

# NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

## LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

### CULTURALLY-BASED CAPACITY BUILDING

NCDI understands that individuals, organizations and communities experience the world through the lens of culture and that the cultural lens has multiple and diverse dimensions. NCDI defines “culturally-based” capacity building as providing transformational technical assistance and training services for individuals, organizations and communities in their unique cultural contexts based on knowledge, experience and sensitivity to the issues of race/ethnicity, language, gender, sexual identity, socio-economic status, age and religion. Our work is guided by this particular perspective that shapes and informs how we engage communities, how we facilitate the process of social transformation, and how we leave community members with the resources and tools to continue their own processes of growth and development.

NCDI has developed the following core principles for providing culturally-based services in communities of color:

- ❖ We are conscious of the cultural dynamics in diverse organizational and community settings;
- ❖ We listen and show profound respect for the community’s voice;
- ❖ We function as enablers/facilitators/resources/co-creators with the community;
- ❖ We help build the capacity for individuals, organizations, and communities to engage in their own cultural self-assessment;
- ❖ We help communities to think globally, to see the big picture;
- ❖ We identify, document, synthesize and transfer knowledge about lessons learned and return it to the community, because it belongs to them; and
- ❖ We incorporate the lessons learned into our own institutional practices so that we continue to grow.

When the capacity-building process is culturally-based, the technical assistance process has the following distinguishing features:

- ***The values are different.***
  - Honoring assets, respecting differences, and listening to the community voice
- ***The role is different.***
  - Not an expert, but an enabler/facilitator/resource
- ***The strategic approach is different.***
  - *Funder Focus:* Project results based on theory of change and results-based accountability
  - *Community Focus:* Social change through civic engagement, infrastructure development, cross-cultural relationship building, community development, organizing and advocacy for institutional change, and community research and evaluation.

- *The terms of engagement are different.*
  - The contracting process is different
  - The diagnosis is different
  - The training and selection of consultants is different
  - The gatherings/meetings are different
  - The facilitation process is different
  - The tools are different
  - The products are different
  - The follow-up is different
  
- *The desired outcomes are different.*
  - From effective project management to building sustainable organizations
  - From measurement indicators to capacity building for social change
  - From project impact to community transformation

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE  
SUMMARY OF CULTURALLY-BASED CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACH**

	<b>WE WORK FROM THE COMMUNITY</b>	<b>WE WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY</b>	<b>WE WORK TO INFORM COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>WE WORK TO CHANGE COMMUNITIES</b>
<b><i>Operating Principles</i></b>	We honor indigenous wisdom and value community assets.	We share power and form equal partnerships.	We learn new ways to address old problems.	We use indigenous knowledge to change communities.
<b><i>Core Beliefs</i></b>	People have a wealth of knowledge/expertise and the potential to change communities.	Community residents must define the social change strategy and capacity-building plan.	Continuous learning is essential for dynamic social change.	Community change occurs when there is vision, leadership, organization and a dynamic spirit.
<b><i>Key Strategy</i></b>	We empower people, organizations and communities to be agents of their own change process.	We co-design and customize the capacity-building process.	We focus on the root causes of problems, not the current crisis or short-term issues.	We develop local leadership and effective organizations with the capacity to build capacity for social change.
<b><i>Basic Approach</i></b>	We listen to and learn from our clients. We value and are guided by indigenous knowledge in our work with communities.	We perform a cultural assessment, conduct asset inventories and co-author the design and implementation processes.	We are co-learners with our clients. We create learning partnerships to inform our analysis and our actions.	We develop management and leadership capacities, then organizational change capacities, and then community transformation capacities.
<b><i>Key Challenges</i></b>	Communities have a history of being marginalized. Valuing indigenous knowledge and self-responsibility are not the norm.	Communities view the NCDI team as “the expert”. They lack confidence in their ability to chart their own destiny.	Communities lack experience in results-based program planning and data management systems.	Communities want “quick fix” solutions to problems. They often lack or do not sustain interest in long-term social change initiatives.
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**NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE  
BCSC “WAYS OF WORKING” SUMMARY**

<b>CORE PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>WAYS OF WORKING</b>	<b>THE SELF THAT ONE BRINGS TO THE WORK</b>
We work from the community by listening and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and learn from community voices</li> <li>• Gather information from multiple community sources</li> <li>• Build trust with community members</li> <li>• Use project teams who understand the cultural norms in communities</li> <li>• Leave personal assumptions and biases at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be humble</li> <li>• Have an open heart and an open mind</li> </ul>
We work with the community by co-designing the change strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work as a peer, not as an expert</li> <li>• Be community-driven</li> <li>• Form genuine partnerships</li> <li>• Co-design the social change process</li> <li>• Adapt methods based on changing community needs</li> <li>• Be mindful of race, class and power dynamics at play in every organization and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put the community first rather than yourself</li> <li>• Be transparent</li> </ul>
We work in the community by facilitating action and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop core strategies and action plans with the community</li> <li>• Develop a learning agenda with the community and promote continuous learning</li> <li>• Collect and share information on best practices</li> <li>• Utilize peer learning techniques</li> <li>• Document and disseminate information on a regular basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a co-learner in the capacity-building process and be willing to learn from mistakes</li> <li>• Be the best community servant possible</li> </ul>
We work for the community to build capacity for social transformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote diverse participation</li> <li>• Develop a shared vision and common goals</li> <li>• Develop results-oriented community plans</li> <li>• Focus on building capacity in six areas: informing/engaging people, strengthening organizations, building cross-cultural relationships, improving conditions, advocating for policy change and documenting/telling the community’s story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a neutral facilitator and a people connector</li> <li>• Practice tough love... challenge people to do the right thing</li> </ul>

<b>NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE BCSC STANDARDS OF PRACTICE</b>
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1. **Listen and learn.** Deep and true listening is an attitude that is fundamentally driven by the belief that there is much to learn from community voices. Listening as an attitude comes from the heart, by caring, respecting and honoring the stories that are being shared.
2. **Allow residents to lead.** Residents have the basic right to decide. They must define their own goals, develop their own plans and make their own decisions about the future direction of their community.
3. **Allow organizational leaders to lead.** The primary role of the consultant team is to assist key stakeholders to develop a broad consensus and dynamic strategy for resolving problems and achieving their organizational and community goals.
4. **Develop authentic partnerships that include honesty and communication.** This is the foundation of trust which in turn enables change.
5. **Know your own culture.** Knowing one's own culture and respecting differences go hand in hand as important steps against judging others from one's own limited frame of reference.
6. **Respect differences.** Build bridges across racial and cultural identity groups in the community by addressing and celebrating our cultural differences.
7. **Learn and respect our community partner's history.** The histories of communities of color have been misrepresented, misappropriated, exploited and denied. Make the space for community leaders to share their stories.
8. **Encourage participation.** Be sensitive to different modes of communication and different personality styles. Create spaces for community voices and allow everyone to take responsibility for his or her own learning.
9. **Collaborate with the client at all levels.** The consultant is not the problem-solver. The client's voice, perspectives, timing and insights are crucial to the learning process and to sustaining the community change work.
10. **Develop institutional capacity.** Institutional capacity is necessary for long-term, sustained success.
11. **Respect client confidentiality.** Honor the trust that the client places in you.
12. **Be transparent about how we work.** Maintain trust through clear and open communication.

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE  
HOW CULTURALLY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING IS DIFFERENT  
JULY, 2003**

**Capacity Building Matters**

- The prevailing paradigms don't work
  - Funding single projects does not result in sustainable community development
  - A theory of change, logic model and result-oriented project design do not get you to the promised land.

**What is Culturally-Based Capacity Building**

- the values are different
  - honoring assets
  - respecting differences
  - listening to the community voice
- the philosophy is different
  - not an expert, but an enabler/facilitator/resource
- the theory of change is different
  - focus on the forest, not the trees
  - focus on community transformation, not project implementation
- the strategic approach is different
  - funder approach
    - theory of change
    - results oriented/outcome focused program design
    - project impact
    - research and evaluation
  - community approach
    - Cultural Equity
    - Cross-Cultural Bridge Building
    - Capacity-Building
    - Civic engagement
    - Community Change
- the terms of engagement are different
  - the process for establishing a relationship is different (e.g., planning committee)
  - the diagnosis is different
  - the preparation of consultants is different
  - the processes and tools that are used
  - the products that are created (to be defined)
  - the follow-up that occurs (to be defined)
- the outcome is different
  - not just measurement indicators, but enduring relationships
  - not just project management/accountability, but capacity building for social change
  - not just project impact, but community transformation
  - not just short-term investments, but leaving something on the ground

## VALUES

- the values are different
  - Value the unique assets of residents, organizations and communities;
  - Honor cultural differences and promote cultural diversity;
  - Be client-driven and responsive to the communities that we serve;
  - Provide reliable and beneficial services to each client organization; and
  - Listen to the authentic voices of our clients, peers and partners in the field.

## PHILOSOPHY

- the philosophy is different
  - The key to rebuilding *our* communities is developing stable institutions with the capacity to solve human problems – i.e., institutions with visionary leadership, a coherent strategic plan, functional management systems and effective community organizing strategies.
  - Community-based organizations can assume a pivotal role in the neighborhood revitalization process if they are provided culturally and linguistically appropriate technical assistance and training services geared toward their unique challenges and special needs.
  - The primary responsibility for addressing organizational and community development issues rests with the board, staff and constituents of an organization...*not with the consultant team.*
  - Working together, the board, staff and constituents of an organization can identify and effectively address key issues through a collaborative planning and problem-solving process.
  - The primary roles of the consultant team are to 1) assist organizations to develop a broad consensus and dynamic strategy for resolving problems and achieving their institutional and community goals and (2) to serve as an enabler, facilitator, motivator and resource for organizations engaged in community-building work.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

- the theory of change is different

LEVELS	ACTIVITIES
<b>Phase I</b>	
1. Inform communities, funders and the community building field about NCDI, its strategy and its work	Marketing including Website Publications Dialogues
2. define culturally-based, customized, capacity-building program for targeted communities focusing on three levels: individuals, organizations and communities	Orientation Assessment Negotiations Contracting
<b>Phase II</b>	
3. Organize and convene constituent groups to develop a comprehensive, results-oriented, outcome-focused community plan	Organizing Orientation Convening Training
4. Assess organizational infrastructure and develop culturally-based, customized technical assistance and training program focusing on three levels: individuals, organizations and collaboratives/networks	Assessment Technical assistance Training Project assessment
<b>Phase III</b>	
5. <i>Implement community plan to change existing conditions focusing on</i> <u>Funders</u> - Theory of change - Project management/ accountability - Project Impact - Research and evaluation <u>Community</u> - Cultural Equity - Cross-Cultural Bridge Building - Capacity-Building - Civic engagement - Community Change	Project assessment Relationship-building Technical assistance Training
6. Implement technical assistance and training program focusing on three levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing/engaging individuals</li> <li>• Strengthening organizations</li> <li>• Building collaboratives/networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship building, TA, Training &amp; Project assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Phase IV</b>	•
7. Develop and implement a sustainability plan to leave infrastructure and capacity on the ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship building, TA, Training &amp; Project assessment</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

- the strategic approach is different (i.e., BCSC Model with four phases)
  1. *Strengthening Community through Institutional Development*
  2. *Planning Community through Visioning and Strategy Development*
  3. *Building Community through Constituent-Driven Community Renewal*

4. *Sustaining Community through Comprehensive Community Development*

**TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT**

- the terms of engagement are different
  - the preparation is different
    - interfacing with environment
    - preparation of consultants
    - selection of tools/process that is culturally-based
    - strategy for leaving capacity on the ground
    - follow-up to sustain institutional capacity
  - the diagnosis is different
    - creating planning team
    - review history and cultural elements (listening project)
    - engage planning group in dialogue to define approach for overall organizational effect (done with them... not to them)
    - create TA team that is technically and culturally appropriate
  - the preparation of consultants is different
    - PDC training in culturally diverse team environment
    - exposed to variety of culturally tailored tools
    - critical thinking and self-reflection tools
    - continued professional development and best practices
    - access to culturally relevant resources and information
  - the processes and tools that are used
    - tailored to group's history and culture
    - group's history and culture are used as a tool
    - geared toward social transformation
    - geared toward holistic systemic analysis
    - designed and delivered to maximize knowledge transfer and control over the change process (focus is on knowledge transfer rather than self)
  - the products that are created (to be defined)
  - the follow-up that occurs (to be defined)

**OUTCOMES**

- the outcome is different
  - There are strong, healthy, resilient communities of color with the leadership, infrastructure and constituent base to effect social change, shape public policy and influence the political economy in an increasingly diverse society.