



2010 FOCUS AREAS

Mission:

To engage community and civic leadership in policy and program development, the Center will accelerate Newark's revitalization while ensuring that the process includes and responds to the priorities of its community members.

Goals:

1. Establish a critical mass of reforms that will bring Newark to a tipping point where a positive cycle of health, abundance and opportunity can be achieved.

2. Restore trust between Newark's decision makers and residents, realigning them to be on the same team.

Focus Area 1:

Workforce Development

Challenge:

- a. Newark's unemployment rate is over 15% and underemployment rate is over 50%.
- b. There is a disconnect between employment opportunities that are coming to Newark and the relevant skills of many job-seekers.

Collaborative Change:

- a. Research and evaluate job training programs in Newark.
- b. Identify best practices in holistic job training from other cities.
- c. Explore feasibility of micro-finance as catalyst for small-business development.

Focus Area 2:

Education Supports and Attitudes

Challenge:

- a. Newark's graduation rate is just about 50%, many of whom lack basic skills above an 8th grade level.
- b. In our survey of 500+ residents, only a few identified education as a concern.

Collaborative Change:

- a. Gather information and develop a resource map of youth development and education-focused entities in Newark.
- b. Conduct surveys and focus groups on community attitudes regarding education.

Focus Area 3:

Police-Community Relations

Challenge:

- a. Tensions between residents and police officials are high, evidenced by both complaints about police misconduct and pervasive unwillingness of community to cooperate with police ("anti-snitching movement").

Collaborative Change:

- a. Assist NPD in revising its Community Relations Strategy through surveys, focus groups and best practices research.
- b. Continue work to implement Community Court and Newark Reentry Legal Services (ReLeSe).

Focus Area 4:

Government Functioning

Challenge:

- a. City Hall functioning as well as internal and public relations suffer from antiquated technology & lack of inter-office paperless systems.
- b. Issues of morale, customer service, training and discipline also mar efficiency and community relations.

Collaborative Change:

- a. Develop system map and flow chart of key inter-departmental processes and initiatives to frame case for investment in technology.
- b. Research best practices in human resources, management and training.

Focus Area 5:

Engagement & Empowerment

Challenge:

- a. The vast majority of survey respondents indicated no trust for city officials.
- b. Barriers to participation in political and policy issues include language and cultural barriers.
- c. Trust is also impaired by lack of a comprehensive listing of available programs.

Collaborative Change:

- a. Perform series of civic education courses with partners serving immigrant communities.
- b. Youth-to-Youth "Know Your Rights" training program.
- c. Convene providers to develop comprehensive resource database.