



In August 2019, the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW), with funding from Canadian Heritage, embarked on a project to build a partnership between ACOW and key community partners working together to develop a bilingual strategy to build capacity and foster meaningful relationships between African, Black and newcomer communities and the service providers who support these communities.

A steering committee comprised of ACOW project partners, Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, Workforce WindsorEssex, Centre communautaire francophone de Windsor-Essex-Kent (CCFWEK), Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP), and University of Windsor worked collectively to achieve the following outcomes within African, Black and Newcomer (BAN) communities:

- To bring communities together to foster mutual trust and learning;
- To build a network of support within the community;
- To share resources and build capacities across the diversity of the BAN serving communities;
- To foster a sense of community pride and promote civic engagement with the broader community;
- To promote equitable access to services and supports for diverse groups within the community; particularly for those groups with less access to resources.

Throughout the course of the project, activities were conducted in order to support the intended project goals, including:

- Steering committee meetings to:
 - develop a partnership plan;
 - develop brand identity;
 - create a strategic plan;
 - write a funding application collaboratively;
- 10 focus groups conducted among African, intercultural, Francophone, and mainstream groups serving African communities and facilitated by the University of Windsor research team. A bilingual report and executive summary of the focus group findings and recommendations was produced by the research team;
- A bilingual website and African-centred service map created by ACOW to improve the communication and coordination capacity of the organization;
- A communication strategy which included the creation and use of social media accounts
- The planning of a community forum (to be scheduled in the near future) to share partnership plans and future goals.

On March 9, 2020, WE LIP Council members, along with community stakeholders attended the African Centred Building Bridges Community Conversation. As part of the BBAD project, the University of Windsor research team engaged with the participants in order to gain a stronger understanding of the network of services and supports, both formal and informal, that will promote the health, well-being, and civic engagement of diverse African, Black and newcomer communities in Windsor and Essex County. Additionally, focus group findings from the African Centered Partnership Project: Building Bridges Across Differences were presented by the research team.



**African-Centered Services: Needs & Gaps
Existing Services & Organizations Do Not
Recognize Racism**

"if you have somebody who looks like you, who knows the same struggles as you ... it will really be easier for them to understand the issues they are trying to convey because most likely they have also experienced something similar."

Lack of Representation

"It's an opportunity to educate them, as well as put them in their place. If you do not say anything, they will continue on."

Building Bridges Across Differences



Strategies Identified by Participants

- 1) Build ACOW's leadership and advocacy capacity.
- 2) Increase ACOW's capacity for service planning, development, and delivery.
- 3) Increase ACOW's collaboration with other mainstream services to share resources and to utilize African cultural strengths and skills.

Building Bridges Across Differences

