

Community Liaison Framework Quickguide



live
healthy
little havana

UHP
Urban Health Partnerships

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Background

Urban Health Partnerships (UHP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to invest in communities by co-designing sustainable change and promoting equity and well-being across the life span. UHP strives to partner with community members, stakeholders, and organizations that share the vision of having healthy and sustainable communities where people can actively, safely and conveniently access resources and meet their daily needs through vibrant social and built environments.

UHP works with urban historically underserved and disenfranchised communities who are affected disproportionately by health disparities due to a wide range of systemic challenges in the social, economic and built environment, harmful policies or lack of inclusive and equitable processes. UHP has worked with communities throughout Miami-Dade and Broward Counties to implement collective impact initiatives addressing health and equity that emphasize community leadership and capacity-building.

UHP has worked with the Live Healthy Little Havana Initiative (LHLH), funded by Health Foundation of South Florida, since its start in 2014. UHP has contributed to the initiative's success through leadership and participation in the Board of Directors, Behavioral Health Impact Team (HIT), and Physical Activity and Built Environment HIT. Additionally, UHP has implemented several projects addressing the intersection of health and the built environment, community capacity building, and developing strong Community Action Plans (CAP) in support of LHLH's goals.

This document presents a Quick Guide to understand the importance of developing a Community Liaison (CL) Framework within any initiative, and a suggested process to prepare, develop, and maintain this framework. The online extensions for this Quick Guide also highlight the project Una Comunidad Conectada as a successful case example of this suggested framework. The Una Comunidad Conectada project and development of this document was funded through a Health Foundation of South Florida grant made to Urban Health Partnerships. The title of each section in the Quick Guide refers to jazz terms because we believe the CL Framework shares a lot of similarities with jazz music. There are diverse musicians bringing unique knowledge, specific instruments they play, the beats that they build on, and the beautiful rhythms they compose. While there is space for solos, for the most part the whole band plays together to create harmony. Most importantly, there is space for improvisation, feedback, learning, making adaptations and adjustments while maintaining a melody throughout. Watch out for the musical notes (i.e., *Jazz Notes*¹) throughout the Quick Guide to learn more about how jazz can help us better understand how a CL Framework can become a hit!

¹ Definitions for Jazz Notes sourced from the following websites: A Passion for Jazz <https://www.apassion4jazz.net/glossary.html>, Sensagent Dictionary <http://dictionary.sensagent.com/Compiling/en-en/>, and Jazz in America <http://www.jazzinamerica.org/JazzResources/Glossary/a/i>.



Jazz Notes will appear throughout this document to identify and define Jazz terms to help us better understand the musical analogy of this work.

What is a Community Liaison Framework?

Community Liaisons (CLs) are residents who are hired and trained to be connectors that help community members better understand and access services, resources, and other opportunities provided by coalitions, initiatives, human service organizations, government and other key agencies. They build sustained and meaningful engagement with community members and key stakeholders to promote community-driven sustainable change. They grow to become long-term champions for positive social change in their own communities. As a social justice strategy, CLs are paid for their time. One cannot assume or expect that individuals have the financial ability to volunteer their time. This professional and personal development opportunity should be available to everyone.

The Community Liaison Framework proposed by UHP emphasizes the need for a systems change to increase community outreach, engagement, and strengthen community networks to positively affect and improve the resiliency, health, and overall wellbeing of community members. This framework helps build bridges between the initiative and the community, reducing working within silos and better addressing the community's needs. It has three main strategies: build the capacity of community leaders, deepen relationships with stakeholders, and integrate community members into the initiative's decision-making processes.

Why Integrate the Community Liaison Framework into Your Community Initiative?

This framework centers community residents as activators and leaders of their own social change. Therefore, this proposed framework will enhance your initiative by creating systems changes in how it engages community members, stakeholders, and other leaders, and implements its projects. These relationships will offer unique opportunities to increase education, prevention, and capacity-building efforts while allowing for more influence from the community around policy, system, and environmental changes (PSEs). This form of community engagement that focuses on building local leaders is a powerful tool to create long-term ownership, impact, and sustainability in your initiative. Consider it an important strategy to promote inclusion and equity within your initiative and in the community.

*“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”
African Proverb*

Setting the Arrangements...



*In music, an **arrangement** is a musical reconceptualization of a previously composed work. It may differ from the original work by means of reharmonization, melodic paraphrasing, orchestration, or development of the formal structure. Similarly, **the CL Framework should always be an arrangement** or reconceptualization of previously conducted work that adapts to each community to adequately represent and integrate its culture, values, vision and members.*



*The **ensemble** is a group of people performing music together, emphasizing the roles of all performers as a whole rather than one star performance. Similarly, to set up a successful CL Framework team, or ensemble, all roles need to be emphasized and adequately understood as equally important by everyone involved.*

a. The Ensemble: Preparing the Initiative for a Community Liaison Framework

It is recommended to set some commitments for the initiative before starting the CL Framework. Here are some examples:

- Understand that the CLs are not just a tool to increase awareness or increase community participation in your initiative. Their role is also to help build community capacity.
- Integrate community members in all processes of the initiative, especially in the co-design and decision-making processes. Integration of the communities' knowledge, values, culture and interests is integral to this framework.
- Intentionally break down barriers, such as transportation, language, cultural, technological challenges, preventing community members from fully engaging in the initiative and its projects. Co-create needed systems changes to improve participation.
- Engage in a depowerment process to establish a more equitable distribution of power in the community. This will require that the creators of this initiative and its stakeholders recognize, acknowledge and think about responsibility, power, and how they have participated (directly or indirectly) or could participate in the oppression of the community they are working with.
- Establish norms, rules, roles, and guidelines for all the persons that are participating, and define a conflict resolution process to address any issues that may arise.
- Identify the collective goals and implement a model of accountability and action plan which encompasses the interests, aspirations, and agenda of each group involved. Be aware that transformative change takes a lot of time, flexibility, reviewing and revision, adaptability and patience.



b. Comping: Preparing the Organization that Will Facilitate the Community Liaison Framework



***Comping:** short for “accompanying”, are the performers who are not soloing and play in the background, accompanying the soloist(s). For the CL Framework you need strong “comping”, the facilitating organization. They will be the accompanying team to the CLs, setting up the framework, systems, and support that assists, guides, strengthens and follows the CLs.*



Responsibilities of the Facilitating Organization:

- Recruit, hire, and supervise the CLs.
- Provide appropriate training and project-specific supervision and support.
- Evaluate the progress and results.
- Connect with project and initiative staff and stakeholders periodically to understand and review deliverables, provide appropriate guidance to CLs, and address any challenges.

Define the “Accompanying Team” or “A Team”:

The facilitating organization should define an A Team to guide and support the CLs’ project(s). This team will be accountable for the trainings, individual coaching, and professional development progress of the CLs. Additionally, this team will supervise the planning, execution, reporting, and evaluation. They will also attend to the initiative’s meetings and provide an oral and written report of progress on the project including successes, barriers/challenges, and lessons learned.

The A team members should have experience in community organizing, outreach, training and process facilitation. It is necessary to identify team members that speak the commonly used language(s) of the community as it cannot be assumed that you will have English-speaking CLs if you want your efforts to truly be representative of the community.

Understand Your Organization’s Positionality and Role in the Community:

It is very important that the facilitating organization and its A Team reflect on their values, social position, biases, assumptions, and relationship with the community they will be working with. Additionally, it is important for them to understand their position as an outsider, analyze what possible blind spots they could have, understand that building trust takes time, and that they will need to come into the community with humility.



c. Behind the Beat: Understanding the Community and its Context



*In music and music theory, the **beat** is the basic unit of time, the pulse, tempo, or groove. The beat is often defined as the rhythm listeners would tap their toes to when listening to a piece of music. The guide or baseline for the overall composition. Playing “behind the beat” means hitting the notes a little bit late. However, rather than making the composition sound off-tempo, it adds a certain level of emphasis or attention that enhances the sound.*

A successful CL Framework sets the community as “the beat”, or beacon for the initiative. To make that possible, the A Team and initiative will need to “play behind the beat” and follow by way of better understanding the community’s context. Like taking a step back (or behind) to better observe what makes the community “beat”. This will only enhance the work and its outcomes.

- Map community strengths, assets, key organizations, community services, etc.
- Study the community’s history, social problems, and their structural influencers.
- Generate a power analysis.



d. The Real Book: Develop a Workplan and Evaluation Plan



***The Real Book** can refer to any of a number of popular compilations of lead sheets for jazz tunes but is generally used to refer to Volume 1 of an underground series of books transcribed and collated by students at Berklee College of Music during the 1970s.*

In CL Framework words, the Real Book is the work plan or guide that outlines a compilation of the lead projects and their outcome objectives to help us set up a successful action plan to accomplish these goals.



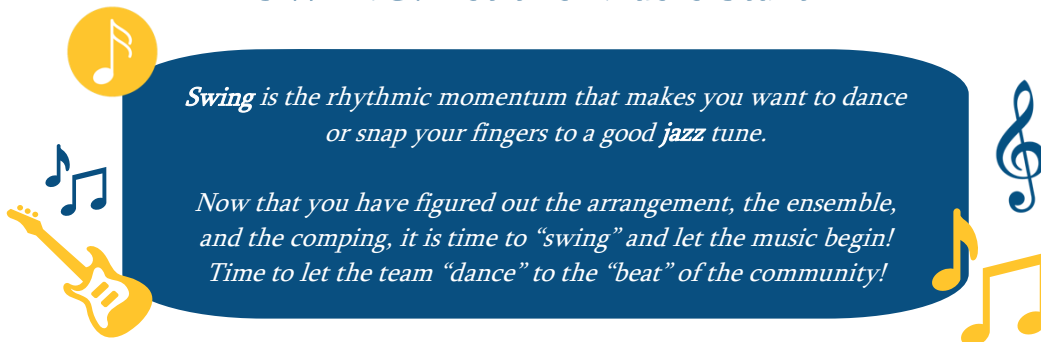
Start by defining long, medium- and short-term outcomes for the project. Identify the activities that will help achieve these outcomes—your action plan—as well as the performance measures that will help evaluate their success. Make sure you engage the CLs in the development of the action plan, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Budget for all the project costs such as the facilitating organization staff, any outside training, professional development tools and training costs, program supplies. It is important to include translation services, transportation, child care, or any other needs that the CLs could have that would prevent them from fully engaging in their role.

Consider the following evaluation questions:

- Have the trainings and professional development increased the CLs' ability to become active leaders in the initiative and their community?
- Has the CL Framework increased the communication between the initiative and the community members and other stakeholders?
- Has the CL Framework increased the engagement of the community in the initiative's decision-making process?
- Has power shifted within the initiative due to community participation/ engagement?
- Has the CL Framework increased representation of community needs in the initiative's projects and community action plans?



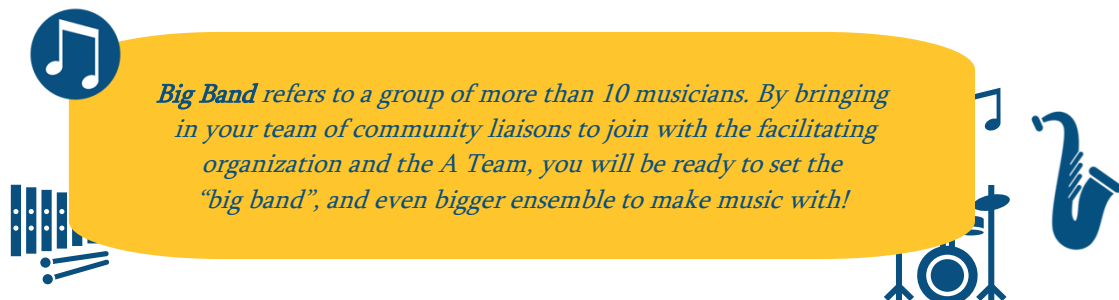
SWING! Let the Music Start



Swing is the rhythmic momentum that makes you want to dance or snap your fingers to a good jazz tune.

Now that you have figured out the arrangement, the ensemble, and the comping, it is time to “swing” and let the music begin! Time to let the team “dance” to the “beat” of the community!

a. Forming the Big Band: Hiring the Community Liaisons



Big Band refers to a group of more than 10 musicians. By bringing in your team of community liaisons to join with the facilitating organization and the A Team, you will be ready to set the “big band”, and even bigger ensemble to make music with!

The facilitating organization will hire a group of CLs who live in the community the initiative is working with. The CLs are community members who are or want to become long-term advocates and champions for positive change in their community. While it is beneficial for the CLs to have previous experience with community involvement and outreach related activities, consider how an individual's previous skills and experiences could translate into this work. Cast a wide net so you have a diverse pool of candidates that bring multiple perspectives, varying connections to the community, and areas of interest. They must be able to work with the community in a context-and-culturally sensitive way.

Responsibilities:

- Build relationships with the community members and stakeholders through one-on one interaction and attending stakeholder and community meetings and events.
- Increase awareness and education around the initiative’s focus areas, goals, projects, and collaborators.
- Help connect the community with the initiative’s projects, leaders, and stakeholders.
- Collect and document community feedback to tell their story and ensure that the initiative’s efforts incorporate the community’s voice and address their needs.
- Attend meetings and events related to the initiative and support goals of increasing resident engagement in the initiative.
- Integrate community members and other stakeholders into the decision-making processes for the initiative.
- Maintain contact with the A Team and provide consistent updates and information.

Set a Professional Development Route:

Each CL should define a professional development route by selecting appropriate trainings with the mentorship of someone of the A team. This route should be aligned with the desired knowledge, skills, and competencies of the curriculum training and CL interests.

b. Getting the Chops: Leadership Development



***Chops:** The ability to play an instrument with a highly refined technique. The CL Framework aims to develop CLs’ abilities to organize, connect and advocate. By “getting the chops,” CLs will be better equipped to carry out their role and more effectively impact their communities.*

The hired CLs will take part in trainings, professional development opportunities, community workshops, and stakeholder meetings to support them in becoming long-term advocates of change in their community.



Trainings:

The CLs should receive trainings periodically to develop personal and professional skills that will aid them in becoming leaders for change in their community. These trainings provide the knowledge and skills that leverage and strengthen their community leadership. To further support their development, CLs participate in the development of meeting and training agenda(s). They also complete an evaluation of each training that includes an assessment of both learning and process outcomes with an emphasis on

building an inclusive and supportive learning environment that is reflective of the community. Consider the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be developed through training:

Knowledge	Skills	Competencies
About the Initiative/Program Frameworks and Methodologies Evaluation and Data Collection Outreach and Organizing Leadership and Advocacy Multiculturalism and Equity Programs and Tools	Teamwork and Communications Public Speaking Writing and Materials Evaluation and Analysis Collaboration and Logistics Program Development Navigating Community Systems	Critical thinking Leadership Emotional Intelligence Effective Communication Performance Measures Oriented Problem Solving and Adaptability Time management

Individual Coaching:

Have individual meetings periodically with each CL by phone, video call, or in-person, to provide professional coaching focused on developing their strengths and identify any other professional development need. Provide individualized and real-time feedback on their work and their individual project(s), their interactions with other CLs and stakeholders, and navigating systems and politics found in organizations and communities.



c. **The Breaks and the Solos: Leveraging Community Network(s)**



*A **break** is a transitional passage in which a soloist plays unaccompanied. A **solo** is any players' improvisation over one or more choruses of the tune.*

In working with partners, collaborators, community members and other stakeholders, there will be times where CLs will have to play some “breaks” and do work on their own. Other times, they will work together guiding each other through “solos” and coming together through the overall collaboration.



Individual Goals:

Each CL should select at least one action-based SMART Goal². The goal would be selected by each CL in consultation with the A Team and based on the pre-established goals of the initiative. This goal should support the CL's long-term involvement in their community such as a volunteer position, the creation of a student group, or the establishment of a program. The CL will develop applied skills through the identification and implementation of a goal that is based on their interests, promotes their ability to be an agent of social change, and creates a foundation for ongoing service.

Group Project:

The CLs engage in an action-based group project aligned with the initiative's goals and supports implementation of community-based and community-led action plans. The topic or goal of the project would be selected by the CLs in consultation with the A Team and partner organization(s). It is recommended that the project have a focus on creating a policy, systems, or social or built environment change in their community, and that responds to the community's needs, previously assessed by the CLs. Thus, CLs learn how to create sustainable change in their own community and gain skills in planning, implementing, funding, working with partners, engaging the community and stakeholders, and reporting. The group project also provides a unique opportunity for sharpening competencies in emotional and social intelligence, effectively working in teams, communication, and accountability. CLs receive ongoing supervision and support from the A Team and provide monthly updates on their progress.

Stakeholders Collaborations:

1. Each CL is paired with one or more stakeholder group(s) to develop a relationship with over time. Consider the CLs' knowledge, interests, and previous experience with community organizations and stakeholders.
 - a. Make sure CLs understand the importance of developing and maintaining these relationships. Support them when and as needed and ensure that they develop effective systems to "stay connected" and be consistent with their stakeholders. Consider:
 - i. Discussing with CLs what tools would help them better track their contact and goals with stakeholders (e.g., action planning, calendars, etc.).
 - ii. Asking them if they need help or if they would like additional support.
 - iii. Motivating them to learn more about their stakeholders so they can more effectively connect and work together.
2. CLs identify and pursue partnership/collaboration opportunities with each group.
 - a. Guide CLs in the development of their partnership/collaboration opportunities:
 - i. Help them brainstorm

² SMART is a mnemonic/acronym, giving criteria to guide in the setting of objectives, for example in project management, employee-performance management and personal development. Generally, S refers to specific, M to measurable, A to attainable (or achievable), R to relevant/ realistic, and T to timely. (Reference: <https://www.revolv.com/page/SMART-criteria>)

- ii. Ask questions
 - iii. Give suggestions and guidance
 - iv. Highlight potential challenges and problem solve
 - v. Assist them in making additional connections
3. CLs also identify possible PSEs that could be achieved through these partnerships.
- a. Ensure CLs understand the goals, purposes, and applications of PSEs through their work. Consider:
 - i. Including regular PSEs reviews
 - ii. Develop tracking tools to document PSEs
 - iii. Building their capacity to propose and support PSEs within their stakeholders' organizations or systems
 - iv. Highlight PSEs being accomplished
4. CLs collect and document stakeholder needs building a feedback loop for the initiative.
- a. Assist CLs in gathering, documenting, evaluating and reporting stakeholder feedback:
 - i. Through training and professional development
 - ii. Through encouraging projects and systems changes that allow CLs to practice these skills
 - iii. Building in opportunities and mechanisms for CLs to share what they are learning and the needs they are identifying with the initiative.

d. Jam Session: Integration into an Initiative's Decision-Making Processes



Jam Session – Also “jamming.” The most informal of jazz arrangements, and one which depends solely on the shared knowledges of the players.

By this point, with a more established CL Framework, the initiative should facilitate opportunities for the CLs to “jam” and trust their knowledge and the relationships and collaborations they have forged so far. Integrating them into meetings and decision-making processes ensures CLs and the community feedback they gather are represented and integrated into decisions that will affect their environment and opportunities.

One of the main outcomes of the Community Liaison Framework is to implement a systems change in how an initiative engages and empowers the community. CLs should attend every meeting of the initiative, but not only as listeners. CLs should become key players at the table, leading and co-chairing meetings, actively participating, reviewing and contributing to initiative strategies, plans, and processes. We advocate for CLs to be part of



every decision-making process. Additionally, in these meetings CLs should bring attention to the needs and interests of the community members and other stakeholders.

Harmonic Rhythm: Building Sustainability

a. Community Connections and Awareness

Community connections are essential to the sustainability of your CL Framework and the changes it will help initiate. To maintain these connections and establish new ones, it is recommended that CLs and supporting staff always:

- Build trust
- Collaborate
- Be consistent
- Communicate honestly and effectively
- Ensure clarity and understanding
- Multiply support and engagement
- Inform, educate, and connect
- Assist as needed

b. Long-Lasting Policies, Systems and Environmental Change Implementations

Periodically assess how your projects, processes, and outcomes align to potential policies, systems, or the built and social environment (PSEs) throughout your initiative. This will help you strategize more effective action plans to help accomplish these changes and identify performance measures to help you evaluate success.

c. Sustaining the Community Liaison Framework

To ensure sustainability of the CL Framework and the changes it helped initiate in your initiative, it is important that all projects, processes, and outcomes are linked to potential PSEs. PSEs establish multiple levels of institutional, organizational, and social support and help sustain the changes initiated through the initiative and the CLs' work.

You can strengthen and further the sustainability of this framework through the following funding strategies:

- Seek multi-year funding from local partners and organizations
- Apply for large and small grants to support the overall CL Framework, as well as, specific CL projects.
- Subcontract CLs through partnerships with other initiative agencies or local stakeholders. This could be done through formal agreements between partner organizations to contract CLs to develop more active connections with community members. This could help with the further integration of community members into important decision-making processes not just in the initiative, but throughout community processes.
- Require that CLs are integrated in all initiative projects and funding opportunities.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Community Liaison Framework

For a successful evaluation plan, consider including:

- Pre- and post- surveys completed by CLs, initiative partners, and stakeholders to gather quantitative and qualitative data assessing the perception of the Framework's purpose, goals, and outcomes.
- Participant tracking to gather engagement numbers at events, meetings, on social media, and through mailing lists.
- Tracking of PSEs resulting from this project.
- Project and event evaluations to gather issue or event-specific data about individual and recurrent engagements.
- Pre- and post- assessments to evaluate changes in CLs' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

e. Shifting Culture and Action to Build Civic Engagement, Leadership and Advocacy

A true culture shift can only happen through collective impact, or the bringing together of diverse stakeholders toward a common agenda to address identified social problems collaboratively. The CL Framework embraces collective impact and helps your initiative:

- Empower and integrate community members into the decision-making processes directly affecting their communities.
- Initiate important systems changes that enhance community engagement.
- Lead to more coordinated approaches to integrate stakeholders and build relationships focused on mutual education and capacity-building efforts while allowing for more influence around PSEs.
- Develop community leaders, champions and advocates who become active participants of their communities.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Define, review and discuss on an ongoing basis the commitments set out from the beginning with the different teams of the initiative.
- To restore power balance in a community it is imperative that partners, decision-makers, and other stakeholders engage in a power analysis. This is an area of assessment for the project in the second year.
- We recommend creating a training schedule and plan prior to hiring the CLs or during the process of interviewing. Due to the diverse time constraints it helps to, consider everyone's availability and pre-determine a tentative schedule, but at the same time be aware that once individual and group projects begin there may need to be some creative adaptation.
- Time can be a barrier. Practice problem solving, be adaptable and get creative. Develop a sustainability plan early to help increase the CLs' number of hours and be able to provide job security.
- Consider having professional support for some of the community meetings as community members may ask for or need assistance during these events. A good example would be, child care services.

- The CLs recommended creating teams of a minimum of two CLs for their stakeholder work to ensure continuity if one of them is not available and provide multiple perspectives.
- Be prepared to manage potential turnover in the CL position as there could be family or financial issues that make it difficult for CLs to continue in their role. It has been helpful to have an orientation packet that includes information from missed trainings to be reviewed with new CLs over several extended meetings. CLs with more experience can practice their mentoring skills to help new CLs integrate themselves and learn the ropes.
- Build a line item into your budget for CL support that includes funding for technology and equipment needs, transportation, child care, and other issues that may create a barrier for the CLs in their role.

To learn more about the CL Framework and Urban Health Partnerships or if you'd like to start implementing a CL Framework in your work/initiative, please visit our website at www.UrbanHP.org or contact us at info@urbanhs.com.

Live Healthy Little Havana is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing opportunities for Little Havana residents to live healthy lives and maintain a culture of health and well-being. Live Healthy Little Havana's guiding principles are ensuring civic participation, hiring from within the community, integrating a culture of health into all policies and projects, and connecting residents, property and business owners to resources. Live Healthy Little Havana's collaborative is currently focusing on housing, employment and education, and public realm. For more information, please visit www.livehealthylittlehavana.com.

The mission of Health Foundation of South Florida is to be an investor and a catalyst for collaborations, policy and systems change that improves the health of South Florida communities, with a focus on vulnerable populations. Established in 1993, the nonprofit foundation has awarded over \$125 million to nonprofits providing programs and services in Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. For more information, visit www.hfsf.org or call 305.374.7200.