



## MWCA Best Practices

### SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA: **Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WSA #15)**

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#### **The Kujichagulia Project**

##### **Overview**

The Kujichagulia (Self Determination) Project is a unique partnership between Ramsey County, the Cultural Wellness Center (CWC), and the Ramsey County African American community to provide culturally specific services to African American participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). The project was undertaken after Ramsey County identified significant disparities in employment, sanction, and exit rates for African Americans utilizing MFIP for income support. The County acknowledged that its traditional service model was not working for African American families, and it approached African American community elders for guidance in creating a model that would increase the effectiveness of services and address outcomes disparities. Their work resulted in The Kujichagulia Project.

Traditionally, Ramsey County uses a “top down” approach to partnerships in which the County identifies a service delivery strategy and issues a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) to select contractual partners to carry out the identified strategy. In this project, however, the County first went to the African American community to identify how to reduce disparities for African American MFIP participants. The Community, in turn, researched strategies and initiated a relationship with the Cultural Wellness Center. The Community then worked to create partnership between the County and the Cultural Wellness Center. The plan developed and recommended by the Community and adopted by County included community change, long term engagement strategy, and the underlying purpose of self determination: *Kujichagulia*.

Ramsey County and the Cultural Wellness Center together conceived a pilot to facilitate a process change in the African American community that would place welfare reform inside the larger community goal of creating more stable and stronger families. The purpose of the project is to help African American families move from dependence on government support to independence and self-sufficiency, and make sure they are able to define themselves, name themselves, create for themselves and speak for themselves instead of being defined, named, created for and spoken for by others.

##### **Jobseeker Impact**

- Improved participant outcomes in the area of Work Participation Rate and the self-support index for the African American community. Work related hours improved by 20%, increase in employment rate by 22%, average number of hours increased by 10%
- Reduction in sanction rate for the Africa American community
- Improved outcomes and services to the Africa American community
- Maintained a sanction rate of 15% or lower
- Better working relationship between job seeker and job counselor
- Addresses issues of self –esteem and engagement with MFIP activities
- Embraces African American cultural to promote self-esteem
- Development of a family kinship network
- Encourages and supporting positive relationship within families
- Navigators provide non-traditional wrap-around services that MFIP is not equipped to provide.

- Navigators and job counselor work in partnership to better serve participants.

### **Community impact**

- Addresses disparities in an innovative matter that supports community collaboration and participation.
- Works with the community to redesign public services and change systems that produce disparities
- Hubert Humphrey Institute Consulting Group to document the partnership formation for replication
- County encouraged and supports community ownership and collaboration of this project.
- Moves away from the top down management approach.

### **Partners**

- Ramsey County
- Cultural Wellness Center
- African American elders and citizens
- Community Institution Advisories include YWCA, African American Advisory Council and others
- Ramsey County Commissioners

### **Leveraging/alignment of outside resources**

- Time and expertise of the community partnership
- Research documentation from Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

### **Ideas for replication/lessons learned**

- The Hubert Humphrey Report can be used to show others the difficulty encountered in developing a government and non-profit partnership effectively work together to build partnerships and address critical issue in our community. This document lays a foundation for any one who may want to enter in to a similar partnership and embrace the lessons learned from this partnership.
- This project has been nominated for a national award in leadership and management by the Hubert Humphrey Institute, and will be converted into a teaching case study for graduate students.

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