

HIP and Funding Partners Strengthen Education Nonprofits in Puerto Rico

by Patricia Yáñez

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In Puerto Rico, 56 percent of families live in poverty - more than three times the poverty level in the United States. Many of these children face chronic health problems and violence in unsafe neighborhoods that are a part of life in poverty.

Understanding that one of the most effective ways to address poverty is through education, four funders have partnered with Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP) to establish the Puerto Rico Donors' Education Collaborative (PRDEC): Fundación Banco Popular, Fundación Flamboyán, Fundación Ángel Ramos and Fundación Segarra-Boerman.



The Puerto Rico Donors Education Collaborative anticipates releasing a request-for-proposals in May 2010.

“By not providing equal access to a high quality education, we are contributing to increasing numbers of adults who are not employable, and are less competitive in a global economy,” said Beatriz Polhamus, executive director of Fundación Banco Popular. “The negative effect of under-educating people is multiplied when these individuals become parents and are unable to support their children’s healthy development.”

Puerto Rico’s public education system educates more than 560,000 Latino students and is the third largest school district in the United States. Most of the students who attend public schools are born to families that live below the poverty level. To address this need, the PRDEC will build the leadership and organizational capacity of education nonprofits in Puerto Rico.

HIP Board member, Janice Petrovich, is working with the funders to provide grants to these nonprofits.

“HIP’s matching funds created an incentive for Puerto Rican foundations to work collaboratively,” said Ms. Petrovich. “By working together and learning from each other, the funders benefit, the grantees benefit, and the public school children benefit. It’s a ‘win-win’ situation.”

Guiomar García-Guerra, Ed.D., executive director of Fundación Flamboyán agrees.

“By leveraging our grantmaking dollars, sharing knowledge and developing leadership and capacity in our education nonprofit sector, we can deliver tangible results that will have a significant impact over one of the most pressing and difficult challenges currently faced by Puerto Rico: unequal access to high quality public education.”

The main goal of establishing the Puerto Rico Donors’ Education Collaborative is to maximize funders’ potential to offer capacity building grants to local Latino nonprofits working in innovative, effective and diverse ways to improve Pre-K-12 public education in Puerto Rico. The Education Collaborative anticipates releasing a request-for-proposals in May 2010.