

**The Heinz Endowments' African American Men and Boys Task Force
Strategic Plan Outline
2009**

Mission Statement: To identify and increase educational, economic, social and leadership opportunities for African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region and improve their life outcomes.

Context Statement: The condition of Pittsburgh's African American men and boys is a consequence of both historical and current injustices, including enslavement, structural racism and a narrow definition of black manhood. We respect this historical context and the scope of the task, as we move to support the African American community in its continuing effort to address the challenges for men and boys. We recognize that the needed change will require active participation and support on the part of a significant number of individuals and institutions in the Pittsburgh region.

Integration of and Collaboration with Local, State and National Initiatives: Although the primary mission of the African American Men and Boys Task Force is to improve the life outcomes for young African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region, its efforts will be aligned with and grounded in successful local, state and national initiatives as a means to provide multiple resources and supports for this constituency. If this alignment and integration of resources and best practices are thoughtfully pursued and accomplished, the Task Force's work will serve as a model for other foundations and their communities.

Intent of the Document: The intent of the strategic planning document is to acknowledge the Heinz Endowments Board of Directors' commitment to improving the life outcomes for African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region; affirm the best thinking and priorities of the five community focus groups; guide and coordinate the grant making of program staff as a total body and at the program level; facilitate dialogue and direction from the advisory committee; and avail successful practices and solutions to the larger community.

Priorities, Goals and Strategies

Priority #1 Educational Opportunity

Goal: Increase academic achievement for African American boys in order that they would be prepared to succeed in college, other post-secondary education experiences, or immediate careers.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Establish community-based parent / guardian workshops and forums to equip participants with the skills and resources to support students in their educational futures from pre-school to grade 12.
- Design learning environments in formal school settings and in community venues to bridge nutrition, physical fitness and healthy lifestyles to the intellectual development and academic achievement of African American boys.
- Conduct teacher training in ways to increase the level of cultural responsiveness in classroom instruction for African American boys.
- Create partnerships with interested area colleges/universities and businesses to provide curriculum related and economically beneficial experiences for African American male students that increase their motivation to attend college and/or pursue a particular career pathway.

Priority #2 Access to Economic Opportunity

Goal: Ensure that African American boys and men in the Pittsburgh region can pursue career paths with the potential for wealth creation on par with the opportunities available to other demographic groups.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Strengthen the workforce pipeline to address the full range of career paths from entry through professional level positions, with a special focus on environmentally sustainable industry sectors.
- Provide opportunities for cooperation among minority-led companies so that established firms can enable less-experienced partners to build competitive businesses more quickly.
- Encourage employer investment in retention in addition to recruitment as part of creating a workplace culture that welcomes diversity and eliminates disparities in career opportunity.

Priority #3 Identity, Gender and Character Development

Goal: Develop African centered initiation and Rites of Passage Programs that strengthen identity, including its gender, racial and character components, which lead to increased academic achievement, civic engagement and violence reduction.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Take young men into a nature-based environment for an extended exploration of values, personal capacity and teamwork, and then bring them back to the community to apply what they learned in real-world settings.
- Enroll young men in a leadership program based on the values of the Nguzo Saba (the principles of Kwanzaa) as a means of building their commitment to their families and communities.
- Give young men a long-term immersive experience in the arts of the African Diaspora, and then share their growth with the larger community in a culminating performance/exhibition.

Priority #4 The Heinz Endowments Communications

Goal 1: Generate deeper community understanding of issues facing African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region that leads to dynamic public engagement, advocacy and policy change.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Serve as a resource to the African American Men and Boys Task Force priority areas and to the Endowments.
- Mobilize community-wide calls to action that address issues affecting African American men and boys.
- Establish, frame and link platforms based on the task force's priority issues.

Goal 2: Increase public recognition of the deficit framing used to discuss the successes and challenges facing African American men and boys, resulting in community action to eliminate that framing and to increase positive images of African American males in the public sphere.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Conduct an audit of the Pittsburgh new media's framing of the stories about African American men and boys.
- Support the creation and distribution of stories and media developed by, for or about African American men and boys.
- Work with nonprofit and foundation partners to change any deficit framing used in our field in discussing African American men and boys and to galvanize the philanthropic and broader community in promoting more positive portrayals.
- Create opportunities for organizations who work with or on behalf of African American men and boys to publicize their work to the larger community.
- Establish a promotion fund from which small grants can be awarded to support publicity for community events that encourage and support African American men and boys.

Goal 3: Sustain community awareness of the need to improve the lives of African American men and boys and the priority that the Endowments has placed on addressing this issue as an important aspect of the foundation's work.

Examples of Possible Programmatic Strategies:

- Communicate the goals, strategies and grant making of the African American Men and Boys Task Force through the Endowments and other resources to all relevant stakeholders: our grantees, both current and potential; other foundations, both local and national; government and for profit organizations; and the larger southwestern Pennsylvania community.
- Devote an h magazine issue to examining the accomplishments and struggles of African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region.
- Establish an African American Men and Boys page on the Endowments Web site.