



Hmong Community Design Group January to May, 2015

A Project of the Mission Impact Council

DESIGN GROUPS: The Mission Impact Council and Hmong community leaders and youth held a series of six monthly design meetings.

GOAL: The goal was to begin identifying needs and *co-creating* initiatives that would increase life opportunity and equity for all Hmong youth.

CONTENT: Monthly discussions focused on five topics: youth development and leadership, employability, diversity, health and wellness, education and support services.

RESULTS: Community members, including youth, identified key gaps and obstacles in each of the above areas that could increase life opportunities and equity for their youth. Their comments and ideas are presented on the following pages in three sections:

1. **Access:** Do Hmong youth have equal *access* to youth programs and opportunities?
2. **Quality:** Are the programs that Hmong youth access *high quality*?
3. **Purpose:** Do existing programs serve the most important *purposes and needs* of Hmong youth and their community?

The Mission Impact Council

The Mission Impact Council convenes diverse organizations and communities to work together for positive social change through developing innovative and community-based solutions that change life opportunities for and with urban and underserved youth in the Twin Cities. The co-chairs of the collective impact initiative are:

- Wokie Weah, President of Youthprise
- Todd Tibbits, Chief Operating Officer of the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities
- Meghan Barp, Senior Vice President, Community Impact, at Greater Twin Cities United Way

For more information, contact Hedy Walls, the Vice-President of Social Responsibility at the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities:

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Hmong Youth Development Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	Parent Support	Find ways to gain parent support and approval for their children to participate in youth development opportunities.	Families strongly value academics & youth development activities can be seen as a distraction. Key to get parental understanding & support.
	Affordability	Make youth development opportunities accessible for families from all income levels.	Programs are more available to those with many resources & with few (through scholarships). Mid-income families can struggle.
	Male Involvement	Attract more Hmong male youth to diverse youth development opportunities.	Girls more frequently engaged and successful in school and leadership. Boys can be held back by stereotype and not explore their potential.
	Communication	Find more effective ways for Hmong families to find out about youth development opportunities.	Some of the families and youth had never heard of the YMCA or other youth development opportunities.
Quality	Family Partnership	Include, involve, & support families' role in youth development.	Approach should be to work with families, not just individual youth.
	Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate pride in culture, values • Bridge gaps with mainstream programs. 	Programs sometimes don't work well with families, don't want feedback, have low expectations, and can be culturally biased.
	Program Diversity	Provide options for many different kinds of interests.	Youth need to explore and grow diverse talents.
	Program Improvement	Promote more training for programs serving Hmong youth	Need cultural insights and connections.
Purpose	Leadership and Service	Support Hmong youth leadership development and commitment to contribute to their community.	Many youth enjoy and want more leadership and service opportunities.
	Community Learning	Gain access to learning opportunities/ exposure outside the Hmong community.	Many youth isolated from learning activities outside the community; stay at home in summer.
	Trust	Youth development organizations spend more time in the Hmong community so both sides can build their trust and knowledge.	Mainstream youth development organizations sometimes seen as disconnected and only for the middle class.
	Mentoring	Connect educated role models from diverse fields to youth.	Successful people not always take time for youth.

Hmong Employability Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	Career Exploration	Create more opportunities for internships and other career exploration including for those under 16.	Businesses are committed elsewhere or afraid (don't know how to do it). Create opportunities that aren't full internships (episodic volunteering)
	Networking	More opportunities and skills for networking that could lead to career opportunities.	Some youth tied most to family and clan and not have outside contacts to open opportunities. Not understand networking.
	Risk-Taking	Encourage a mindset that values exposure to new experiences beyond one's comfort zone (e.g. summer camp, science museum, volunteering).	Easy to stay in your own family and clan/ not have outside ties/ not do anything different in the summer. Need value for stepping out. Isolation can limit future prospects.
Quality	Skill Training	Increase JQ (job intelligence) about career choices/ options: how to look for and get a job; how entrepreneurs start their own businesses.	May succeed in education but also need formal and informal employability learning opportunities: values; financial literacy, EQ,, dress for success, and more.
	Cultural Value	Strong parental and cultural value for employment choices and opportunities.	High priority of parents to see children set up in a job & career. Area where possible to get support.
Purpose	Mobilizing Parent Support	Educate parents about 21st century job skills and how they can be developed in and out of the classroom.	Need to know that life skills are employability skills. Sports, service-learning, leadership, etc. learn much beyond the classroom.
	Value Conflict	Sometimes strong pressure to make money.	How balance need for money and finding a fulfilling career?
	Self Awareness	Opportunities to learn about their passions, strengths, values, and goals.	Some Hmong youth are book savvy but not in other ways like with people.
	Community Support	Mobilize community-wide vision and support for employability.	Clans can compete against each other (we're most successful). Need to rally whole community for all.
	Role Models	Connect and job shadow with diverse careers (e.g. performance artists, law enforcement, elected officials)	Some successful Hmong not as likely to help others develop; feels threatening to groom others Need to see successful Hmong professionals.

Hmong Educational Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	Visibility	Educational data needs to be disaggregated so it's possible to identify progress and problems	Data now merged with multiple Asian groups. Parents fear falling through the cracks because of socio-economic issues.
	Higher Education	Many access issues (understand, admissions, finances, purpose, mindset, relation to employability).	Many get into college but not have a support structure; may fail and owe loans which discourages parents sending others.
	Communication	Find more ways to communicate about education that doesn't involve text.	Word of mouth is powerful in community. Grandmother may hear on radio or TV but not read.
	Support Services	Families need broad supports (e.g. food, mental health, tutors, physical health, homework).	Children arrive at school with multiple unmet needs that can interfere with education.
Quality	Diversity/ Equity	Bridge gap between mainstream educational institutions and Hmong community.	Assumptions can interfere e.g. must need ESL or because you are quiet you must be understanding content.
	Parent Education	Provide more preparation for kindergarten for parents; outreach for all families.	Parents may not understand today's educational system & standards, so can't support children as needed
	Policy	Hire more teachers and staff that speak Hmong.	Need people in the system that get and represent Hmong culture.
	Family Voice	More ways to engage Hmong/ Karin parents where may not be a custom. Empowered parents may still not be heard. .	Teach parents how to advocate, but then system doesn't want to listen. PTO not at times can meet. Need more ways than PTO to engage.
Purpose	Academic Pressure	High pressure on students for school, college and to make money. (Success defined by educational level).	Many youth also enjoy and want more leadership, sports, service-learning and other enrichment opportunities beyond classroom.
	Goal Conflict	Everyone wants what is best, but need to find consensus of what that is. How do we decide what "success" is?	Need opportunities for parents (academic pressure) and youth (desire for more enrichment) to find balance and workable solution
	Community Support	Mobilize community-wide support for Hmong education	Strong support for family and clan; spread support to all in community.
	Mentoring	Connect educated role models from diverse fields to help guide.	Successful people not always willing to take time for youth.

Hmong Health & Wellness Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	Limited Physical Activity Facilities	Limited space for physical activity in urban setting; need recreation center where welcome youth.	Safety issue in housing project; “can hear a pin drop outside in summer”; Karin soccer lack space.
	Nutrition	Multiple obstacles to accessing healthy food.	Food not available or people feel too expensive.
	Organized Sports	Youth ready for and expecting more organized athletics	Not just go to park; want coaching; middle school volleyball growing.
	Summer Activities	Need more summer options/ outlets. Need value for stepping out. Isolation can limit future.	Easy to stay in your own family and clan/ not have outside ties/ not do anything different in the summer.
	Transportation	Transportation and child care to facilitate health and wellness.	Have large families and even if have car, many other demands on it.
Quality	Elder Fitness	Young concerned by lack of activity by elders, especially in winter.	Community gardening opportunities as one possible avenue for summer.
	Low-Cost Fitness Options	Find ways to make health facilities more available.	YMCA financial assistance scale sometimes not enough.
	Health Education	Education on many issues including different impact of Hmong traditional diet versus American diet.	How Hmong community can deal with rates of diabetes, obesity, gout, liver & kidney disease, high blood pressure,
	Health Care	Need for care that addresses Hmong specific needs.	Want practitioners that understand Hmong culture; also eye care
	Elder Leadership	Whatever happens in health area needs to come from Elders changing social norms.	Nothing happens until Elders are convinced; need to respect culture.
Purpose	American Lifestyle	Need to learn to cope with American lifestyle.	Need a way to cope with lifestyle change— stress level, diet, etc.
	Culturally Relevant Programs	Provide culturally relevant programs; also cultural attitudes can interfere with good health;	Make connection between physical activity and wellness; cultural perception that plump is attractive.
	Healthy Relationships	Important to promote healthy relationships in home.	Trying to balance patriarchal tradition and youth dialogue.
	Sexual Health	Sexual health education; Need way prevent teen pregnancy.	Girls need life goals, mentoring (e.g. Hmong alumni of U. of MN).
	Alcohol	Complicated relationship with alcohol—part of cultural traditions/ ceremonies; not polite to turn down	Alcohol abuse/ lose driving license; tradition only men drink, now women too; need Elders to change social norm
	Mental Health	Multiple issues: bullying, self-harm, self-esteem, depression	Code of silence; youth respect elders and not speak up

Hmong Diversity Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	Educating Minnesota	Need to educate the general community about the Hmong American experience.	Do so and avoid “single story narrative” (i.e. that all Hmong have the same story).
	Stereotype Threat	Hmong face many wrongful stereotypes (e.g. We eat dogs and cats” and “we don’t speak English well,” etc.)	Need to find way to erase denigrating stereotypes and project positive traits and images of Hmong in mainstream and social media.
	Exposure to Diversity	Need to balance preserving culture and exposure to activities outside the Hmong community.	Need to encourage (not discourage) . associating with activities outside the culture and community; now not likely to lead in multi-cultural group.
	Generational Differences	People overlook that there is great diversity within Hmong community	Differences not only between generations but between those born here and those not.
	Cultural Preservation	Need to grow programs that help youth find their identity and their place in Hmong history.	Reinforcing value of community identity and traditions is about who you are.
Quality	Visible Hmong Leadership	Offer programs and services that are led by Hmong team members/ leaders.	Important that youth see Hmong leaders as the face of the community.
	Blended Cultures	Help navigate the blending of Hmong and new culture.	Causes intergenerational conflict (need to understand and respect each other).
	Strengthening Families	Challenged by American lifestyle that is more about individualistic mindset and less about family relationships.	Family and clan connections are critical to preserve centrality of the family and culture; need parent-child culture program.
Purpose	Parent-Child Programs	Expand number of parent-child programs on language, culture.	Start at a young age building cultural knowledge and identity.
	Youth Leadership	Find more ways for youth to provide service and leadership in the community.	One strategy for preserving culture is to have youth take leadership in doing so.
	Language	Find ways to preserve Hmong language as an anchor for the culture.	Youth losing the language limits cultural preservation.
	Value Conflict	Values clashes — parents focus on school and career success and youth also desire to participate in out of school activities.	Challenge of blending and building on both life experiences.