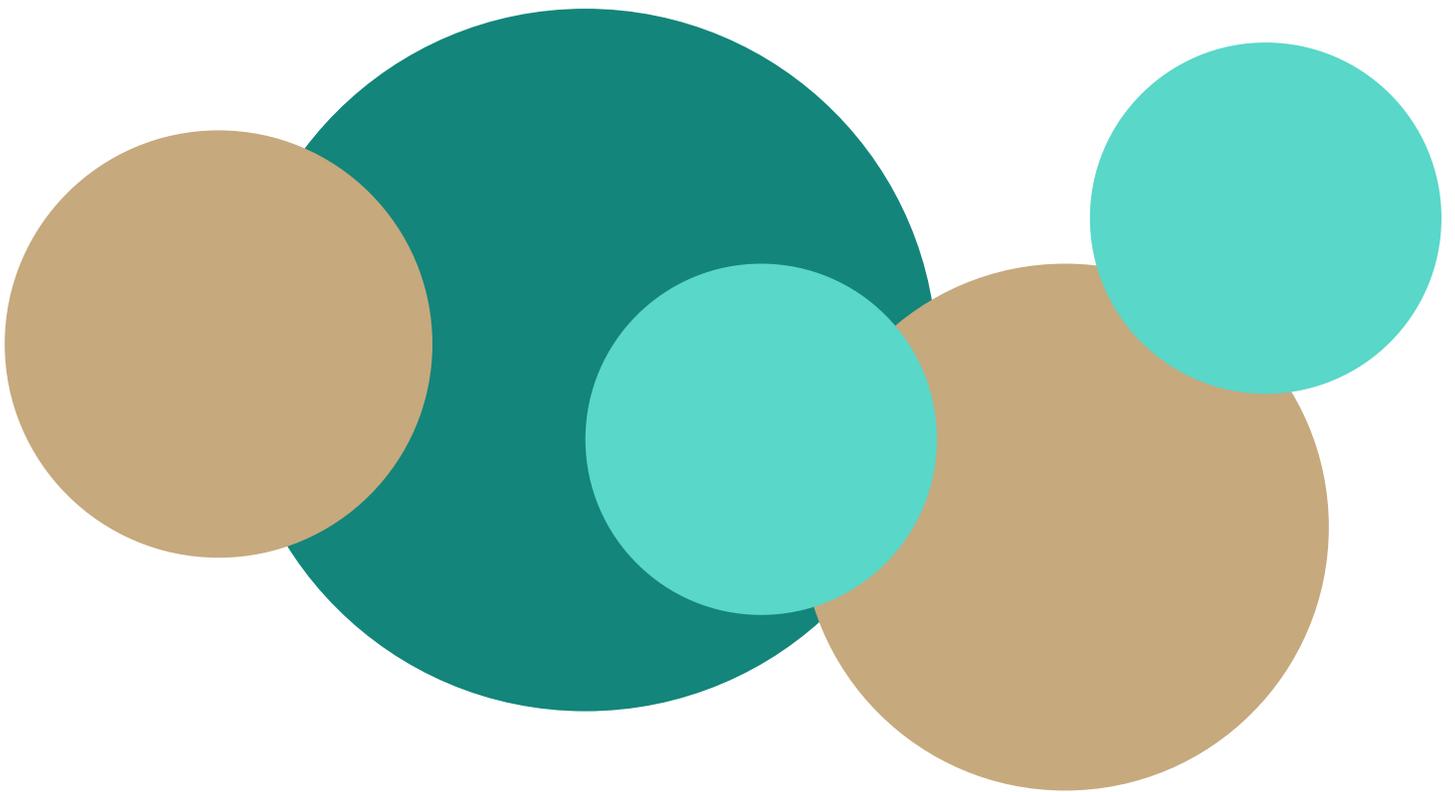
## Promising Practices Identified in the Southwest Latino Men and Boys Initiative

	AGUILA	Amistades	La Plazita	La Red	SWOP	YouthWorks
<b>Overarching practice:</b> Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships	X	🔑	🔑	X	🔑	🔑
<b>Overarching practice:</b> Weaving Latino Culture Throughout Programming	X	🔑	🔑	X	X	X
Building Assets with Latino Families	🔑		X	🔑		X
<b>Applied practice:</b> Incentivizing Participation	X		X	🔑		
Shifting Youth to Higher Paying Sectors			X			🔑
Building Pathways to Careers	X		🔑			X
Schoolhouse as an Incubator for Democracy	X	X			🔑	
Inviting Latino Families into the Classroom	🔑					
Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline	X	X	X		🔑	X
Prisoner Reintegration			🔑			🔑
Developing the Leadership of At-Risk Young Immigrant Men	X		X	X	X	
<b>Applied practices:</b> Youth Mentorship	🔑		X	🔑	X	
Staying Engaged with Latino Men and Boys	🔑	🔑	🔑	X	X	
Addressing Cultural Barriers to Health Access		🔑		X		
<b>Applied practice:</b> Personalized Case Management			X	🔑		🔑

## Case Studies

This section includes individual case studies about each nonprofit's Latino Men and Boys projects.

Key promising practices are included in the Vital Stats box at the beginning of each case study.



# A GANG FOR GOOD

By providing Latino boys with a sense of brotherhood and a commitment to give back to the community, Men of Honor creates pathways to college and lifelong success.

**AGUILA**  
**Youth Leadership Institute, Inc.**  
www.aguilayouth.org



## **Mission:**

To empower and prepare Latino/a youth for college admissions and graduation using cultural understanding as a guide to personal, academic and professional excellence as future Latino/a leaders.

## **Initiative:**

In the AGUILA Men of Honor college-prep program, Latino high school students develop a vision for their lives and gain the skills and self-esteem needed to successfully attend college.

## **Population Served:**

Low-income, first-generation, Latino ninth through 12th graders.

## **Geographic Location:**

Greater Phoenix metropolitan area

## **Key Promising Practices Employed:**

Inviting Latino Families into the Classroom, Building Assets with Latino Families, Youth Mentorship, Staying Engaged with Latino Men and Boys.

**Disconnection at home and school contributes to many Latino boys dropping out of school and/or joining gangs. The gang provides a sense of self, confidence, brotherhood, belonging and accountability. The AGUILA Youth Leadership Institute, a community-based Latino organization, uses those same concepts to guide Latino youth into a successful college-prep program that develops their leadership and commitment to service.**

**The Project:** The Men of Honor program's goal is to increase admission and graduation rates in post-secondary education for Latino young men. The program tackles these interrelated goals providing experiences that contribute to a strong sense of self, a deep connection to cultural heritage, and a lasting commitment to ethical leadership. Participation in Men of Honor is open to ninth through 12th grade high school students in Greater Phoenix. The program begins with a three-night/ four-day Summer Leadership Symposium designed to motivate and inspire the young men about the college process. From September to April, Men of Honor offers monthly Saturday sessions on local college campuses addressing such topics as: substance abuse, violence, civic engagement, as well as a variety of complementary activities designed to strengthen boys' educational, leadership, and cultural commitments. Approximately 400 Latino boys, mostly low-income, participate each year, guided and mentored by AGUILA Alumni, who are committed to the core value of Men of Honor.

Through individual and group parent sessions as well as volunteer opportunities, the program Invites Latino Families into the Classroom, encouraging parents to be actively involved in the process and their sons' lives. "You need to know your children's GPA, their rank, what they are involved in, what their aspirations are, where they want to go to college, what they want to do when they grow up, and what their dream of success is," said Rosemary Ybarra-Hernandez, AGUILA founder and CEO. "A lot of parents tell us, 'I don't know these things.' "

Parental participation is critical as the boys -- primarily from families that have not had access to higher education -- begin to apply for college. Men of Honor staff spend a significant amount of time coaching parents with regard to the long-term benefits college can offer to their children. Like their children, parents recognize the value of the program and often support the initiative as volunteers. Many stay involved even after their children have gone on to college.

AGUILA boasts a 100 percent high school graduation rate of boys in the Men of Honor program moving onto college. Men of Honor is able to leverage scholarships for participants who are accepted into college, Building Assets with Latino Families, who otherwise would be unable to afford tuition. Since the inception of the program, Men of Honor has helped participants access more than \$75,000,000 in private scholarship funds beyond federal financial aid packages.

However, acceptance into college is only the beginning. Once on campus, the young men are welcomed by older Men of Honor alumni, Staying Engaged with Latino Boys. The alumni continue to guide and mentor them, providing emotional and academic support necessary for college success and graduation. The "brotherhood" is passed on between young men, who pay it forward to the new boys who will become AGUILA Men of Honor.

The concept of "paying it forward" is woven throughout the entire initiative. Participants carry Men of Honor cards inscribed with the program philosophy, "Through the light of knowledge, we pay it forward in service." This commitment to giving back lends itself to a unique near-peer Youth Mentorship model that is essential to program success. Men of Honor alumni return to act as informal mentors to the boys.

"They understand the benefits of this program, understanding their obligation to give back-- particularly to the young ones who are looking up to them. That's the only way we can do this," said Ybarra-Hernandez. The engagement of the alumni is essential, given the importance of developing personal relationships between the young men and the constraints of having 400 participants with few paid staff members to run the program. Relating to a near-peer mentor from the same community appears to have a profound effect on the young men who deeply respect the alumni and are able to see

themselves in them, on a path to success. In addition, students complete an annual application where they recommit to Men of Honor for the upcoming year, and the alumni review applications to determine who will become the future Men of Honor.

"Our Men of Honor stay with us because they enjoy and benefit from the sense of family, of belonging, of pride," said Ybarra-Hernandez. "They come by the office to give me updates on their lives that include graduation internships, new cars, the purchase of a home, they're getting married, they're having a baby. They are home and they wish to share the success that comes from an education."

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** Moving forward, aspects of the program will be brought to 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys in one of the most impoverished local school districts. Inclusion of 8th graders will provide the Men of Honor participants with the opportunity to serve as near-peer mentors for younger students. In addition, AGUILA Youth Leadership Institute is exploring expansion of the program to other Southwest states with similar history and context.

While the alumni make important contributions with their near-peer mentoring activities, having 400 youth in the program makes developing one-on-one relationships with all of the young men a challenge. Moving forward, AGUILA will seek resources to provide stipends for Men of Honor alumni to become success coaches for the young men. Success coaches would check in with the young men individually, as well as spend time at the AGUILA office so that there would always be a mentor available when they come by.

# ASSEMBLING A CULTURAL TOOLBOX

Service providers receive an education in core Latino values to increase accessibility and improve outcomes on the job.

**Amistades, Inc.**  
www.amistadesinc.org



## Mission:

To provide culturally competent education, prevention and early intervention services to disconnected, underserved youth, immigrant families and the elderly in Pima County and Southern Arizona.

## Initiative:

Through the community-informed Niños Sanos, Hombres Fuertes (Healthy Boys, Strong Men) training initiative, service providers from a variety of sectors gained tools to offer culturally competent services to Latino men and boys.

## Population Served:

A cross-section of workers, including educators, government, and healthcare and other social services providers.

## Geographic Location:

Southern Arizona, covering Pima County south to the Arizona/Mexico border.

## Key Promising Practices Employed:

Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships, Addressing Cultural Barriers to Health Access, Weaving Latino Culture Throughout Programming.

Latino men and boys are largely underserved by mainstream providers across all sectors. Amistades, a Latino-led and Latino-serving organization, helps providers to recognize Latino culture and core values that will help them to better identify and more competently serve this group.

**The Project:** Amistades developed, implemented and evaluated Niños Sanos, Hombres Fuertes, a series of eight workshops designed to build and strengthen cultural competence capacity within the network of health, education and other social service providers to improve outcomes for low-income Latino men and boys. The interactive, hands-on workshops covered a range of topics in two-hour sections, including youth violence and crime, underage drinking, mentoring, financial literacy, the school-to-prison pipeline, school readiness and dropout prevention.

Amistades conducted several focus groups in order to incorporate the voice and lived experience of Latino men and boys into the workshops.

“It was very dynamic and we were very deliberate in our branding and our messaging, in terms of introducing this project to the community,” said Claudia Jasso-Stevens, Director of Operations for Amistades. “We valued and needed their input... it would help us in the development of these workshops.”

The project was especially important in Southern Arizona, where anti-Latino sentiment can run deep among service providers. Strong Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships proved invaluable for successfully recruiting workshop participants.

“We were very lucky because we already had relationships with school districts, elected officials, other nonprofit organizations, and the university and community college, so we were really able to hit the ground running when we got this award,” said Jasso-Stevens. In total, 351 people attended 12 workshops in six southern Arizona counties; about one half of participants identified as Latino.

Niños Sanos, Hombres Fuertes Addressed Cultural Barriers to Health Access. According to Jasso-Stevens, many service providers do not understand the Latino core value system that must inform effective service delivery, nor do they understand the barriers that impede Latino men and boys from accessing service and programs. Workshops taught participants to recognize these barriers and provided concrete strategies for reaching Latinos where they are.

“We emphasized and taught them that there are other places for them to go where Latinos gather -- their barrios, in the communities, over food, where they are doing laundry -- that there are other nontraditional ways Latinos organize at the community and familial level,” said Jasso-Stevens. Workshop participants shared that the training helped them engage their clients in more sensitive and respectful ways, including the use of Spanish interpreters when dealing with a language barrier.

In Weaving Latino Culture Throughout all of the workshops, facilitators stressed the importance of understanding and validating the history of the people that they serve, noting that this is particularly important with Latino men and boys, who they describe as vulnerable to feeling displaced. Workshops covered important Latino values such as trust, unity, power and family. Jasso-Stevens observed that these teachings had a profound impact on many of the participants.

“When we introduced some of these concepts, people were blown away,” she said. “For Latino participants, the inclusion of Latino core values validated what they already knew and taught them how to utilize and leverage that knowledge in their work. “They know that *familia* is important. They know that Latinos operate differently than other groups, but this helped them to use it in their work in a coordinated way,” she added.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** Niños Sanos, Hombres Fuertes had a positive impact on participants. Ninety percent of participants stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the workshops, and 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed that presenters were knowledgeable. Ninety-one percent of participants stated that they understood the importance of improving their cultural competence level. One participant shared:

“I was able to immediately provide my curriculum more effectively to families. I was more mindful to ask questions that help me be more sensitive in the culture

of the families I work with. The families seem to better relate to me as well.”

In addition to helping Amistades build out their training and technical assistance offerings, it cemented their reputation as a “go to” agency for cultural awareness questions. Amistades also cross-trained all staff to deliver the workshops, so that requests for trainings do not become overly burdensome on a few people. Even more profoundly, the project validated the mission and offerings of Amistades and built pride among the employees.

“It was nice to be able to implement a project that was directly aligned with our cultural values, our reason for existing, and our value system as an agency,” said Jasso-Stevens. “It was particularly close to our hearts. And it motivated us to continue to do the work with the community.”

Not all experiences with the program were positive for everyone. Some participants demonstrated apathy and even anger at having to participate in the workshops. This was most evident among providers who were mandated to attend the workshops by their agencies. Amistades believes that these participants are the most important to reach.

“If they are that negative about learning how to work with Latinos, it makes my skin crawl to think about how they are probably delivering services,” said Jasso-Stevens. “So if there is anything we can do to help, it is super important no matter how volatile or difficult it is to work with them. The end user is that Latino male they are serving.”

Amistades plans to continue training providers and acting as a cultural competency resource in its community. It is a key member of the Tucson Mayor’s My Brother’s Keeper challenge initiative, through which they will provide several trainings specific to youth violence and the school-to-prison pipeline. Amistades has also made the Niños Sanos, Hombres Fuertes curriculum available to all its past participants. Amistades would love to enhance the curriculum with train-the-trainer resources that could be sold widely, thus earning income to increase trainings. In addition, it is interested in working directly with agencies to do cultural competency assessments and create organizational action plans to better serve Latino men and boys.

# TILLING SOIL, PLANTING SEEDS

A blend of Indigenous cultural engagement and hands-on farming practices empowers Latino men to rebuild their self-worth from the ground up

**La Plazita Institute, Inc. (LPI)**  
www.laplazitainstitute.org



## Mission:

To engage New Mexico's youth, elders and communities to draw from their own roots and histories and express core traditional values of respect, honor, love and family.

## Initiative:

In the Rudolfo Anaya Urban Barrio Youth Corps, disconnected young Latino/Chicano/Mexicano men learned tangible entrepreneurial and agricultural skills while reconnecting with themselves, their indigenous roots and their community.

## Population Served:

Adjudicated, disconnected, and/or high-risk Latino young men, ages 16-25.

## Geographic Location:

South Valley, Albuquerque, New Mexico

## Key Promising Practices Employed:

Prisoner Reintegration, Weaving Latino Culture Throughout Programming, Building Pathways to Careers, Youth Mentorship, Staying Engaged with Latino Men and Boys, Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships.

For La Plazita Institute, adjudicated young Latino men hold the highest promise -- and indigenous Latino culture is the key to its reintegration and non-traditional leadership model.

**The Project:** LPI began a round of the Rudolfo Anaya Urban Barrio Youth Corps, an intensive eight-month program that combined 15 hours of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm work with five hours of culturally-based programming each week. The program utilized Prisoner Reintegration strategies to engage and develop the leadership of 12 young men, eight of whom were on probation or formerly in the legal system. These Latino young men had been dealing with an array of complex issues—poverty, addiction, incarceration, depression, neglect, deportation, mental health issues and/or homelessness. Staff worked with the young men to successfully complete their probation and develop as non-traditional leaders.

“Those who don’t come with the so-called prerequisites defined as ‘leadership in America’ are forced to become non-traditional leaders,” says Albino Garcia Jr., LPI Founder and Co-Executive Director. “And we pride ourselves on it.”

The Barrio Youth Corps also engages in Weaving Latino [Indigenous] Culture Throughout by using a Quinto Sol (Fifth Sun) model derived from indigenous Nahuatl tradition and developed into “Multiple Worlds,” an organizational curriculum and framework by LPI’s founder Albino Garcia. The Fifth Sun model utilizes the elements of the natural world to help the men restore a sense of wholeness within themselves, their families, their communities and social institutions. It also serves as a teaching tool for how to navigate through various layers of society.

“The first direction for our boys is to go inward—personal development,” the younger Garcia said. “We tell them, ‘Take your shirt off, put it inside out, put it back on.’ So we have a lot of activities around self-development.”

The project develops entrepreneurial skills and Builds Pathways to Careers that are tied to traditional, land-

based ways of living for the young men. Barrio Youth Corps participants receive a stipend to work 15 hours per week in LPI's community supported agriculture project. Through Barrios Youth Corps' training, participants learn every step of the farm-to-table process -- from breaking the ground, amending the soil and planting the seeds; to taking care of the crops, harvesting, cleaning and packaging them, and selling their produce at local growers' markets.

Through the process, men learn real-life financial skills by handling money and are entrusted with organizational resources, including a van for transporting the produce.

"We teach a model of connecting to land-based living, and also being able to show that people can create success not having a college degree or because they are adjudicated," said Joseluis Ortiz, Project Coordinator. "It was huge for them."

The program creates opportunities for deep sharing as staff become Youth Mentors and surrogate family members. Group sharing is commonplace, as is group accountability when one of the men makes a mistake. Staff encourage the participants to embrace the group as family and to learn not to take things personally. The Barrio Youth Corps culminated with Medicine Road, a pilgrimage from New Mexico to healing-centered locations in California. For many of the men, it was their first time out of the state; their first time seeing the ocean. Powerful conversations and life teachings were shared throughout the journey.

LPI staff are committed to Staying Engaged with the men, and most of the men they help need ongoing services once the program ends. Individualized support can range from assistance in finding landscaping and conservation-based employment to interpersonal, familial and institutional mediation.

"We believe in a long-distance run versus 50-yard dash," said Garcia. "Because our work with our population is not a 28-day program. It's not even a 90-day program. It's not even a yearlong program. Our work with our boys takes one to five years per youth. We've got boys with us for 10 years -- not consistently, but whenever they have hard times, they walk through our doors. That's the long-distance run."

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** LPI is very pleased with program results, in which success is defined according to each participant's unique situation.

"If we have a youth who comes in adjudicated and he leaves not on probation, that's a success. If he leaves our project to get a full-time job, that's a success. If he goes to college, that's a success," says Ortiz. "If he comes in hooked on marijuana and he leaves not using, that's a success." By this measure, 10 of the 12 participants from this round of the Barrios Youth Corps successfully graduated. Some of those graduates went on to obtain their GED, find employment, or to attend college.

Developing patience with the men is essential. Ortiz recalled one particular participant who did not initially mesh with the group. "Instead of releasing him, we need to focus on him," Ortiz said. "He will be our biggest success if he completes the project."

The participation of a transgender man in this round of the Barrio Youth Corps offered yet another layer of self-discovery -- on the administration's side. LPI staff shared that they did not even know initially if a transgender man qualified for participation in this men-only program. His participation ultimately had an unanticipated, profound ripple effect. Learning about the discrimination that this participant had experienced was incredibly powerful for LPI staff and participants, helping them to transcend differences and embrace lesbian, gay and transgender people in their own families and community.

"Pain doesn't discriminate," Garcia said. "Pain knows pain."

The Barrio Youth Corps will continue, although future cohorts will not necessarily be limited to men and will likely be more intergenerational. LPI staff shared that having an all-male group creates a certain level of intimacy, but a mixed gender group can result in men truly learning to empathize with women's lived experiences and vice-versa. Through a Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnership developed with the Petroglyph National Monument, which is located near Albuquerque, future opportunities for the men will combine work on one of the largest petroglyph sites in North America.

"We have a very promising future for the Barrios Youth Corps," Ortiz said.

# A COLLECTIVE TAKES ROOT

Developing new models of collaborative mentorship, services and incentives helps Latino youth thrive in Albuquerque's South Valley.

## La Red del Río Abajo

[www.enlacenm.org](http://www.enlacenm.org)



### Mission:

To create the environment, systems and circumstances to promote safe, healthy, and economically secure families and communities.

### Initiative:

Latino youth connected with Latino male mentors and local nonprofit resources—from their own community in this place-based, collective-impact project.

### Population Served:

Latino boys ages 13-18 and Latino adult mentors

### Geographic Location:

South Valley, Albuquerque, New Mexico

### Key Promising Practices Employed:

Youth Mentorship, Building Assets with Latino Families, Incentivizing Participation, and Personalized Case Management.

Recruiting Latino boys and men to participate in nonprofit programming can be a challenge to even well-established organizations. For La Red del Río Abajo's Men and Boys pilot project, strong community connections coupled with providing much needed incentives made the process significantly easier.

**The Project:** A core group of five La Red organizations collectively designed a holistic, place-based pilot program centered on the meaningful engagement of 20 Latino youths who live in the South Valley. The broader aim was to build leadership and camaraderie, and support robust connections among Latino youth, their social networks and the La Red agencies, in addition to demonstrating a new model for aligning resources around common goals to achieve greater impact. Each organization contributed its expertise, resources and contacts, and they all worked together to develop and implement the project. Throughout the nine-month program, participants received a diverse package of classes and opportunities. Topics varied from violence prevention and nonviolent communication to financial capability, business development, nutrition, health and video-making.

The project also had a strong group Youth Mentorship component, matching 20 Latino boys with 10 adult mentors. Engaging adult male mentors was a dual strategic decision: It recognized adult men in the South Valley as a precious resource, while benefiting boys in the program who lacked male mentors at home due to deportation, incarceration, substance abuse and other systemic issues. Many of the mentors expressed skepticism about working with youth when they were first approached on behalf of the initiative.

As time passed, attitudes changed dramatically. Virginia Pérez-Ortega, Prevention Director for Enlace Comunitario observed a powerful effect on the mentors as they began to form honest relationships with the youth. "

The mentors ended up learning about more than even what they contributed," Pérez-Ortega said. "The engagement of the young men provided the elder men with hope."

Having a core group of mentors was similarly inspirational to the youth: Several expressed that they felt more likely to give back to their community and use their time positively.

The organizations also worked to Build Assets with Latino Families by offering youths the opportunity to participate in an individual development account program. Qualifying low-income boys in the program saved \$1,000 toward educational or career goals, which then earned them a \$4,000 match. They also received individualized financial coaching and 10 weeks of financial literacy classes through La Red partner Prosperity Works. The individual accounts served as a significant incentive for many of the youth -- and, since it required a long-term savings plan, it appeared to increase overall program retention.

Ona Porter, President and CEO of Prosperity Works, says that financial tools, such as the individual development account program, are an attractive incentive for partner organizations as well.

"If they can offer IDAs, their engagement with families can be longer and deeper," she said, "which we know lends to high impact outcomes." In anonymous surveys conducted by La Red, many of the youth expressed increased confidence about being able to pay for college, and shared that they felt more prepared and less afraid to apply for college.

All of the adult mentors and 13 of the 20 enrolled Latino youths remained engaged through the entire program. Interestingly, two of the seven boys who dropped out of the program did not qualify for the IDA program because of income, suggesting that IDA eligibility may be extremely useful for Incentivizing Participation among low-income boys. The youth and adult participants also received 20 weeks of fresh, locally grown organic produce from La Red member organization Agri-Cultura Network. In addition, mentors received a stipend to compensate their participation, as well as their assistance with transporting some of the youths and picking up food for meetings.

La Red offered Personalized Case Management to the boys in the program to remove barriers that could impede their participation in it and overall pathway to success in life. Barrier strategies included helping youth pass their driver's license test and providing

referrals to culturally appropriate mental health services. The broad network of La Red members expanded opportunities for participants.

"It's one thing when one agency helps one youth or one family," says William Poehner, Project Coordinator, "but it's another thing when they can work together, and they're able to touch all different agencies. It multiplies the impact."

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** Satisfaction surveys and informal post-program interviews with participants indicate that the pilot program succeeded in meeting or exceeding its goals. The adult mentors and youths expressed that they want to remain engaged with future cohorts. Participants reported that they increased their knowledge and positively changed their behavior for nonviolent communication, healthy eating, ability to prevent violence and have healthy relationships, and more. Participants seemed grateful for the camaraderie and new relationships they formed. La Red members were also extremely pleased with the project, for its impact on the boys and men, as well as their greater capacity to develop a robust program across multiple organizations.

Moving forward, La Red members plan to spend more time directly communicating with the entire family as some of the boys reported feeling that they were advancing in their own lives at the expense of leaving their families behind. And according to La Red members, some of the boys' mothers didn't fully understand the program benefits and subsequently felt disconnected.

La Red is actively seeking resources to continue the project. They received bridge funding from the McCune Charitable Foundation to form another cohort over the summer of 2016.

# IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

When public school disciplinary policies unfairly affect students of color, Latino youth re-write the book on accountability.

## SouthWest Organizing Project

www.swop.net



### Mission:

Frontline multi-issue membership organization working to empower the disenfranchised in the Southwest to realize racial and gender equality, and social and economic justice.

### Initiative:

Latino youth mobilize the community and influence school district leaders to codify a Student Bill of Rights and accurately track student discipline data to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.

### Population Served:

Latino youth working to change policy that disproportionately impacts Latino boys.

### Geographic Location:

Albuquerque, New Mexico

### Key Promising Practices Employed:

Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships, Schoolhouse as an Incubator for Democracy, Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

Harsh disciplinary policies in public schools disproportionately impact students of color, particularly Latino youths. These “tough on crime” policies increase suspension and expulsion, ultimately turning students over to authorities and beginning a pipeline that often leads to incarceration. The SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP) invests in the leadership skills of Latino youth to work alongside school leaders inside the system, while also mobilizing other youth and low-income families in the community to disrupt this school-to-prison pipeline.

**The Project:** After achieving successful passage of “The Student Bill of Rights” as a state Senate memorial, a core group of 15 mostly Latino SWOP youth worked to incorporate the Student Bill of Rights into the Albuquerque Public Schools Student Handbook. Their work also involved influencing district leaders to accurately track discipline data and involve youth of color and their families at the policymaking table.

After years of organizing in the community and often in confrontation with the district, the school district acknowledged its lack of experience working with marginalized youths and families and approached SWOP for assistance. This created a unique Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnership.

“It was a new opportunity for us to seize a little bit of power and relationships and resources from the district that we had never had before,” recalled Emma Sandoval, SWOP Youth Organizer. “Previously, we had been kicked out of schools because they thought we were too political. And now, they were knocking at our doors asking us to help.”

SWOP organizers came to realize that working on the inside did not diminish the need to simultaneously push for change on the outside. A student walkout protesting the bias and corporate nature of specific standardized tests put significant tension on the new relationship. SWOP sided with the protesting youths while the district was against the walkout. Despite these differences, SWOP continued to work with the district while pushing to keep youth voices center stage.

“Working with an institution that has a history of being part of a system that has an oppressive culture is very challenging,” said Sandoval. “We had to have hard conversations about the realities of what men and boys of color face when [school administrators] make policies that are really punitive, and what are the impacts.”

SWOP youths worked to Break the School-to-Prison Pipeline by demanding that the school district track and aggregate its discipline data by race, gender and type of infraction.

Through this project, participants also re-envisioned the Schoolhouse as an Incubator for Democracy. SWOP youths mobilized other youth and their community to become more knowledgeable about how school board decisions impact their lives, to call for accountability from school board leaders and to increase school board election turnout.

“There’s been a culture in the district to not feel accountable to their communities because so few people vote,” Sandoval said. “Even though they have a real responsibility to parents and students, the reality is not all parents and students can vote -- because young people can’t vote, and there are many families who cannot vote because they are undocumented, or have a felony and cannot engage in the electoral process.”

Youth and families became informed, hosted candidate forums, attended meetings and started to hold the district accountable, regardless of their voter status. “Our youth had the boldness to go to school board meetings and try to achieve actual policy that changed the conversation on a much broader scale,” says Javier Benavidez, SWOP Executive Director. In fighting for the Student Bill of Rights, SWOP youths demanded equity for all students.

“It focuses around constitutionally protected rights, being able to speak different languages, access to after-school programs, and quality education that’s equitable and proportionate,” said Sandoval. “There’s a lot of stuff around the rights students have when they are in trouble and ensuring that young people aren’t being unfairly punished, based on their race and gender.”

Many of the youths are now motivated to run for positions on the school board. Sandoval describes their journey as a “pipeline of leadership development: Young people come up through the organization and then have their skill set developed to the point where they are able to

transition to other spaces. Sometimes it’s at the university, sometimes it’s organizing with other community groups and sometimes it’s actual employment within SWOP.” The cycle of empowerment is completed as former SWOP youth return to the organization as adult members.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** As a result of this work, Albuquerque Public Schools has implemented new systems to track and aggregate student discipline data. The first round of numbers is expected to be released soon. SWOP anticipates that the new district student handbook coming out next school year will include the Student Bill of Rights.

This project was also instrumental in creating VIA (Voices for Change), a student advisory committee that provides input to school district leaders. Almost half of the VIA members are SWOP youths.

“We will continue to maintain relationships with the district, but we’ll also continue to do what we do best, which is organizing,” Sandoval said. “That means bringing attention to negative policy issues as they come up, as well as trying to be proactive in developing and putting our vision forward of what it really means to work effectively with young people and to support and uplift youth and their families.”

SWOP will continue to work with APS as they hold the district accountable for the gains made through this project.

“It’s great to get policy passed,” says Benavidez, “but you have to stay on the implementation to follow through, or it just gets sucked up into the machine. We are fighting for actual investment in our families.”

# TAILORING SERVICES TO HELP THE AT-RISK SUCCEED

With a comprehensive program, transitional Latino young men settle into employment, essential services and a sense of belonging.

**YouthWorks**  
www.santafeyouthworks.org



## Mission:

To help young people develop the necessary life skills to become active, productive participants in their community.

## Initiative:

Through personalized case management and adult education classes offered in a supportive environment, young Latino men break the cycle of unemployment and homelessness -- and find community in the process.

## Population Served:

Unemployed, homeless (67 percent), adjudicated and/or high-risk (primarily) Latino young men, ages 16-24.

## Geographic Location:

Northern New Mexico

## Key Promising Practices Employed:

Personalized Case Management, Seizing Opportunities to Shift Youth to Higher Paying Sectors, Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships, Prisoner Reintegration.

Each year, about 650 at-risk Latino young men walk in the door at YouthWorks looking for employment; they leave with a stronger sense of self, a connection to community resources, and increased skills to find and keep a job.

**The Project:** YouthWorks is committed to serving every young person who walks through its doors, many of whom arrive as a last resort with a myriad of challenges that are heightened by poverty. The comprehensive Personalized Case Management services that YouthWorks has developed for these young men and women, recently bolstered by an additional case manager, include assistance with housing, accessing healthcare, creating a transportation plan, enrolling in school or job training classes, navigating the criminal justice system, and more. By providing a variety of options for assistance, YouthWorks staff is able to meet the participants' most pressing issues.

YouthWorks' staffers are committed to meeting program participants "where they are at," without anticipating where they should be, avoiding judgement and labels. Participating young men determine where they want to be, and YouthWorks staffers provide the extra support that they need to navigate the system.

"We open the doors to everyone, and we try and help with anything they need," said Melynn Schuyler, YouthWorks Founder and Executive Director. YouthWorks also has an onsite partner providing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals-related immigration assistance, which has increased immigrant eligibility in many of the YouthWorks paid employment programs and, correspondingly, immigrant participation.

YouthWorks offers a range of classes and vocational training opportunities to Shift the Youth to Higher Paying Sectors. The classes are focused on where there are job opportunities and market demands in Northern New Mexico. In response to a shortage of healthcare providers and a rapidly aging population, YouthWorks offers a 10-week personal home health care assistant training that meets for eight hours each week. YouthWorks also has a successful culinary training program that provides food for

the organization's work crews, classrooms, and an income-generating catering program. "There are more than 400 restaurants in Santa Fe," Schuyler said.

"We hope to get everyone through our culinary program even for just a couple of weeks, so they have the experience to get work when the opportunity arises." Restaurants commonly call YouthWorks to get connected with prospective employees. In addition, YouthWorks has a strong relationship with the local community college, which enables YouthWorks to offer some of their internal classes for college credit. Having college credit on a transcript makes the process of enrolling in the college less intimidating.

"If you can just get one college credit on a transcript, then you are a college student building small steps into college, instead of biting the whole thing off at once and failing again," Schuyler said.

Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships also make it possible for YouthWorks to provide actual paid employment opportunities to many of the young men who access its services. The organization has developed partnerships with a variety of labor-based departments within the City of Santa Fe, including Water Management, Parks and Recreation, and Streets and Drainage. Through the partnerships, YouthWorks is able to pay its participants directly (about 70 percent of its organizational budget goes toward youth stipends.) and develop work crews. The experience provides income and employment experience for the young men, and helps them to develop their social skills and build peer relationships -- all while providing a needed service to the community.

"The community develops awareness about putting young people that they thought they despised out to do good things," says Schuyler, "and the young people see that they can do something that is going to be appreciated. By building that rapport and that awareness on both sides, there is a reconnection."

About 40 percent of YouthWorks participants face additional employment obstacles due to adjudication. "Young people that have been engaged with the system have a very hard time getting out," Schuyler said. YouthWorks staff help participants address outstanding warrants and avoid further involvement with the system YouthWorks' commitment to Prisoner Reintegration was recently bolstered when it was designated an official Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative site through New Mexico's Children, Youth and Families Department.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** Expanding services with one additional staff member enabled YouthWorks to serve at least 100 more young men. Staff shared that the depth of services felt much more responsive to the needs of program participants. The increase in clients served necessitated that YouthWorks invest in a new and improved data tracking system. Despite this increased capacity, the lack of resources has left the organization seeking funds to add one more case manager.

One of the secrets to YouthWorks' success is helping participants achieve tangible gains very soon after beginning services. "If we can give them the booster shot fast enough so they catch on to 'I can do this,' then they usually succeed in some way," Schuyler said. Remaining open and nonjudgmental creates an atmosphere of continued engagement that keeps participants returning to Youthworks to share their achievements, offer assistance to young men in the program and seek assistance when necessary.

"This is a family atmosphere, so if you have been engaged with us in some way or another, we are concerned about how you are doing," said Heather Vigil, YouthWorks Lead Case Manager. "And [former participants] obviously want to report on their celebrations, and they get back to us if they need help on an issue."

Moving forward, YouthWorks has big plans. The organization would like to open a state charter school that combines formal and vocational training with job opportunities, enabling participants to secure a diploma and certifications associated with a trade. In response to a major affordable housing shortage in the Santa Fe area, YouthWorks is looking to become a provider of transitional housing for homeless youth. Toward that end, its leadership envisions securing distressed housing that its work crews can renovate and eventually occupy.

# Discussion and Conclusion

Latino-led and Latino-serving organizations working at the local level play an important role in improving the lives of men and boys. As demonstrated in the six case studies, their cultural knowledge and strong community relationships, coupled with the use of promising practices, lend themselves to programs that anticipate and respond to the needs of Latino men and youths. serving organizations working at the local level play an important role in improving the lives of men and boys. As demonstrated in the six case studies, their cultural knowledge and strong community relationships, coupled with the use of promising practices, lend themselves to programs that anticipate and respond to the needs of Latino men and youths.

Many of the practices identified overlap and build off one another. That each practice can stand alone or be used in combination with others holds significant promise in offering tools to the field. This report discusses some of the variations in how practices were applied by way of thematic clusters.

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*“The changing demographics of our country provides an opportunity for Latinos in the Southwest (and New Mexico, a minority-majority state), to lead the way in promising practices for Latino men and boys. Local groups are from the community, working for the community. Similar to our practice at Con Alma, ‘we are them.’ Community self-determination is key.”*

–Dolores Roybal, Executive Director, Con Alma Health Foundation

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## Employment-Related Practices

Latino men are employed at high rates, but they are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Even when adjusted for level of education, Latinos make lower wages than the general population—indicating that

workforce discrimination is a factor that Latino men must contend with.<sup>3</sup> Given the rapidly growing Latino population and its younger demographic, it is no surprise that two of the grantees seized opportunities to Shift Youth to Higher Paying Sectors. YouthWorks makes this possible by providing community-college course accreditation and vocational training programs. La Plazita Institute teaches all of the skillsets necessary to run a successful small-scale farm-to-table agricultural project.

The dearth of higher paying jobs for Latino men also suggests that low-wage Latino earners compete against other marginalized low-wage earners, such as African American men, potentially dividing two disenfranchised groups that could actually work together to remove systemic barriers. This bolsters the opportunities to promote greater Black/Brown understanding as Latinos Build Pathways to Careers. Focusing on jobs that serve the greater good is a practice that can be seen through SWOP’s efforts to develop future community organizers, who will serve within the agency or around the community.

## Incarceration-Related Practices

For adjudicated Latino men and boys, finding any employment, let alone higher-paying work, poses additional challenges. This is particularly troublesome as Latino students are overrepresented among those facing harsh disciplinary practices in schools, resulting in suspensions and contributing to higher dropout rates and involvement with the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup> Working to Break the School-to-Prison Pipeline is a priority for several of the grantees, though their approaches differed significantly. Amistades confronted this issue by developing training materials for educators and other providers on how to break the pipeline, while AGUILA provided myriad enrichment opportunities to help youth stay in school and successfully transition to college. While those measures were largely preventative, two of the

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<sup>3</sup> Glover Blackwell, A. & Pastor, M. (2010). Let’s Hear it for the Boys: Building a Stronger America by Investing in Young Men and Boys of Color.” In Edley, C. & Ruiz de Velasco, J., *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve The Health of Boys of Color* (pp. 3-35). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

<sup>4</sup> National Council of La Raza. (2011) School-to-Prison Pipeline: Zero Tolerance for Latino Youth. Retrieved from: [https://www.sccgov.org/sites/pdo/ppw/pubs/Documents/ZeroTolerance\\_FactSheet22011.pdf](https://www.sccgov.org/sites/pdo/ppw/pubs/Documents/ZeroTolerance_FactSheet22011.pdf)

organizations utilized Prisoner Reintegration practices to reduce recidivism as they simultaneously helped young men develop tangible employment skills. La Plazita Institute actively sought out adjudicated young men, while about 40 percent of the men served by YouthWorks have been adjudicated. For both organizations, providing a supportive and non-judgmental environment is essential. Research indicates that community-based programs focused on assisting people who have been incarcerated to “re-enter” society are effective in reducing recidivism.<sup>5</sup>

## Education-Related Practices

Latino male students drop out of school at much higher rates than the general public.<sup>6</sup> An effective retention strategy employed by AGUILA is to Invite Latino Families into the Classroom by engaging them through parent meetings and volunteer opportunities to become more involved in their children’s education. AGUILA’s ability to communicate with parents in Spanish is critical, since the lack of language access can be an insurmountable barrier for Latino parent engagement with academics.<sup>7</sup> SWOP used the Schoolhouse as an Incubator for Democracy approach to organize Latino youth to develop leadership skills while demanding accountability and equity across schools.

## Addressing Needs and Barriers

Latino men and boys have many additional critical needs, such as housing, immigration services and food security. Systemic barriers and a “one size fits all” mainstream service-delivery approach make accessing resources to ameliorate these needs even more challenging. Amistades Addressed Cultural Barriers to Health by training mainstream service providers to make their services and programs friendlier to Latinos, while La Red focused on overcoming barriers by referring Latino boys in need of services to a network of culturally specific service providers. A few grantees offered Personalized Case Management to meet these needs and overcome these barriers.

La Red’s assistance package was not a formal component of programming but was viewed as integral to success; for example, a youth could

<sup>5</sup> Glover Blackwell, A. & Pastor, M. (2010). Let’s Hear it for the Boys: Building a Stronger America by Investing in Young Men and Boys of Color.” In Edley, C. & Ruiz de Velasco, J., *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve The Health of Boys of Color* (pp. 3-35). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Zarate, Maria Estela. Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education: Perceptions, Expectations, and Recommendations. 2007. The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.

not attend sessions without transportation and, therefore, needed assistance to secure his driver’s license. On the other hand, the YouthWorks project was developed to increase the reach of its already established and formal case management services. Until these critical needs were met, it was difficult for Latino men and boys to perceive the value of prioritizing their participation in the initiatives.

## Helping Latino Families to Thrive

La Red del Rio Abajo worked to Build Assets with Latino Families by offering an individual development account program that provided financial planning classes and enabled the Latino youth to save and receive matching funds for paying educational expenses. AGUILA built assets with families by helping youths to secure scholarships, without which college would have been financially inaccessible. Incentivizing Participation through stipends, food baskets and more was an important strategy for recruitment and retention given the needs of participants. SWOP noted that providing stipends to their youths (through another funding source) enabled them to reach youngsters who otherwise would have had to secure employment to assist with family expenses, preventing their involvement. La Red participants received a share from local community supported agricultural projects as a way of increasing access to organic foods and improving health among participants, in addition to incentivizing their participation. This is particularly important as Latino men and boys are significantly more likely to be overweight or obese, compared with White males.<sup>8</sup>

## Developing Long-Term Leadership

The nonprofits’ initiatives were not intended to just help Latino men and boys get by, but rather to excel through increased leadership capacity. While none of the initiatives was solely focused on Developing the Leadership of At-Risk Young Latino Immigrant Men, four projects strongly incorporated leadership development strategies. AGUILA developed leadership by making the concept of “paying it forward” essential to program design. La Red used a Youth Mentorship design to simultaneously enhance the leadership skills of the adult mentors and the youth. La Plazita staff members served as informal mentors, modeling leadership skills, to the primarily adjudicated young men with whom they worked.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. (2013). Obesity and Hispanic Americans. Retrieved on March 5, 2016, from <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=70>

Despite the eight-month duration of their program, La Plazita views Staying Engaged with Latino Men and Boys for several years as essential to truly help participants develop their leadership, given the multiple barriers that adjudicated young Latinos face. AGUILA's program is designed to engage the boys throughout all of high school, and alumni are encouraged to play a role in programming beyond.

## Partnerships

Every grantee utilized Nonprofit and Public Sector Partnerships to expand its reach. Public sector partnerships for YouthWorks enabled them to provide paid employment opportunities through municipal agencies. Partnerships with nonprofits enabled SWOP youth to increase their calls for accountability by uniting with Asian youth at another organization who were at-risk of joining the school-to-prison pipeline. Similarly, the personalized case management provided by YouthWorks, La Red, and La Plazita would not be possible without their nonprofit partners.

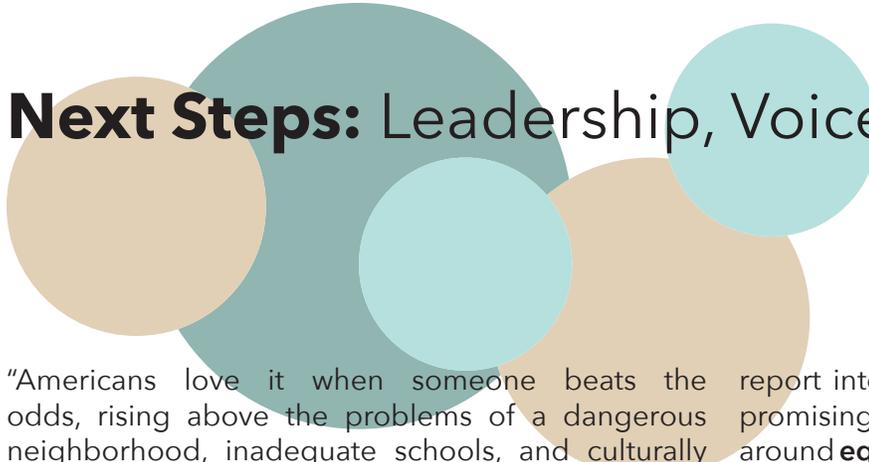
TheHIP-RobertWoodJohnsonFoundationpartnership also made possible networking opportunities that increased the capacity of nonprofits to expand and deepen their regional and national contacts.

## Utilizing Culture

Weaving Latino Culture Throughout Programming cuts across many of the promising practices. Indeed, research has shown that cultural pride programs can motivate young people to advance academically and set higher goals for themselves.<sup>9</sup> Culturally specific services can be much more effective at reaching Latinos given the systemic barriers they face. Despite the effectiveness of this practice, its application differs significantly depending on type of initiative and which cultural group of Latinos that programming targets. La Plazita primarily focused on incorporating indigenous aspects of Latino culture into programming, while Amistades taught providers core Latino values and provided them with practical outreach suggestions for working with the Latino communities.

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<sup>9</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. In *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. 34, Number 3. Retrieved from [http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/sites/tolerance.org/tdsi/files/assets/general/Ladson-Billings\\_PDE.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/sites/tolerance.org/tdsi/files/assets/general/Ladson-Billings_PDE.pdf)



# Next Steps: Leadership, Voice, and Equity

“Americans love it when someone beats the odds, rising above the problems of a dangerous neighborhood, inadequate schools, and culturally insensitive systems,” said Dr. Manuel Pastor, Director of the University of Southern California Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. “But, while celebrating individual mobility and *ganas* (or ambition) is key, the real task for policymakers, philanthropists and others is to change the odds, working to ensure that structural barriers fall and successes become easier over time.” Hispanics in Philanthropy will continue working to support Latino men and boys as they beat the odds in three key ways, by focusing on supporting efforts in leadership, voice, and equity.

Hispanics in Philanthropy has taken on a strong **leadership** role nationally, and regionally, to support initiatives that work with Latino men and boys. The broader men and boys of color movement has formed within a distinct sociocultural framework in the U.S. that is related to, but independent of, the modern Latino experience. Within this framework, and national conversation, Latino led, Latino-serving projects are underrepresented. We are glad to continue this role, to bring together funding partners and other allies to support improvement and social justice for all our Latino young men, their families, and their communities.

Furthermore, HIP is committed to working with our funding partners so that Latino grassroots nonprofits can elevate their **voice**. We look to the best examples of their work, some of which are highlighted in this report, to motivate, inform, and inspire us. Yet we know that we must continue to invest in that voice, through providing leaders with better communications, data, and advocacy tools, and through facilitating the means through which nonprofits can focus on service to their communities. Many times, the most important changes begin locally, and nonprofits that serve Latino young men must have an effective communications platform to take advantage of local opportunities.

Building on its past work, Hispanics in Philanthropy implemented recommendations from its previous

report into this under-researched field, and we see promising results in programs specifically designed around **equity**, to engage Latino men and boys in ways that add to their self-worth and motivation to succeed in their families, in school, in the workplace and in life. Although rigorous research and evaluations will be needed to better inform the field and improve upon what has been done, it is clear that the diverse strategies explored here are scalable and many are transplantable to other places. It is also clear that many strategies and practices overlap with efforts in African American, Native American, and other communities of color, and that we need to leverage each other’s strengths to serve all our men and boys together in a more equitable manner.

The need to build the capacity of Latino-led and Latino-serving nonprofits to initiate or increase activities in this field is great. In addition to more research, what is missing is long-term funding commitments, resources to build the capacity of community-based organizations, train government, criminal justice and social service workers to engage Latinos through cultural awareness, and to fund the programs equitably.

We have identified an active opportunity in funders who want to work together and leverage resources to better coordinate local work, and create a common narrative for local communities addressing the needs of Latino men and boys. Hispanics in Philanthropy encourages all of its allies to dig deeper, so that we can better understand, serve, and ultimately mitigate the barriers and needs that Latino men and boys, and all men and boys of color, continue to have and face.







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