

Increasing Diversity in the Fundraising Field.

Too many of us know that there are too few trained and experienced fundraising professionals of color. We can bemoan the fact or learn from the model developed by the Multicultural Alliance (MCA) of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Golden Gate Chapter.

By: Mary Schmidt



Front Row, left to right: Margaret Tobias, Adeeba Deterville, Keira Dubowsky, Jill Kunishima, Randi Ervin, Mel Shaw
Back row, left to right: Nicole Branch, Sonya Garzouzi, Pearl Shaw, Rosi Bustamante, Kathleen Greely

The Multicultural Alliance (MCA) is a two-year professional development and fellowship program for fundraising professionals that takes into consideration issues of race and ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation as they impact the fund development field and process. Founded in 1996 the program welcomes diverse participants from traditionally under-represented populations and those whose organizations predominantly serve people of color, members of the lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer community (LGBTQ), and low-income and working class people.

MCA provides an enriching and carefully crafted training experience that includes a forum for peers to discuss cultural challenges and strategies for overcoming them. In 2001 it was recognized for its innovation and value as the recipient of the Charles R. Stephens Excellence in Diversity Award by the Association of Fundraising Professionals International.

Leadership consists of graduates and founders of the program who volunteer their time and lend their expertise to ensure the sustainability of the program. The Advisory Board is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, class background and sexual orientation. Graduates from the program are encouraged to become actively involved as mentors, advisors to the MCA program, and Association of Fundraising Professionals-Golden Gate Chapter (AFP-GGC) Board Members.

The two-year program experience includes workshops, networking sessions, access to special AFP-GGC member-focused events, and opportunities to participate in programs offered by collaborating partners such as the East Bay Community Foundation, Development Executives Roundtable, CompassPoint and The Foundation Center Library.

Program participants are acknowledged as MCA Fellows. An incoming cohort of between 10 and 15 Fellows enters the program on alternating years. Most new Fellows have between one and three years of fundraising experience, although many seasoned Fellows often join the program to bolster their skills and expand their peer support network within the greater community. MCA welcomes Fellows to participate in the program for a second year; approximately two-thirds of the Fellows tend to do so from year to year. Second-year Fellows are asked to assume leadership roles by committing to serve as training assistants, mentors and Advisory Board members.

MCA Program Goals

1. To nurture the professional development of these aspiring new populations of fundraising professionals through AFP-GGC's mentoring and continuing education programs.
2. To provide culturally appropriate training to aspiring fundraising professionals from under-represented populations who are working in small, grassroots organizations and are not being reached or adequately supported by traditional outreach and training programs.
3. To enable organizations rooted in communities of color, LGBTQ, and other under-represented populations to become more self-sustaining by training current and future leaders in these communities.

Accepted Fellows commit to:

1. Attending and participating in at least six out of nine annual MCA workshops and providing feedback by written evaluation at the conclusion of each workshop
2. Attending at least two AFP-GGC Chapter luncheons during the program year
3. Attending at least one of two major events produced by the AFP-Golden Gate Chapter such as Fundraising Day and National Philanthropy Day

Accepted Fellows receive:

1. Customized training and information from experienced practitioners in the field
2. The opportunity to learn new skills and share and expand upon the ones you have already mastered
3. A chance to connect and network with peers from the field who can help you succeed at your current job or help you advance to a new position
4. Membership in AFP for one year and access to all of its benefits including the opportunity to apply for a personal mentor to help support career development and advancement
5. Scholarships and discounts to attend other AFP-GG events
6. The opportunity to apply for limited scholarships to attend the national AFP conference that takes place each spring.

Participants excel in leading fund development roles around the Bay Area such as: Development Associate United Religions Initiative; Development Director, Rubicon Programs Inc.; Donor Relations Specialist, Glaucoma Research Foundation; Development Director, 4C's of Alameda County; Development Associate and Event Coordinator, Glide Foundation; Development Associate, Covenant House; Development Director, Youth Together; Development Officer, Mission Economic Development Agency; Operation Manager, Environmental Justice Coalition for Water; and Founder & CEO, The Martin Brown Academy.

The MCA model is available for use by others committed to excellence and diversity in fundraising. With the involvement and commitment of those already in the field we can help increase the diversity of fundraising professionals. There is no need to wait for someone else.