

National Community Action Partnership

**2021 Management & Leadership  
Training Conference (Virtual)**

*Centering Innovation in Family  
Voice & Engagement*

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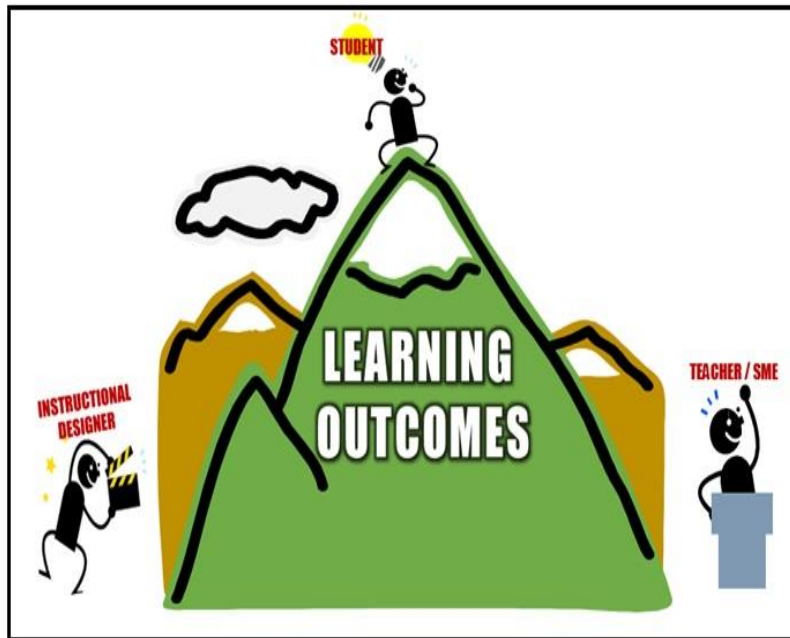
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Advancing Equity, Building Resilience, Sustaining Hope

# The Best Laid Plans

Designed a College Prep Program



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## And Why They Go Awry

- Didn't ask the people we designed it for.
- Didn't Check to see how it was going along the way.
- Focused on Outputs
- Comfortable with the status quo.



# Learning to Listen First

- Reviewed Data to Improve Outcomes
- Met with customers about program struggles including what worked and what didn't
- Did our homework on Industry needs
- Advocated for funding policy changes to meet customer goals and needs
- Restructured based on customer goals and feedback
- Tried Again



# Customer Voice

- Start with the customer first and be prepared to go back to them throughout the process both formally and informally.
- You might not like what you hear from them but commit to listening not defending.
- Apologize when needed and try to fix the problem
- Make their involvement part of your culture not a one off.
- If you aren't going to utilize their insight, Don't Ask Them.



# Customer Feedback: What They Said

- Provide more detailed information upfront about programs prior to enrollment to ensure participant expectations match the goals and realities of the program;
- Ensure consistent follow-through on all opportunities and resources offered to participants, such as consistently distributing stipends according to the established schedule;
- Pay participants during internships and increase the stipend while participants are in class;
- Provide financial assistance for participants to transfer and/or translate degrees from other countries;
- Discuss next steps with participants earlier in the process to enhance and further their continued progress and forward-facing outlook;



# And There Was More



- Increase participant buy-in by expressing the value of programming to participants, for example, the retail cost of certification courses and the potential benefits for changing their lives;
- Add a required financial literacy and budgeting skills element to the program;
- Add mental health supports on site, both for program participants and for MAC staff;
- Provide an after-hours “hotline” so that people can talk to someone about their issues outside of normal work hours;
- Maintain a consistent class schedule and communicate in a timely manner with participants and training providers about any changes; and
- Advocate for policy changes that would increase eligibility levels and allow customers to continue participating after their child ages out of Head Start or after gaining a moderate increase in income, providing a transition period and preventing them from losing benefits.



# Changes We've Made

- Redesigned organization to add additional team members to our Communications Division to include a Customer Engagement Coordinator.
- Established Customer advisory team for all areas including the youth advisory team, customer advisory that includes multiple age groups
- Involved customers in providing feedback to our Board as part of the Strategic Planning Process
- Placed customer satisfaction surveys under the same division versus being handled solely by the programs to address agency wide not just funder requirements
- Made feedback more convenient by offering a text option for customers who prefer that option.



# Changes We've Made

- Made customer voice a part of our continuous improvement process.
- HS Policy Council President is a voting member of the governing board.

