

Features of Movement Capacity Building for Nonprofits

There have been significant resources dedicated to the development of nonprofits' organizational capacity. However, far less attention has been paid to the capacity of groups to support movement for social change. Below are nine areas the Project identified as important building blocks of movement capacity of nonprofit organizations.

Vision: The organization has a statement of the world it wants to create and a theory of how change is made, including the role the organization plays in the larger social change arena and to whom the organization views itself as accountable.

Principles: Based on its vision of social change, the organization develops values that are applied within and outside of the organization.

Learning and Reflecting: The organization allocates time for its staff and constituents to learn and reflect on the organizational vision through presentations, readings, discussions, or arts/culture. The organization reflects on its work in order to refine its vision and strategies.

Issues of Race and Power: The organization considers society's "dominant culture" and how this culture is, often unconsciously, replicated within the organization itself. The organization analyzes how the effects of race, class, gender, and other cultural factors impact its work.

Work Across Boundaries: The organization builds relationships with other agencies, groups, and individuals to create a movement, and supports other groups without trying to "own" every issue or campaign.

Work Across Generations: The organization has a mechanism for transferring trust, power, and responsibility from older leaders to younger ones, while educating younger leaders about the complexities of social change work and inspiring their involvement in these issues.

Constituent Involvement: The organization has a mechanism by which to promote meaningful constituent involvement that goes beyond just staff, board and funders. The organization also directs resources toward constituency involvement, within and outside of the organization.

Structure: The organization creates a system of effective leadership, management, and accountability while remaining creative and flexible in internal and external problem-solving. The agency collaborates with other organizations to bring about social change.

Funding: The organization recognizes and has transparency about the impact that funders' priorities have on the organization's work. The organization also examines how to maintain accountability to its constituents, particularly when funding comes from sources other than the organization's constituent base.

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