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Title: Utilizing university resources to build the capacity of local organizations: A case study from the University of Florida

Abstract: Since 2017, The University of Florida (UF) Office of Sustainability (OoS) has partnered with the Community Weatherization Coalition (CWC), a local non-profit, as part of a larger effort to develop a presence off-campus and engage in larger discussions of sustainability. This partnership grew from a specific desire to address racial inequity in our community. While CWC's programming serves the whole of Alachua County, it targets low-income homes particularly affected by inequitable utility burdens. In the presentation, we will discuss the ongoing process of building trust between the two entities in order to prompt discussion of comparative strategies between universities and community organizations. This presentation will explore the framework UF's OoS is mapping out for institutional collaboration with local non-profits, emphasizing the considerations attached to scale, scope, relevancy, context, and sustainability. The CWC was established over ten years ago in Gainesville, FL as a grassroots response to this burden and support struggling homeowners and renters. CWC deploys trained volunteers to clients' homes to conduct 2-4 hour energy "tune-ups" which combine educational and behavioral resources with the implementation of energy-saving mechanisms. Since UF's partnership with CWC and the subsequent dedication of both human resources and short-term funding, CWC has begun the process of "scaling up." This has involved increasing the number of tune-ups and energy upgrades (larger-scale repairs), engaging and retaining volunteers, developing communications and social media strategies/materials, and the digitizing training materials. Transparent communication and resource-sharing has been a critical mitigation strategy when it comes to identifying limitations, overcoming them, and preparing for a long-term strategic expansion of CWC's programming. While UF's OoS has provided funding, dedicated staff, and research materials, the partnership with CWC has also offered the university a way to better engage with our community, reduce economic leakage in vulnerable communities, encourage the conservation of natural resources, address social inequity, and learn about what "scaling up" means for grassroots organizations.