

COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

The Community Learning Partnership (CLP) works with grassroots groups, organizers and educators to create new educational pathways into community change careers. CLP Degree and Certificate programs lead to careers in:

- Community Organizing and Community Development;
- Grassroots efforts to improve communities and gain greater social justice; and
- Nonprofit or government programs that depend on community participation for success;

Community change work is immensely challenging, requiring highly skilled, knowledgeable and strategic staff and leaders. There is a critical shortage of such people, especially in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color where the needs are greatest.

The Partnership's sole focus is on addressing this pipeline crisis. We bring community leaders, organizers, trainers and academics together to **create new College Degree and Certificate Programs in Community Change Studies**. These programs prepare students for careers in community organizing, community development and democracy-building. They enable students to develop the broad knowledge, practical and intellectual skills, values and vision they need to organize people, build power and influence, and bring about change. They include extensive field experience with skilled organizers as mentors.

The programs are sustainable because they are based at public colleges, and their students are eligible for Pell grants and other financial aid. They offer credentials which greatly enhance their students' upward mobility in organizing and other careers. And they offer flexibility to students who, for financial or other reasons, need to combine their education with a job, earning credentials as they work and learn.

Furthermore, these educational pathways address the greatest crisis in the pipeline: **they focus on recruiting and preparing people of color and people from low-income and working class neighborhoods for careers in community change**. They tap the participants' experience of poverty and exclusion and equip them to organize and lead efforts for change in their communities.

Our Strategy:

There are four key components in our strategy for advancing Community Change Education to make it widely available for potential change agents:

1. **CLP works with local partners to develop Community Change Studies programs** at community college, college and midcareer levels ;
2. **CLP is developing a national network** to forge close links, peer learning, and collaboration among people and institutions committed to solving the pipeline crisis through Community Change Studies programs in their communities;
3. **With support from the US Department of Education, CLP is developing a replication system to help sites** develop curricula, teaching materials and faculty teams -- including experienced organizers and other community-based practitioners -- for these programs;

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4. **The CLP network is advocating for greater recognition and funding** for these educational and skill-building programs.

The New Partnerships and Degree Programs:

The Partnership's work¹ has resulted in a series of strong partnerships between academics and practitioners that are launching intensive educational programs. These combine the breadth, range and financial sustainability which institutions of higher education can provide, with the knowledge and practical skills which can best be developed through extensive field experience with mentoring by community-based practitioners.

On the community side, CLP's partners include citywide coalitions of grassroots groups; community development technical assistance and training centers; organizations focused on training new organizers; and collaborations among leading grassroots groups in communities.

On the institutional side, all programs initially involve Community Colleges because those institutions have unique access to students of color and people from low and moderate income neighborhoods. The programs thus offer a "double social benefit": they prepare low-income and working class students for promising careers, and their graduates in turn develop the commitment, skills and knowledge they need to organize and improve disadvantaged communities.

These programs vary considerably. Some cities are adding a high school component, helping local high schools develop dual-enrollment courses to introduce students to Community Change Studies while earning college credit. The Minneapolis program includes both a one-year Certificate and a two-year Degree program in Community Change Studies, and has negotiated an articulation agreement with a four year college. New York City offers a paid Apprenticeship in collaboration with Public Allies/Americorps. It also offers an Advanced Community Organizing Fellowship program at Hunter College whose participants earn postgraduate credit. Each site adapts to its own needs and opportunities.

The programs combine classes and field work to help students develop the skills, knowledge, values, vision and experience they need. This promises to boost the quality and sophistication of the next generation of community change agents.

The national Community Learning Partnership plays a variety of roles as : A catalyst for action in different locations; A source of technical assistance and seed money for emerging local partnerships; and, the Hub for a growing national network. As resources permit CLP plans to expand the number and scope of these programs so they become increasingly significant sources of the talent that is so greatly needed by community groups, other nonprofits and public agencies which depend upon community engagement for success.

¹ **Current sites:**

- New York
- Minneapolis
- Los Angeles
- Cupertino/San Jose
- Chicago - in planning
- Detroit/Southern Michigan - in planning
- Expansion in California -in planning