



SECTION THREE:

Partnering With Community

Why It's Important

Service organizations typically reside within the communities they serve and staff have a fairly clear picture of the neighborhood or geographic area where constituents live, or the larger population that represent their constituents. The organization can help people connect to community resources and to activities where people can learn new skills and reduce isolation.

When an organization decides to integrate community change work in this area they see their work as part of a developing community as well as a service provider to individuals. It means the organization is ready to expand its impact beyond the one-to-one worker/individual or family relationship, and to explore staff roles and responsibilities in relation to the community's assets and interest

Staff and members of the local community develop a reciprocal relationship where constituents contribute their knowledge of and experience in the community, and staff help to find and mobilize structures and supports that help create conditions where people can thrive. Staff participate in community events as partners and represent the organization which is constantly learning about the role it plays and changing as conditions evolve. Power between the community and organization is equalized.

RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

Advancing Community Level Impact:

This report examines how two organizations (The Mutual Assistance Network of Del Paso Heights in Sacramento, CA and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation in Brooklyn, NY) developed and executed strategies that advanced their commitment to bridge the service-organizing "divide" by thinking beyond individual needs to address problems at a community level.

Building Alliances with Diverse Community Groups:

This section of the University of Kansas Community Toolbox explores building alliances with diverse and marginalized groups, promoting leadership and supporting people to gain power in their community.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION

Components of Community: This guide helps organizations explore the key components of community building, evaluate how community building is currently taking place in the organization, and opportunities to expand community building. This exercise uses a worksheet that can help organizations discuss areas of work and to generate more concrete ideas for next steps.

Building Strong Neighborhoods for Families with Children: This four-session discussion guide is to help people make their neighborhoods better places for families with children by identifying challenges and opportunities, and working toward solutions. It is from the Study Circles Resource Center, developed in collaboration with the Anne E. Casey Foundation project: Making Connections.



Initial Assessment for Partnering with Community

The simple assessment shown here is meant to (1) help the organization determine readiness to explore partnering with their community, and (2) spark thinking about where to begin and what goals to develop. The tool consists of statements that describe constituent role in the community and how the organization relates to the community. It can be best used if the organization:

1. Carefully considers when and with whom to conduct the assessment. Will you use it in a staff meeting, at a board meeting, with leadership, with other partners?
2. Is clear about what to do with the results. Will they be shared broadly? How will the results impact planning and goal setting?
3. Uses the results to think through operations, programs and process as it relates to partnering with the community.
4. Enhances discussion about trends, patterns and current practice

When giving directions, emphasize that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and for respondents to check “all that apply”. Determine who will compile the responses and how they will be presented.

Constituent	Organization
A. We work with the constituents of our services only	A. The organization focuses on our staff, clients, and volunteers
B. We encourage constituents to bring family and community members to the organization	B. Staff participate in the community (such as local events and celebrations)
C. We visit constituents' homes to meet them in context	C. Community members can use the organization's facilities for events and meetings
D. We reach out to make community members welcome in some of our activities	D. Staff are encouraged to attend community meetings (e.g. Community Board meetings)
E. Community members visit the organization even if they are not constituents. There are activities for all members of the community	E. Staff and Board members come from the community



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Asset Based Community Development: Asset Based Community Development is a strategy to link individual and community assets to the larger change initiatives so that communities can drive the development process by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets, and thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity. This website is a link to Asset Based Community Development resources. It provides talking points, asset mapping tools and facilitation tools. In the context of assessment, the approach uses a capacity inventory rather than a “needs” assessment to identify assets within the community that may not be obvious or useful to residents.



Goals and Theory of Change

As a result of the previous assessment(s), goals will begin to emerge about partnering with the community that will set the stage for determining strategic direction and the action necessary to accomplish those goals. The Theory of Change (TOC) is a method or technique that can assist communities to think about, plan and evaluate their work. Resources for TOC are listed in the Introduction Section. This section includes suggestions for specific goals and outcomes relating to Partnering with Community. Preparation for either approach requires several things:

- Agreement about when to embark on the process and who to involve
- A clear understanding of the time and resources required
- An individual or small group that will work with the consultant in between large group process to integrate ideas and shape the final document.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

When deciding who to involve in the process of goal setting, it may be useful to ask the following questions about a broad range of stakeholders:

1. What viewpoints and expertise are necessary to make informed decisions?
2. Who can effectively participate in the discussion (are there any barriers in terms of language, substantive knowledge of the programming area, hierarchy, or politics?)
3. What they will get out of participating in the TOC design?
4. Is this the best way to gather information from them?
5. Do they have the time and resources to participate?

It may be helpful to have sample goals and outcomes for Partnering with Community in mind prior to the meeting to help guide the discussion and formulate questions.

Community Asset Mapping Workbook: Community Asset Mapping is an activity that can help organizations and their constituents understand more about where they live. It can be used as a way to organize people to become more involved in changing the conditions of their neighborhoods and identifying available resources, where people gather and involvement opportunities – in essence the assets that exist to build upon for change.

Sample Goals and Outcomes:

The organization helps develop leaders who are recognized and respected within the community.

Constituents speak up about issues within the community.

Community members participate in evaluation of the organization and its activities.

Community members are motivated to take action on issues.

Staff participate in community events to represent the organization and build relationships with community members.

Case Studies

The following case studies can be used to spark thinking about how different organizations engage their constituents. The process below can help the group learn from the case studies and apply to their organization:

- Use three charts labeled “**What?**”, “**So What?**”, and “**Now What?**”
 - What did you read that resonated for you? (WHAT?)
 - What did you learn about the agencies as it relates to Constituent Engagement? What were some of the issues they addressed and how? (SO WHAT?)
 - How can this apply to your organization? (NOW WHAT?)
- Pairs or 3s start at a different chart
- 5 minutes per chart to add strengths/focus areas
- Move to next chart – each group at each chart
- What would you like to learn more about?

Sacramento, CA Building Healthy Communities: This is a link to The Hub, a media portal for the California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities Initiative in Sacramento, CA. There is a variety of articles about issues relating to their work, from focus on school suspensions, urban farming, advocating for health services among others. They could be used to spark thinking about partnering with the community and as examples about how to get the word out.

Queens Community House: This case study describes how Queens Community House in New York, fashioned after the settlement house tradition, offers services and programs to help individuals improve their situation and strengthen their community. It follows the story of Queens Community House from a service provider to a powerful community building organization.



Culture

As an organization begins to shift its practice and partner with community in new ways, it is helpful to explore the existing culture to surface assumptions about process and players. Creating a safe place to have continuing discussion about current conditions means identifying strengths and values as well as asking questions that will reveal areas for change.

Setting goals to fully engage constituents and their communities often means exploring the organization's culture of power dynamics. Every organization, team, and community experiences elements of power which can be seen in the light of relational power, or power with someone or over someone, as well as the kind of power which comes from having influence in a situation.

Discussions about power may lead to an exploration of cultural sensitivity, or how we value others, especially others who are different from us. One way we demonstrate how much we value others is in how we share power with them. How does power operate within the organization? What are the organization's assumptions about getting to goals? How do staff and leadership see their current culture and practice?

HANDOUT | Sources of Power

This handout can be used with organizations working in partnerships. It is helpful to understand the different ways that participation and communication styles can be perceived in groups and encourages users to consider how to share power in order to establish trust.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Asking Powerful Questions: This publication includes a conceptual framework, examples, agendas and worksheets to learn to and apply asking powerful questions.

Cafe to Go: The World Café has been asking important questions and sparking conversations for many years all over the world. These guidelines provide the tools needed to hold a Café conversation that can be used in many different settings and with a variety of stakeholders. It is a valuable resource and can be adapted for use in many of the topic areas of the NICE Toolkit.

CULTURE | RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities:

This toolbox contains information on understanding culture and diversity, how to strengthen multicultural collaboration, and building inclusive communities. It includes descriptions, examples and power points to adapt to any organization

Practice

As the organization and its constituents become clear about goals, assumptions and culture, the next step is to develop a plan to implement action to reach the goals. Partnering with the community, by its nature, requires a plan that promotes full participation from key stakeholder groups. The consultant role is to guide the organization to consider who needs to be involved, how to best recruit them and to eliminate barriers for participation.

PRATICE | RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

Caught in the Middle: Community Development Corporations and the Conflict between Grassroots and Instrumental Forms of Civic Participation:

This article – also noted in the constituent engagement section – explores the various roles of citizen participation in community based organizations (specifically community development corporations). It includes a “Citizen Participation Continuum” which helps organizations and groups understand the source of conflicts between different types of citizen participation and provides organizations with a road map for evaluating programs that promote change in society.

Developing a Plan to Encourage Participation:

This resource provides a comprehensive list of questions to ask when developing a plan to become more inclusive of community members. It offers a checklist of action, examples to study and a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the key points in the section and could be used as a foundation to customize for the organization.





RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Increasing Participation and Membership in Community Change: This toolkit provides step-by-step guidance for increasing participation and engaging constituents and community members in a change process

Community Engagement Governance™: In the Community Engagement Governance™ framework, responsibility for governance is shared across the organization, including the organization's key stakeholders: its constituents and community, staff, and the board. Community-Engagement Governance™ is based on established principles of participatory democracy, self-determination, genuine partnership, and community-level decision making. It can be explored as a way to ensure that engagement is integrated into daily practice.

Impact

Evaluating change in Partnering with Community focuses on four areas: (1) what has changed for the individual who is a participant in services at the organization; (2) what has changed within the organizational structure; (3) what has changed in how the community views the organization and (4) what has changed in the community.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation: This brief describes four methods that were developed to respond to the unique challenges of measuring advocacy. Included are step-by-step instructions for use, rating scales, and sample questions that can guide evaluation.

Transactions, Transformations, Translations: Metrics that Matter: Metrics that Matter is a way of looking at organizational growth and the alliance building that brings groups together. This evaluation approach can capture the importance of narrative and numbers, of politics and policies, of transformation as well as transaction. Included are transactional and transformational criteria for measuring leadership and organizational development, and movement.

IMPACT | RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

A Framework of Factors that Affect Political Support:

Frameworks can be useful in that they can be customized for a particular organization and its focus. This framework describes three factors that can impact the amount of attention an issues receives: (1) the actors involved (individuals and organizations); (2) the story the actors tell about the issue; and (3) the environment surrounding the organization. It can be used with an organization to evaluate the impact of the role played by constituents and the organization, and the change in conditions within the environment.

Pathways for Individual and Collective Empowerment:

This detailed diagram illustrates how collective involvement and individual development empower social justice actions within a community. It can be used with the organization to measure change across a spectrum to increase understanding of the forces that are driving change and where efforts need to be focused.

Participatory Evaluation:

This article focuses on Participatory Evaluation and seeks to provide a framework for making evaluation accessible to all who are involved. Stakeholders are involved in all aspects of evaluation. Members of the program community are involved in defining the evaluation, developing instruments, collecting data, processing and analyzing data, and reporting and disseminating results. The authors believe that to the extent that practitioners are privy to and participate in making sense of raw data, their understanding will be deeper and more meaningful than if they were merely to process someone else's interpretation.