

Contents

Introduction ♦ Partnerships ♦ Inactive Members ♦ Diversity ♦ Conclusion

OPEN FORUM FOR COMMUNITY TIMEBANKS

Nancy Goodman and Caitlin Featherstone

Introduction

This forum was led by Nancy Goodman, President of the Board of Directors for Cape Ann TimeBank (CATB), and Caitlin Featherstone, Member Coordinator for CATB. The focus of this forum was to allow members to present their personal concerns and issues and be prepared to receive wisdom from other community-based TimeBanks (TBs), using the Socratic Method. This method proved to be very helpful to the attendees of the forum because they had the opportunity to receive advice from the forum leaders as well as other members in the forum who were able to offer different perspectives of their issue.

Partnerships

The most important issue addressed in this forum was the challenge of engaging businesses and agencies in the mission of TBs. One suggestion that was offered was for members to research specific companies' needs and how their community-based TB can meet those needs without displacing current workers. When members are involved in this process they are able to brainstorm ideas of how to promote their businesses while simultaneously improving the quality of life for the people in the community. When members are encouraged to be involved in this process it opens the doors to business perspectives that may not have been available to the director, or a small panel of board members. One member emphasized the importance of identifying areas that businesses (or agencies) may benefit before approaching them with a proposal for participation. Members should always be looking for new and innovative ways of getting the attention of these businesses (or agencies) so that they can diversify the support their TB is receiving.

Inactive Members

One issue that most of the TB members seemed to have was surrounding inactive members. In some scenarios, members were considered inactive because they provided monetary support but were unwilling to trade services with others in the community. In this case, Nancy suggested that members accept that some members are not comfortable or maybe unavailable to trade services. TimeBanks should allow those members to still participate and simply offer extra incentives to those who are willing to trade services, because the idea of TBs is reciprocity. Another suggestion was to send out monthly calendars with the dates of events at the TB and require members to call or come in and register for those events. This keeps members informed of what's going on in their community TBs and reminds them to communicate with them.

Participants

Jessica Vinson
Caitlin Featherstone
Nancy Goodman
Alison Underhill
Olnia De Mayo



Diversity

Another issue that was addressed was the need for more diversity in various areas of the countries. For example, CATB's members are a homogeneous group that is primarily made up of people that are financially privileged and/or possess a bachelor's degree or higher. The coordinators want the TBs to reflect the needs and assets of people with various economic profiles. One suggestion offered in the forum was for members of CATB to engage people in the surrounding communities with incentives that benefit those people. For example, CATB may offer assistance with ESL or citizenship tests in communities that have a large immigrant base. Another suggestion was for CATB to promote their services in areas that serve people from various economic profiles, like Farmers Markets, public libraries, and Downtown areas.

Conclusion

Overall, the forum was very helpful to all the participants. One member commented that the reason that the forum was so helpful is because the coordinators, Nancy and Caitlin, also had questions that generated a lot of important ideas that she's anxious to incorporate in her community-based TB. Another member mentioned that being able to listen to other member's issues and offer advice allowed her to gain a better perspective on the issues she experienced in her community.