



SECTION FIVE:

Social and

Systems Change

Why Important

Many problems that constituents and communities face could be eased or solved if there are changes in policies, laws, administrative mandates and other systems. Systems change efforts require long-term commitment and often include a variety of partners ranging from advocates to organizers to providers, with a clear understanding of the roles each plays. Key stakeholders develop strategies, share information and data, and decide on what are short and long-term goals. Part of this work is to include community members, including constituents who live the experience, to be engaged in all stages of the effort.

In collaborative efforts that address systems change, it is often the role of service organizations to understand systemic barriers facing constituents. In addition, service organizations are well-placed to promote constituent engagement in those and other efforts while continuing to provide connections and resources for those who need them.

Organizations might contribute their efforts through advocacy, organizing and social and media campaigns to get the word out about the issue. Using the constituent voice in the message is a potent way to spread the word and to empower people to feel that their experience has value and impact.

RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

[Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-impact Nonprofits](#)

This book, first published in 2007, is a guide to how nonprofits achieve extraordinary social impact. After studying 12 nonprofit, the authors identified six practices that lead to success. Advocacy and constituent engagement are key.

[Better Together](#)

This website is the portal to “Better Together”, the 2000 report that identified America’s civic apathy and ways to revitalize it. There are links to the book, “Bowling Alone”, which describes how isolated members of our society have become, as well as a social capital primer, research and measurement tools.

[Social Movements and Philanthropy: How Foundations can Support Movement Building](#)

[Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide](#)

On page 17 of this report, social service organizations are identified as places that have not been organized to contribute to social change efforts. The author cites the Building Movement Project’s Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide as a tool to increase engagement as well as noting other strategies for recruitment.



Initial Assessment

The simple assessment shown here is meant to (1) help the organization determine readiness to explore this topic, and (2) spark thinking about where to begin and what goals to develop. The tool consists of statements that describe the constituent experience in system change efforts and how the organization views their role in the same. 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 constituent engagement.
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 don't involve constituents in systems change work	A. We provide services only; the organization does not seem interested in doing social change work, such as advocacy or teaching our constituents about their rights
B. As part of case management, we help constituents see their problems not just as individual ones but also as larger community issues	B. Our organization belongs to coalitions that advocate for funding and issues related to our constituents
C. We take constituents to lobby days and other collective actions	C. Our organization is a leader in addressing systemic issues affecting our constituents
D. We refer constituents to community organizing groups or similar groups for leadership development and/or involvement	D. Our organization works with organizing and other groups to train constituents to address systemic change.
E. Our programs develop constituents as leaders working to address systemic issues	E. Our organization supports constituents to become leaders in social change efforts with our and other groups.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Theory of Social Change

This discussion guide and exercise applies an adapted version of this familiar framework to your organization in order to help participants consider how service work differs when it incorporates social change goals. Both types of planning and impact are important.

Catalysts for Change

In 2009, the California Endowment and the Building Movement Project surveyed more than 450 California nonprofit service providers about their methods used to integrate social change activities into their work. Five main themes emerged from the survey results, as well as several case studies. These themes offer insights into what service providers can focus on in order to increase their capacity to engage in social change activities. The link below is to Part One of Catalysts of Change. The five themes are outlined on pages 5 and 6. The handout may be used as a way for organizations to assess their readiness to engage in social change work from multiple perspectives.





HANDOUT | The Five Themes for Integrating Social Change into Direct Service Work

In 2009, the California Endowment and the Building Movement Project surveyed more than 450 California nonprofit service providers about their methods used to integrate social change activities into their work. Five main themes emerged from the survey results, as well as several case studies. These themes offer insights into what service providers can focus on in order to increase their capacity to engage in social change activities.

(Summarized from [Catalysts for Change: How California Nonprofits Can Deliver Direct Services and Transform Communities](#) –The California Endowment and Building Movement Project, 2010)

Constituent Voice	External Action	Internal Capacity	Strategic Partnerships	Organizational Leadership
<p>Organization engages in activities that support clients' Ability to develop leadership skills and to build their civic voice both in and outside of the organization.</p>	<p>Organization participates in external Action that is aimed at creating social change.</p>	<p>Organization has put internal practices into place that support Activities beyond direct services.</p>	<p>Organization seeks out strategic partnerships and Alliances that enable it to participate in larger change efforts even with limited resources.</p>	<p>Organization experiences strong, focused, value-driven leadership.</p> <p>Organization experiences strong, focused, value-driven leadership.</p>
<p>Provides training and support to help community members better identify and speak to issues that affect them.</p> <p>Helps constituents better understand their rights within broader systems (e.g., health care, education, etc.).</p> <p>Offers educational forums on issues facing constituents.</p> <p>Offers constituents opportunities to develop leadership skills.</p> <p>Offers constituents opportunities to participate in organizational decision-making, goal-setting, program planning processes.</p> <p>Provides voter/census education and registration.</p> <p>Provides training to community members to enable engagement in local politics or to testify before legislative or decision-making bodies.</p> <p>Utilizes Promotores or community/peer educators' model.</p>	<p>Participates with other collective bodies that seek to address systemic issues impacting clients.</p> <p>Takes public positions on policies, legislation that directly affect its clients.</p> <p>Engages in grassroots, community, and/or youth organizing.</p> <p>Meets with policymakers/legislators about specific issues, policies, legislation.</p> <p>Participates in rallies, boycotts, etc.</p> <p>Uses research to inform advocacy work.</p>	<p>Solicits client input/feedback about programs and priorities.</p> <p>Provides staff and BOD opportunities to learn about root cause issues and policies/legislation impacting clients.</p> <p>Creates organizational culture where connection between service delivery and social change is consistently and frequently reinforced.</p> <p>Vision/mission statement, strategic plan, job descriptions reflect commitment to social change.</p> <p>501 (h) election is taken.</p> <p>Meets with clients to discuss their views on key issues.</p> <p>Staff and board members reflect diversity of clients and community served.</p> <p>Outcomes and evaluations are related to social change activities.</p>	<p>Participates in alliances that work to address policy changes or take collective action on issues that directly impact constituents and their communities.</p> <p>Partners with other groups to use resources strategically to ensure that resources are available for activities beyond direct service delivery.</p>	<p>Organization is able to successfully articulate and fulfill a mission that is focused on helping individuals and changing unjust systems.</p> <p>Leadership is able to inspire staff and board members to embrace the mission.</p> <p>Leadership is committed to developing both staff and constituent leadership at all levels of the organization to promote community engagement and civic participation.</p> <p>Organizational culture actively supports serving clients, listening to their needs and concerns, identifying larger issues, and creating plans for action.</p>



Goals and Theory of Change

As a result of the previous assessment(s), goals will begin to emerge about working with constituents towards social and systems change 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 found 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:

1. Agreement about when to embark on the process and who to involve
2. A clear understanding of the time and resources required
3. 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?

Culture

An important element in organizational culture as it relates to systems change is the space to enhance constituent leadership. This fundamental belief in the capacity of constituents to lead change efforts opens possibilities within the organization to build powerful partnerships between staff and constituents. Additionally, it is essential to create a culture of learning, where perspectives are shared and a new reality is shaped.

Sample Goals and Outcomes:

It may be helpful to have sample goals and outcomes for Social and Systems Change in mind prior to the meeting to help guide the discussion and formulate questions.

Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

This handout can be used to spark conversation when developing goals and strategy. It guides the organization to explore what is currently happening within the organization as well as identifying those who will work with you and those who might block your efforts.

An Advocacy Theory of Change

This tool can be used to design an “advocacy” theory of change. It leads a group through six questions for discussion, provides facilitation tips, and several graphic representations of what final strategies might look like.

- Understand and identify the systemic barriers facing constituents
- Increase partner organizations’ awareness of conditions that impact root causes
- Constituents hold leadership positions in community change efforts
- Constituents are engaged in efforts across the spectrum of collaborative/collective impact activities



CULTURE | RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

Learning Circles in Culture Change: Why Use It?

This paper, while focused on the topic of senior services, gives clear, basic information about the purpose of learning circles. It includes tips for the facilitator, logistics and suggested ground rules. It also offers questions (on the topic) for learning at different developmental stages of the group. Questions can be customized for other groups and topics.



RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE AGENCY:

The Power of Stories

This webpage has a link to a video that describes the cultural treasures of one community in California. The video highlights youth working for change and developing leadership through civic engagement and advocacy.

Where I Found Role Models Who Look Just Like Me

This motivating story by a youth leader can be effective to spark conversation about engaging often overlooked constituents for leadership roles. After reading and viewing, the organization might discuss possibilities for its marginalized populations and opportunities to learn from them and open doors to leadership.

Practice

The tools for this section focus on building organizational knowledge and capacity to engage in social change and to expand leadership capacity of constituents as allies. Organizations that have the tools to conduct root cause analysis, have the knowledge about the rights and limits of advocacy activities and have the ability to promote civic engagement as a key for leadership will see their work as a part of the spectrum that includes direct community action.



RESOURCES WHEN WORKING WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Root Cause Analysis

Causes and Consequences

These two activities are used to conduct a root cause analysis and to explore the causes and consequences of issues that staff and constituents deal with on a daily basis. The root cause analysis includes a handout for the discussion about “why” conditions exist. The causes and consequences handout helps organizations explore the focus of the impact of their work. Are they addressing the (root) causes of conditions or the consequences, which doesn't lead to changing conditions and often creates the “revolving door” of service provision.

PRACTICE | RESOURCES FOR THE CONSULTANT:

Learning Circles for Root Cause Analysis

This handout from BMP offers information and a process to engage staff and constituent partners in learning circles focused on root cause analysis. It describes how to organize the learning circle, set it up for success and provides tips for the facilitator.

Nonprofits Must Speak Out about Poverty and Income Inequality

This paper makes the case for nonprofits to work to ameliorate income inequality beyond providing services to those who are already poor or are in danger of falling out of the shrinking middle class and into poverty. The author suggests several strategies and offers a case study that could be used to explore possibilities within the organization.



Deriving Power from Constituents

Nonprofits that look to their constituents for leadership and direction can change the structure and governance of the organization. This case study describes a move to build leadership within the organization that not only reflects the community it served, but to become that community. In this way, the leaders of the organization and of the community were the same, and thus able to address the root causes of the conditions that acted as barriers to change.

Nonprofits and Lobbying

This document provides the lobbying rules for nonprofit, 501(c) (3) organizations. Contrary to popular belief, nonprofits can “lobby freely” if they follow the rules included here. This opens up many possibilities for advocacy and engaging legislators and policy makers around issues impacting local conditions.

Vote with your Mission Campaign Kit

These materials, provided by California Nonprofits, help organizations promote civic engagement and leadership. When nonprofits use voting power, they will be able to advance their causes and mission. CalNonprofits' campaign goal is to have 100% of eligible nonprofit staff, board members, and volunteers vote.

Everyday Advocacy Resources

This website from the National Council of Nonprofits has a wide array of resources for advocacy. It includes links to engaging the board in advocacy, all you need to know about legislation, “how-to” worksheets, and material about federal, state, and lobbying laws.

Impact

Evaluation of social and systems change can be complex and require thoughtful planning at the beginning of an initiative. What kind of knowledge and data will drive goal setting? How will the organization and its partners gather information that can be useful, confidential and fair? Who will design an evaluation plan and how will it be shared across users? All of these questions and more must be explored.

This section will offer some resources for cross-sector, social change evaluation as well as narrow the focus to advocacy and leadership development. Whatever approach is taken, organizations need to evaluate their efforts regularly and use the information to adapt to new conditions, some of which happen as a result of the organization’s efforts towards change.

RESOURCES TO USE WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

Advocacy Evaluation Case Study

This case study provides an example of an evaluation of the Chalkboard Project’s civic engagement efforts. Because of its adaptive approach, it was well suited to lift up evaluative thinking in ways that fostered strategic learning. The case study presents an outcome data map and interview techniques that could be adapted for a specific organization.

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:

Evaluation for Strategic Learning

This paper makes the case for the value of using evaluation to inform strategic learning. Organizations that are set up for learning will make the best use of this type of evaluation approach. The paper includes a description of evaluation for strategic learning, questions, examples, and tools to adapt to any organizations situation.

A Practical Guide to Evaluating Systems Change in Human Services Systems

This Guide is for practitioners and evaluators who would like a practical way to think about systems and systems change. The author presents a framework (page 4) that looks at the collaborative group as a way to organize for systems change – not the change itself.

