The Anchor Institutions Task Force

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Marga Incorporated

- [www.margainc.com](http://www.margainc.com)
- Created in 2000
- Marga provides research and strategic advice to philanthropic initiatives and community partnerships
- Marga has acted as a “partnership catalyst” by leveraging principles of strategic planning to strengthen partnerships involving anchor institutions
- Recently, the company’s most substantial work has been coordinating ongoing initiatives, including the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF)
Marga Incorporated’s Method

• Marga’s method is informed by principles of strategic planning
• Marga designed strategic planning services to multi-institutional partnerships involving anchor institutions
• The method includes: Assessment, Identifying partners, Establishing mutually beneficial possibilities, Convening partners, Conducting relevant research, Facilitating the development of Strategic plans, Designing projects, Creating products, and Evaluating progress
• This approach has been applied with emerging and existing partnerships as well as the external initiatives of singular anchor institutions in locations of varying sizes
Anchor Institutions

- Anchor institutions are enduring organizations that remain in their geographic places, and play an integral role in their local communities and economies.

- The word “anchor” suggests grounded or rooted.

- Anchor Institutions cannot easily leave their geographic surroundings; they are, therefore, enduring, stable, and consistent in their localities and regions even in the midst of substantial capital flight.
Considering Tapping Anchors

• Anchors can be leveraged for economic and community development to strengthen neighborhoods, cities, & regions
• While anchors are objectively rooted, they are not necessarily actively engaged locally or contributing to community and economic improvement
• Communities will need to leverage stable local assets in order to address a wide range of issues and improve community and economic development
Aspiring to Mutual Benefit

• The challenge is to help transition anchor institutions from being merely *objectively* rooted to being *philosophically committed* to strengthening their communities through mutually beneficial collaboration with local stakeholders.

• Anchors can connect their core mission with local needs (e.g. linking student learning and faculty research to local and regional priorities).

• This kind of connection can also be made between institutional priorities with local needs (e.g. physical development, hiring, procurement).
Identification as an Anchor

• Institutions of higher education have been the most well known anchors
• However, the range of types of institutions identifying as anchors is increasing
• Medical institutions, for example are becoming more engaged in an anchor role
• Community foundations are inherently committed to their localities, and are now increasingly identifying as anchors
The terminology, “anchor institutions” is being used increasingly in various sectors.

This is accompanied by greater awareness of the potential of anchor institutions to strengthen localities and address critical issues.

Conceptions of how to effectively leverage anchors has evolved and expanded over recent decades (e.g. from student service to institutional engagement).

The idea of how an anchor can engage locally has become far more comprehensive, spanning the physical, economic, social, human, and intellectual capital anchors possess.
Anchor Institutions Task Force

• The Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF) was created through the process of developing a report to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2009

• This original group of 19 was coordinated by Dr. Ira Harkavy of the University of Pennsylvania

• Now a much more substantial initiative, the AITF is coordinated by Marga Incorporated (www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf/) with assistance from the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania
Anchor Institutions Task Force – Think Tank

• The AITF serves as an ongoing think tank, promoting the role of anchor institutions in community and economic development (multi-issue)

• The AITF enhances knowledge on effective anchor engagement to improve local practice and policy

• The AITF is a resource to government and others on how anchor institutions can make valuable contributions to reducing inequalities and expanding opportunities

• The AITF deliberately engages representatives of anchor institutions, government, and philanthropy to encourage coordinated strategies
Anchor Institutions Task Force -- Network

• The AITF has emerged into a vast network – movement structure
• The AITF has grown to close to 600 members – leaders of anchor institutions, leaders in the field, and partners – easy to join
• These individual members represent over 320 institutions
• The AITF’s membership is largely U.S.-based, but increasingly global
• Affinity groups (Subgroups) reflecting the unique interests of segments within the field (health professionals, higher education presidents, economic development executives foundation leaders, etc.) have been emerging within the AITF’s larger network
Higher education was catalytic in creating and growing the AITF, and the membership is comprised largely of higher education representatives.

The AITF is actively expanding to include a wider range of types of anchors (i.e., medical institutions, community foundations).

The AITF holds an Annual Conference – the last conference in Chicago in November 2014 convened leaders in higher education, health care, philanthropy, and government.

Next Annual Conference: *October 29 and 30 in New York City*

The AITF also develops publications, i.e., *Anchor Institutions: An Interpretive Review Essay*; and now the AITF produces an annual literature review.
Anchor Institutions Task Force -- Values

• The AITF is values-driven
• Individuals join the AITF, subscribing to these values
• Values provide a framework for the nature and quality of how anchor institutions engage in their communities

• AITF Values:
  • Collaboration and Partnership
  • Equity and Social Justice
  • Democracy and Democratic Practice
  • Commitment to Place and Community
AITF Substantive Impact

• By highlighting effective anchor engagement strategies, members will enhance their efforts in their localities
• By focusing on how anchor engagement can impact specific issue areas, we will better illustrate potential impact
• Education, Health, and Economic Development are three areas of substantive focus for AITF
• By creating a big tent under which different types of anchors can connect with each other, we can enhance how anchors collaborate with other institutions in their localities
• By creating specific subgroups (affinity groups), peers within AITF’s diverse membership can address common interests and improve their practice
AITF’s Economic Development Subgroup

• The AITF’s Economic Development Subgroup convenes economic development executives at anchor institutions for peer learning
• The group addresses the internal and external realities of local economic development strategies, strengthening participants’ knowledge and capacity
• AITF Subgroups meet periodically by phone and hold an in person Annual Summit associated with the AITF’s Annual Conference
• Participants can bring lessons and strategies from exchanges with peers back to their home institutions and communities
• A joint metrics initiative has been launched in order to improve the economic impact of each participating institution in its community
Economic Development Subgroup Participants

• The Economic Development Subgroup includes executives from:

• Brown University, Case Western Reserve University, Harvard University, Florida International University, Johns Hopkins University, Portland State University, Rutgers University-Newark, SUNY Albany, Syracuse University, the University of Memphis, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Southern California
The Anchor Field’s Next Frontier

• The AITF is seeking ways to engage representatives of anchors across the globe around coordinated efforts – co-organizing regional meetings, forging alliances with networks in different nations and regions, attending international conferences

• Multi-anchor partnerships connected to government and philanthropy will be essential to strengthening local communities

• It is important to align anchors, communities, philanthropy, and government