

Topic: Economic Development Strategies for Latino Communities

Bernardo Ramirez, Executive Director, Hispanic Economic Development Corp. of Kansas City

Bernardo Ramirez is the Executive Director of the Hispanic Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) in Kansas City, Missouri. Established in 1993, HEDC is a non profit corporation that exists to improve economic opportunities for the greater Kansas City area with an emphasis on Latinos. Bernardo is responsible for the daily operations of the agency including program planning that follows a strategic vision measured through accountability.

Prior, Mr. Ramirez was the Associate Director of Finance and Development for the Guadalupe Centers, Inc (GCI) responsible for the agency's accounting department and resource development. In addition, he was responsible for the agency's operations including areas such as Information Technology, Human Resources, and Facilities Management. Bernardo was also responsible for the completion of the Employment & Training and Cultural Arts Center, a 24,000 square foot anchor in Kansas City's historic Westside neighborhood.

He has over 20 years experience working with community-based organizations and advocating on behalf of Americans of Hispanic descent. From 1997 through 2001, Mr. Ramirez was the Deputy Vice President of the Office of Technical Assistance and Constituency Support in the National Council of La Raza's (NCLR) Washington, DC headquarters. Mr. Ramirez managed and coordinated the programs of NCLR's five regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Washington, DC. Prior to that he served as the Director of NCLR's Midwest Regional Office in Chicago, IL providing training and technical assistance to 50 NCLR Midwest affiliates and other Latino organizations.

Mr. Ramirez has a strong background in board and nonprofit management in such areas as macro- vs. micro-management, operational programming and financial and budget structures. He's conducted training session throughout the United States and in 1993 because of his bilingual abilities, conducted board of directors' training to seven non-profit organizations in Quito, Ecuador.

In 1993, Mr. Ramirez left NCLR to obtain a master's degree in business administration. He graduated from Rockhurst College in Kansas City, Missouri in 1996. He was employed at GCI during that time as the agency's Director of Development.

Mr. Ramirez currently serves on the board of directors of the Council on Philanthropy and on May, 2007 was appointed by Mayor Funkhouser to Kansas City's Economic Development/Incentive Policy – Task Force. Mr. Ramirez currently sits on the boards of directors of the local United Way of Greater Kansas City, the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City and the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders.