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ADVANCING COMMUNITY LEVEL IMPACT

A SERIES OF 5% SHIFTS: IMPACT

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The Building Movement Project develops tools that help organizations align their social change principles with their social service practices. Our research and experience shows that relatively small shifts in service provision can cause ripple effects; raising up constituent voice, fostering community cohesion and increasing engagement in advocacy efforts. This series highlights "5% shifts" – as we are calling them – that don't rely on organizations completely changing course and reinventing themselves. We lift up shifts that are both simple and achievable, to inspire service providers to adapt what works.

These reports are structured to include both conceptual framing based on research and literature in the sector, as well as case studies of on-the-ground experiments initiated by organizations. They also include discussion materials and other resources to help staff and leaders reflect on the case examples and apply the lessons to their own organizations. We hope that organizations will take what is useful, build on their strengths, and exercise judgment and wisdom in tailoring these examples to make "5% shifts" that fit their specific community and organizational contexts.

We invite organizations to spread these lessons and learning throughout the nonprofit sector, and to reach out to BMP to share experiences or to request additional resources or coaching. Feel free to email BMP Co-Director Sean Thomas-Breitfeld at sthomas-breitfeld@demos.org.

Thanks go to our team of authors and reviewers: Caroline McAndrews, Hai Binh Nguyen and Sean Thomas-Breitfeld co-wrote this report; Frances Kunreuther provided important feedback.

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INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK:

ADVANCING COMMUNITY LEVEL IMPACT

Service providers are on the front lines of our nation's struggles with the effects of poverty and inequity. While the sector has always focused on helping people, service organizations underwent significant changes in the 1980s when government began to contract out service delivery on an unprecedented scale. Over time, organizations absorbed the service functions that were largely abandoned by the state – meeting people's basic needs for food, shelter, health, and safety. Facing increased competition for government contracts, increasing demands for services and tougher measures of accountability, many of these organizations adapted to the trends by becoming business savvy, professionalizing staff, and looking for models of efficiency. [1] Other organizations did not participate in the new government contracting system and instead focused on organizing and advocating for changes in the government's social welfare policies. These major shifts in the sector are often described as creating a divide between "providing services to oppressed populations or organizing them to challenge power structures."[2] But in practice, service groups fall at various places along a spectrum, and increasingly service organizations are integrating their mission to meet individual needs with their aspiration to address the larger systems, policies, and structures that contribute to the problems people face. This report examines how two organizations 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.

1	Smith and Lipsky (1993)
2	Brooks (2005)

The Mutual Assistance Network of Del Paso Heights in Sacramento, CA, went through a series of small shifts in how the organization saw its role in relation to individuals and the community. They rethought the organization's overarching philosophy and went from focusing on addressing the problems of individual residents to creating opportunities for both individual and community growth. At the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation in Brooklyn, NY, the organization had already made a strategic commitment to resident engagement and leadership development, but was challenged to make this strategy real throughout the entire staff team. They therefore revised job descriptions and staff evaluations to reflect the organization's social change priorities, and integrate its commitment to social change in all its staffing decisions.

As these organizations began addressing community-wide issues, both realized the importance of two shifts in their strategy and practice: 1) engaging residents as active participants and leaders in building a healthy community together, and; 2) equipping staff to see and work with participants as partners in the social change activities. An earlier report in this series, "Developing the Leadership of Recipients" focused on how program staff created opportunities for participants to take on leadership roles by developing programmatic areas and providing peer support to other clients. Similarly, staff of the Mutual Assistance Network and Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (as well as other organizations working for change at the community level) focus on creating opportunities for residents to take on leadership beyond the organization's walls; whether by participating in advocacy activities or building the relational ties that are critical to fostering a sense of community.

Shifting an organization from focusing on helping individuals address their personal challenges towards impacting neighborhoods as a whole may start as small

shifts, but over time will result in bigger changes. As the authors of the report "Resident-Centered Community Building: What Makes it Different?" note, "creating healthy and vibrant communities is a long-term process" [3] so it is important for organizations to see the shifts they make as the building blocks of the foundation for long-term work. As the social safety net continues to be threatened by federal, state, and local budget cuts, nonprofit agencies face an ever growing number of problems to be solved. Now is the time for providers to think about how to make small shifts in how they view their work with individuals and communities, involve and honor the voice and leadership of program participants, and adapt their internal management so that they can have far-reaching impacts in their communities.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

How does your organization engage in community building and change efforts at the neighborhood level?

What would it take to equip staff to incorporate community building work as a necessary tool in their toolbox?

3 The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. (2012)

CASE EXAMPLE 1:

FROM "PROBLEM" INDIVIDUALS TO HEALTHY, STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

BACKGROUND

When Richard Dana from the Mutual Assistance Network of Del Paso Heights (MAN) presented on his work at a conference of community service providers more than ten years ago, he noticed that all the successes he named — impressive results by any standard — were about change at the individual level. Mutual Assistance Network's case management programs, home visitation programs, and youth services were lifting up families in their isolated neighborhood in Sacramento, California; yet Richard felt they were missing something significant.

Richard brought this nagging question about their level of impact to his staff and community residents. Through a series of conversations and learning sessions, they explored the relationship between individuals and their communities and how the physical environment in a neighborhood can positively or negatively impact individuals. They observed that in contrast to their own area, healthy and thriving neighborhoods provided plenty of common spaces such as recreational centers, farmer's markets, and parks where residents could gather for a variety of activities. Using these observations as a guide, the Mutual Assistance Network slowly began to shift their approach from focusing on individuals and their "problems" – such as diabetes or child obesity – to providing services and building institutions that were present in other strong, healthy neighborhoods. In this case study, we highlight how this shift in perspective provided a framework for program planning, and how it has led to larger organizational changes.

HOW IT WORKS

Executive Director Richard Dana explains, "Instead of focusing on the problem, we just stopped talking about it. We realized that we were approaching it wrong. We were approaching it from a 'deficit' model, not from a concept of what really should be there. We began to think about it as what strong neighborhood attributes need to be in place so that those needs are alleviated."

This shift in perspective meant re-evaluating not only the goals and objectives of MAN's programs and services, but also, at times, the very existence of those programs. As a result, some programs underwent small tweaks, some faced a complete makeover, and a few were cut altogether. MAN's staff shifted their programs to focus on creating opportunities for children and families to be active and social. For those programs where contracts limited flexibility and required a specific type of work

BEFORE:

Mutual Assistance Network provided programs that addressed the "problems" of individuals.

5% SHIFT:

Programs and activities were developed to change the physical environment of the neighborhood and provide opportunities for people to come together and form community.

IMPACT:

Residents, staff, and community partners work together to improve the neighborhood and create an environment that supports community economic and social development.

with individuals, MAN began to change the way it described its work; instead of describing the program as fixing an individual's specific problem, MAN framed its work as partnering with individuals so they could be a part of the activities or groups in the neighborhood.

RESPONSE & IMPACT

In the beginning of the process (and even today) MAN faced many skeptics who insisted that the organization needed to deal with the problems of clients first. Richard responds, "Our philosophy is that by creating an environment that is strong, people will help make the problems go away." As one of the first experiments of their new strategy, MAN staff founded a youth soccer league and helped to transform an abandoned park into a soccer field. In this process, they demonstrated that they could address multiple issues such as youth obesity, parent isolation, and public safety through reinvesting in a public space and bringing people together. Through the soccer league, young people were active, parents got to know other parents, and the park's constant flow of people prevented it from reverting back into a gathering place for illegal activities. Since MAN began experimenting with programs and projects like this, crime rates have decreased by more than 52% in Del Paso Heights (compared to 2005) and young adults' high school graduation and college attendance rates have also improved. While these positive community trends are surely linked to many factors, MAN has been a critical piece of the puzzle in revitalizing their community.

Throughout MAN's change process, the entire organization has embodied a spirit of innovation and experimentation. Richard explains, "We have staff meetings where staff throws out new ideas. One of the items that we're exploring as a result of a staff idea is creating a plant nursery. A lot of people in our community have gardens and we want to help people beautify their neighborhoods, so a nursery may be an affordable way to do that."

The spirit of experimentation also meant leaving room for potential failures, and learning from those missteps. For example, when staff put on a concert that had very low attendance, they met to assess the event and realized that it did not adequately cater to the interests of the residents, who were mostly family-driven and kid-focused. Staff learned that community events should always be inclusive of children and geared towards entire families in order to speak to the identity of the neighborhood. The next year, instead of another concert, staff held a harvest festival that featured an array of kids' activities. As a result, 25 local businesses partnered with them and over 4,000 people showed up to the 3-hour event.

What started out as an initial perspective shift led to deeper organizational change. Residents, staff, and community partners eventually came together in a strategic planning process to outline a new vision and philosophy for the organization. In this new strategic direction, MAN sees its role as not only supporting individuals, but also changing the environment so that individuals can

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

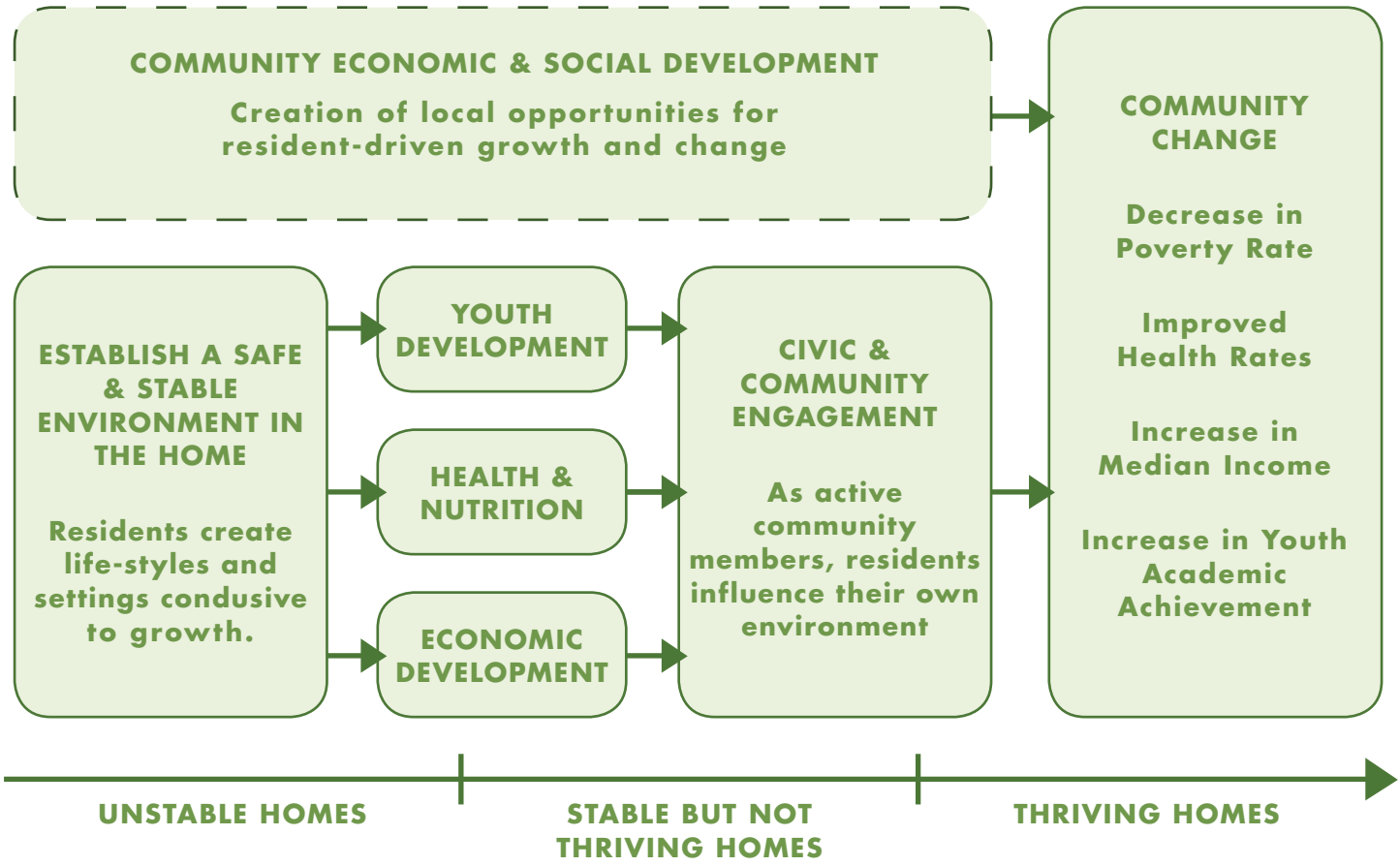
- Plan according to the *interests* of community members, not just their *needs*.
- Embrace uncertainty and a spirit of experimentation.

succeed. As a result of this strategy, MAN developed a conceptual framework (represented in the chart below) to illustrate how MAN's "community economic and social development" programs and services can meet the needs and interests of Del Paso Heights residents across a range of family conditions and circumstances.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What is your organization's current philosophy or vision that determines your program and strategy?

What shift in philosophy might be required to get your organization to think about its programs and strategies in terms of community level impact?



Developed by Mutual Assistance Network

CASE EXAMPLE 2:

IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL CHANGE COMMITMENT THROUGH JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND STAFF EVALUATIONS

BACKGROUND

Founded by residents and merchants in the neighborhood of Cypress Hills in Brooklyn, New York more than thirty years ago, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (Cypress Hills) provides a variety of critical programs and neighborhood development projects to more than 8,000 residents each year. More than 70 full-time and 140 part-time staff delivers Cypress Hill's continuum of services, ranging from college success to housing counseling to career training.

When the economic recession hit a few years ago, Cypress Hills – like many other organizations around the country – faced the threat of its core programs being reduced in the city and state budgets at a time when residents needed them the most. Because the organization has had a rich history of community activism and engagement, staff and residents actively responded to this moment through campaigns and advocacy efforts to save these critical services. As campaigns and organizing activities became more intense and required more staff participation outside of their regular job responsibilities, Cypress Hills wanted to acknowledge the hard work that staff was putting in to engage residents in these activities. At the same time, the organization was looking for ways to solidify its longstanding commitment to resident engagement and leadership development outlined in its recently revised mission and strategic plan.

In this case study, we discuss how Cypress Hills revised their job descriptions and staff evaluations to make real its commitment to social change.

HOW IT WORKS

The advocacy committee – an ad hoc team composed of program directors, division directors, and line staff – is one of the main bodies at Cypress Hills. Their mission is to support the coordination of advocacy work. As a result of conversations with staff, the advocacy committee proposed revisions of all full time staff job descriptions and evaluations to include language on leadership development and other social change strategies.

Cypress Hills also began to affirm social change goals as an organizational priority at the outset for new staff by including the following language in every job posting announcement: "Demonstrate a commitment to leadership development, community building, and community organizing as strategies for social

BEFORE:

Staff participating in advocacy and organizing activities were not formally recognized for their efforts even though a recent strategic plan had prioritized this commitment.

5% SHIFT:

Every job description and staff evaluation includes language on commitment to leadership development and community building.

IMPACT:

Both staff and the organization have a clear way to be held accountable to the social change vision.

change." Julia Watt-Rosenfeld, Director of Community Organizing, explains, "When we advertise for jobs, we make it very clear to the prospective applicant that we're committed to organizing. This means that we are going to attract people who are interested in social change, and it also means that we are making clear our commitment to it from the beginning."

To help staff fulfill their commitment, six-month and annual staff evaluations ask how each staff person has engaged in social change activities, such as supporting leadership development of community residents, encouraging residents to participate in campaigns, and representing residents and Cypress Hills concerns in coalitions and other advocacy organizations. Knowing that each position in Cypress Hills has different time constraints, responsibilities, and resident engagement opportunities, the organization provides flexibility for staff and their supervisors to determine how exactly to satisfy this performance measure.

RESPONSE & IMPACTS

Response to these new requirements has been overwhelmingly positive, though there are still lingering questions about what implementation will look like. To help address this issue, the advocacy committee continues to play a key role in identifying gaps in the skills and capacity of staff and providing workshops and opportunities for staff to learn together. Rob Abbot, Director of Youth and Family Services and a member of the advocacy committee explains, "If a staff was hired originally to run after-school programs, that person would not have had the conversation about context and strategies of an organizing campaign. We need to bridge that gap."

The committee is planning a half-day training for all staff in the Fall of 2013, focusing on community organizing tools and processes in order to increase understanding of what staff can do to fulfill this commitment and what roles they play in a larger movement. This training builds on workshops the committee has organized in the past, including one featuring a Cypress Hills educational equity campaign. The goals of these workshops and trainings are to acknowledge the roots of organizing in the neighborhood and legacy of organizing in the organization, while providing the opportunity for staff to connect new learning and insights to their existing work.

Already, Julia sees that these sessions help staff develop innovative ways to incorporate residents into their work and, in the process, do their work better. Cypress Hills's Community Development department, the division responsible for developing affordable housing projects, recently partnered with Julia to bring residents to testify at a city commission about the community's need for affordable housing. Julia shares, "It was an awesome experience for our residents and for the Community Development folks. I think staff feels like they are being held accountable to do this. They're getting results from this. It's not as if they are doing more, but it's making them more effective in the end."

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- As much as possible, involve representative staff at all levels in planning before rolling out new performance measures.
- Provide workshops and other learning opportunities to support staff in fulfilling new work requirements.

Requiring all staff to act on the organization's commitment to leadership development and social change unites staff toward a common vision. The commitment is not relegated to a particular team, but everyone has to participate. At the same time, through this explicit commitment, staff can help to hold the organization accountable to its vision of resident leadership. Julia describes how timely the focus on organizing leadership has been. "Our communities have been hurt by the economic crisis. We've had to fight for vital programs. While we've seen success, some of our programs have faced the threat of enormous cuts. Staff recognizes that there's a lot at stake and that recognition keeps our commitment very real."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

How does what your organization measures reflect what matters to the organization?

How are social change goals reflected in the expectations your organization sets for staff?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Purpose of this Discussion:

Have participants reflect on the case studies and their own experiences, in order to explore opportunities and strategies to expand impact.

Hoped-For Outcomes:

- Explore the value and potential for shifting the organization's focus to include community-level impact
- Consider the internal systems and structures that could support this shift

60-MINUTE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Round of Introductions and Personal Reflection 15 min

Start with a round of introductions where people respond to the following statement:

> When are you most aware (or confronted by) the community-level, structural and systemic barriers to your work?

If time allows, ask for reflections on common themes or specific case stories/examples of structural barriers to the success of individual clients.

Reflect on the Work 20 min

Explore the organization's current focus on community impact:

> What community-level issues does our work confront? What insights about the community are we uniquely able to provide because of the wisdom and experience of our staff and clients?
>
> What pieces of our work address community issues? How do we measure the overall impact of that work?
>
> How are staff members engaged in the surrounding community and in issues impacting the community? Do staff members vote? Do they attend neighborhood social events?

Consider the possibilities for, and impacts of, shifting the organization's focus towards community-level impacts:

> What community-level changes would have the most benefit for our clients? How do/could we involve clients in identifying community-level problems and solutions?
>
> What value or meaning might staff derive from having a greater focus on community-level impacts? How might it resonate with staff interests and commitments? How might it challenge staff?
>
> What are ways staff could engage with residents around the issues impacting the community? What are ways our organization could support and align with other groups in the community to create greater impact?

Explore Systems and Structures to Support Community Impact 20 min

Consider the organization's current structure:

> Acknowledging that staff may fall along a spectrum from more focused on individual-level work to more focused on community-level work, what is the balance in terms of staff interest/inclination? What is the balance in terms of staff roles/responsibilities?
>
> [If the organization already does community-level work] Is the focus on community impact held by a team or unit within the organization? What are the benefits of this? What are the pitfalls?

Explore ideas for supporting community-level work:

> Are there specific training needs that staff would have if we were to have more community-level impact?
>
> What organizational barriers might we need to consider if we tried to do more community-level work? [Barriers might include board resistance, concerns about funding, competition with other organizations, etc.]

Closing and Evaluation 5 min

Ask people to identify one thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation.
Close the discussion and thank people for their participation.

> **Note:** If there was energy about developing organizational strategies for expanding a focus to include community-level work, invite people to participate in a follow-up meeting, using the guide and worksheet on the following pages.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION GUIDE & EXERCISE

BACKGROUND

Many service agencies use some sort of Theory of Change or Logic Model to articulate their service provision goals. Both of these tools use a visual representation of work and outcomes in order to plan for impact and link it to daily work. The underlying purpose of these tools is to assess the "if-then" (causal) relationships between the elements of a program; if the resources are available for a program, then the activities can be implemented, if the activities are implemented successfully then certain outputs and outcomes can be expected.[4] These models can be used for evaluation, but they are also great tools to use for program planning.

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. For organizations making a 5% shift towards incorporating more of a social change vision into service work and planning, the right-hand column of the worksheet that accompanies this discussion guide can be very useful in order to understand and expand the community impacts of the work. In addition, the definition of root cause below can be useful as well.

ROOT CAUSE:

Root causes are the underlying factors that create community problems, and make those problems likely to persist even though services may be in place to help individuals and families meet their immediate needs.

4 For more information on logic models, see W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide, Chapter 3 at http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide.aspx. For additional information and models, Wikipedia has a comprehensive page at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic_model.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION GUIDE & EXERCISE

Purpose of this Discussion:

For those individuals who were particularly engaged or excited by the last meeting, you can use this agenda and worksheet to examine the impact your organization can have when you incorporate social change goals into your program planning.

Hoped-For Outcomes:

- Understand the difference between a Logic Model (or Theory of Change) and a Theory of Social Change
- Map your work and its impact for use in future program planning
- Recognize the full range of assets you are working with

90-MINUTE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Round of Introductions and Personal Reflection 10 min

Start with a round of introductions where people respond to the following prompt(s):

(If any participants were not part of the first meeting, have them first reflect on this statement)
When are you most aware (or confronted by) the community-level, structural and systemic barriers to your work?

(For those who participated in the first meeting) What most excited you about our last discussion together? Why?

Note: You may want to write down answers to the second question on a flipchart for everyone to see and remember.

Introduce the Exercise 5 min

Explain that the goal of this exercise is to help participants consider how service work differs when it incorporates social change goals. **Note that the goal is not to show that one approach is more important than the other but to determine how to balance the two.**

Give each person a copy of the attached worksheet. Write your organization's mission statement on a flipchart or white-board, and have the group fill it in on their worksheets. Explain that the mission statement of most service agencies reflects the agency's Theory of Change – its plan for how to go about addressing a community need or problem. Let the group know that you will begin this process by first identifying your organization's Theory of Change based on your mission.

Theory of Change 20 min

Break into small groups of about 3 or 4 people per group and ask them to discuss (and write-down in the Theory of Change column on their worksheets) responses to the following questions:

Assessment of Individual Needs: What assumptions does our mission make about the population we serve, the problems they face, and how that problem should be addressed?

Service Goals and Activities: What are the service goals outlined in our mission? What activities do we engage in to meet those goals?

Resources Needed: What resources do we need in order to meet these service goals? (i.e. contracts, billable hours, fee for service work, specialized staff skills, etc)

Service Provision Metrics: How will we know if we've met our service goals? What are the indicators of success and how will we measure them?

CONTINUED

Theory of Social Change 20 min

After 20 minutes, have the group shift their focus to thinking about what the work of the organization would look like if it was also focused on addressing the root causes of the problems your mission addresses.

Ask participants in their groups to discuss (and write-down in the "Theory of Social Change" column on their worksheets) responses to the following questions:

Root Causes of Community Needs: What are some root causes of the conditions that our mission addresses? (See definition in the box on page 10 — you may want to discuss this at the beginning or post this definition in the room)

Social Change Goals and Strategies: What goals to we want to achieve in order to address community needs? How will we achieve those goals?

Resource Opportunities: What are examples of resources accessible to us when we focus on community change goals? (i.e. community relationships and coalitions, new partnerships, community leadership, staff development, etc)

Community Impacts: How will we know if we've met our goals? How would the community look different if these goals were achieved?

Group Discussion 25 min

Have one or two groups present their comparison to the larger group

As they present have each presenter highlight:

Any 'A-ha!' moments from the group discussion

Where the group struggled

After each presentation, have members of the wider group offer feedback, observations and comparisons to their own findings during the exercise

Have the group discuss:

The differences in the approaches and what they mean

The pros and cons of the two approaches

Any common themes or recommendations they would make about incorporating social change work into social services

Closing and Evaluation 10 min

Ask people to share:

Something they learned, or a moment in the discussion that surprised them.

One thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation.

Close the discussion and thank people for their participation.

THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE WORKSHEET

MISSION STATEMENT:

Theory of Change (Logic Model)	Theory of Social Change
Assessment of Individual Needs:	**Root Causes of Community Needs:**
Service Goals and Activities: *(to address Individual Needs listed above)*	**Social Change Goals and Strategies:** *(to address Community Needs listed above)*
Resources Needed: *(i.e. contracts, billable hours, specialized staff skills)*	**Resource Opportunities:** *(i.e. partnerships, staff development, community leadership)*
Service Provision Metrics:	**Community Impacts:**

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND USES

There are many different approaches to creating logic models. If you'd like to explore one way to set up impact goals and measurements of success, take a look at the guide put out by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation at http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide.aspx. Chapter 3 is particularly useful.

Additionally, if you'd like to spend more time examining the root causes of the problems staff and clients face in their daily lives ("Root Causes of Community Needs" box in the Theory of Social Change worksheet), you can check out the Root Cause analysis tool on our website at www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Root_Cause_Analysis.pdf.

Finally, for deeper work around how your programs respond to both the sources of these causes as well as the symptoms, you can use the Causes and Consequences tool on our website at www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Causes_or_Consequences.pdf.

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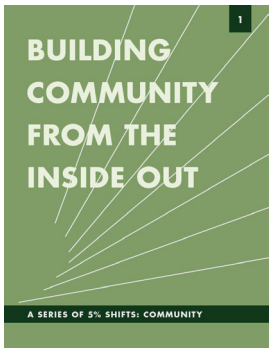
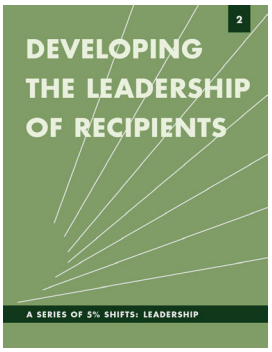
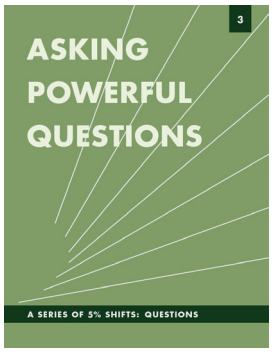
OTHER REPORTS IN THIS SERIES

For over a decade, Building Movement Project has been advancing the potential for nonprofit organizations to have an impact in building movements for progressive social change. In our Service and Social Change work, we help develop the capacity of social service organizations to engage constituents in changing the systems that impact them. Our 5% Shifts Series focuses on small organizational shifts agencies can make that lead to big impacts within the communities they serve.

Download these reports and other resources at www.buildingmovement.org







If you liked the tools compiled in these reports, go to www.buildingmovement.org and click on the "Tools" tab for similar resources to download and use.

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