



# Providing Technical Assistance To Build Organizational Capacity



LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE COLORADO TRUST'S SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

**family**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE COLORADO TRUST

**THE MISSION OF THE COLORADO TRUST  
IS TO ADVANCE THE HEALTH AND  
WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF COLORADO**

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# PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE COLORADO TRUST'S  
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# THE COLORADO TRUST'S

## SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

### MISSION

The mission of the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative is to improve the mental health and cultural adjustment of immigrants and refugees living in Colorado.

### VALUES

The Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative integrates the following values into all of its activities:

- Immigrants are assets: Recognize that immigrants and refugees contribute to society through economics, strong family values and cultural richness.
- Cultural competency: Understand, accept, value and honor the unique cultural attributes of people from across the globe.
- Organizational development: Recognize that organizations serving immigrants and refugees need assistance in becoming stronger in their own internal functions, in outreach to immigrant families, in relating to the broader community and in sustaining their programs.
- Networking: Provide immigrant-serving organizations with beneficial opportunities to network with each other to learn from one another's successes and mistakes, and for mutual support.
- Evaluation: Learn more about immigrant and refugee needs and which approaches to learning do and do not work with populations.
- Communication: Share our knowledge about immigrants and refugees with the broader Colorado community.
- Integration: Recognize that while it is important for immigrants not to lose their own cultural identity, it is also critical for them to be full participants in Colorado communities.

### GOALS

**Goal 1:** To provide organizations across Colorado with funding and guidance that substantially promotes their ability to implement effective direct and indirect mental health services for immigrants and refugees.

**Goal 2:** To encourage the coordination of services which promote the mental health of immigrants and refugees directly and indirectly through increased collaboration between agencies and enhanced referral capabilities.

**Goal 3:** To strengthen organizations that serve the mental health and cultural adjustment needs of immigrants and refugees by improving their capacity in arenas such as board development, staff recruitment and retention, conflict resolution, cultural responsiveness and other key areas.

**Goal 4:** To enhance the ability of Colorado organizations to respond to the needs of new and emerging immigrant and refugee populations in timely and effective ways.

**Goal 5:** To create strategies for sustaining effective programs that enhance the mental well-being of immigrants and refugees.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado Trust's \$7.4 million, five-year (2000-2005) Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative (SIRFI) is focused on supporting the mental health and cultural adjustment of immigrants and refugees in Colorado. Twenty-three diverse, immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations statewide serve as SIRFI grantees focused on carrying out these goals.

The Colorado Trust has a long history of providing for and encouraging the use of technical assistance to grantees under many of its initiatives. Lessons learned through the challenges and successes of these past experiences provided instruction as to how to craft technical assistance for the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative.

The technical assistance component of this effort is managed by the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, which also serves as the overall coordinating agency for the initiative. As such, Spring's role is both to assist The Trust in the design and management of the initiative and to provide for technical assistance and capacity building tailored to each grantee organization's needs. The goal of such technical assistance is to help strengthen the ability of service agencies to address current and emerging needs of immigrants and refugees; to encourage coordination, collaboration and referrals among service providers; and to work toward improving services that can be sustained over time.

The Trust provides technical assistance to SIRFI grantees through the Spring Institute and funds it with a separate pool of money from that budgeted for direct grantmaking. In this way, grantees are not put in the awkward position of receiving technical assistance directly from a funder, nor of having to "spend" part of their project funding on technical assistance.

The Spring Institute has the responsibility to assist grantees in choosing and overseeing their technical assistance providers. Grantees select independent lead consultants, known as project consultants, from among a pool of candidates picked by Spring's project director in consultation with the grantee. In this way, Spring is directly involved in assessing technical assistance needs, but in most cases does not provide technical assistance itself. Once chosen, the project consultants help grantees determine their technical assistance needs, locate technical assistance resources (when the needs are outside their own expertise) and generally make themselves available to guide the delivery of technical assistance services, resolving any problems that occur along the way.

The process by which SIRFI technical assistance needs have been identified is for:

- The grantees to each select and orient technical assistance providers, chosen from among a pool of candidates picked by the Spring Institute in consultation with each grantee organization
- The project consultants (technical assistance providers) to develop relationships with the grantees and provide clarity about roles and opportunities
- The project consultants to determine the grantees' organizational needs using an organizational assessment process tool.

The technical assistance services or needs most frequently identified by the 23 SIRFI grantee organizations are:

1. Organizational assessment (17)
2. Fundraising and sustainability (14)
3. Public outreach and awareness (13)
4. Board development (13)
5. Program evaluation (12)
6. Strategic planning (12)
7. Collaboration with other community organizations (10)
8. Enhancing program quality (10).

Some of the lessons learned in providing technical assistance to SIRFI grantees include:

- An organizational assessment helps to identify technical assistance needs that might take strategic priority. In prioritizing the grantees' needs for various kinds of capacity building, it is significant that "big picture" issues like strategic planning, board development and sustainability take precedence over programmatic technical assistance.
- By systematically identifying technical assistance needs early on, there is an increased possibility of meeting those needs more efficiently and effectively through joint trainings provided to multiple grantees.
- Providing culturally competent technical assistance is critical. Some of the lessons learned in this regard are:
  - The desirability of language competence. If the project consultant serving the grantee speaks the language of the immigrant population it makes delivery of technical assistance easier and understanding of cultural norms less of an issue. However, limiting technical assistance resources to those with language proficiency can make it difficult to find the right technical expertise.
  - Individuals with previous knowledge of a refugee or immigrant community are in a better position to offer culturally competent services. Previous knowledge allows them to know the power dynamics within a community that can be a stumbling block for the uninformed. However, when a project consultant is also a member of the community he or she serves, the project consultant might not be seen as neutral.
  - There is no substitute for increasing the project consultant's familiarity with the community and enhancing his or her relationships via informal interaction with community members outside the venue of the organization's office.
  - Absent experience in a particular culture, project consultants who have a greater breadth and depth of inter-cultural experience tend to be more effective.
  - The relationships that seem to work best are those in which the project consultant and the grantee organization develop a mutual interest in learning from each other.



# OVERVIEW OF THE COLORADO TRUST'S SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

## INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Trust is a grantmaking foundation dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of the people of Colorado. The Trust created the five-year, \$7.4 million Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative (SIRFI) in 2000 to address the mental health and acculturation needs facing the rising numbers of immigrants and refugees in Colorado. By taking a broad view of mental health, this initiative was developed to provide nonprofit agencies and organizations with funding over a three-year period to carry out programs designed to help immigrants and refugees positively adjust to living in Colorado. The types of programs eligible for funding include: therapy, counseling, parenting classes, English as a Second Language classes focusing on cultural adjustment, and support groups. Funding grants average \$50,000 to \$75,000 per year and are based on a plan of activities developed individually by each agency. Additionally, technical assistance – the focus of this report – is provided to build the organizational capacity of the grantee organizations.

Through a competitive request for proposal process, The Colorado Trust awarded 11 grants to immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations in 2001, and 12 additional grants in 2002. The Trust wanted to fund a diverse set of programs, and selected 23 grantee agencies that vary considerably in location (urban and rural), experience (some agencies were created recently, others have been in existence for decades), size (some organizations have several locales and large budgets, others are smaller with minimal staff), focus (a few work exclusively with refugees, the majority with immigrants) and strategy (some offer more traditional mental health programming, others serve mental health needs more indirectly). Although the agencies serve a number of ethnic and linguistic groups, including Hmong from Laos, Vietnamese, Q'anjob'al Mayan from Guatemala, Bosnian, Russian, Arabic-speaking north Africans, Amharic-speaking Ethiopians, Koreans and others, the vast majority are Spanish-speaking Mexicans.

The technical assistance component of this effort is managed by the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, which also serves as the overall coordinating agency for the initiative. As such, Spring's role is both to assist The Trust in the design and management of the initiative and to provide for technical assistance and capacity building tailored to each grantee organization's needs. The goal of such technical assistance is to help strengthen the ability of service agencies to address current and emerging needs of immigrants and refugees; to encourage coordination, collaboration and referrals among service providers; and to work toward improving services that can be sustained over time.

## COORDINATING AGENCY

The Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning is a nonprofit training and consulting organization dedicated to demonstrating that national, cultural and ethnic differences need not be barriers to understanding and cooperation. It has operated programs for refugees, immigrants and other limited-English-proficient adults and youth for more than 20 years. In providing technical assistance regionally, nationally and internationally, Spring aims to deliver services that are determined in close consultation and partnership with its clients.

## GRANTEES AND POPULATIONS SERVED

The 23 SIRFI grantees are profiled below according to various characteristics, including the legal status of the populations they serve, their clients' primary countries of origin, the types of direct and indirect mental health programs they offer and other characteristics. (See Appendix A for a full listing of the SIRFI grantee organizations.)

### LEGAL STATUS OF POPULATIONS SERVED

The target population for SIRFI includes immigrants, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers (including asylees) residing in Colorado. Definitions of these categories are as follows:

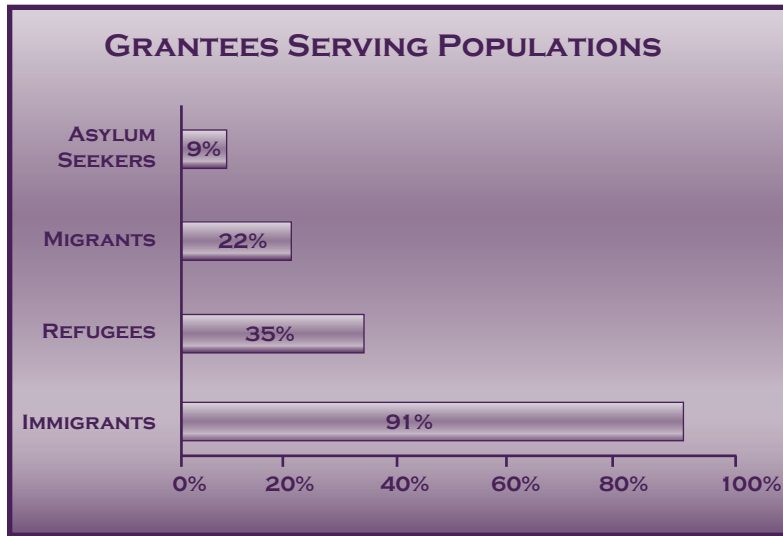
- **Immigrant** – According to U.S. law, an immigrant is a foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the United States as a lawful permanent resident. An undocumented immigrant is a person who is present in the United States without the permission of the U.S. government. Undocumented immigrants enter the U.S. either illegally, or with a temporary visa, and then remain in the U.S. beyond the expiration date of that visa.
- **Migrant** – The term “migrant” is typically used to describe a seasonal farm worker who migrates into the U.S. to work during the growing season and often returns home during each year. However, this definition has recently been expanded to include individuals who may work in construction, the hospitality industry and other sectors.
- **Refugee** – A refugee is a person who has fled his or her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.
- **Asylum Seeker** – An asylum seeker is an individual in the United States or at a port of entry who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Such an individual may apply for asylum in the United States and, if granted, the person is called an “asylee.”

SIRFI grantees include organizations serving all of these categories. Table 1 summarizes the primary focus for the 23 grantees, and Chart 1 indicates what percentage of the grantees serve each population type within their primary focus.

**TABLE 1**

PRIMARY POPULATION FOCUS OF SIRFI GRANTEES		
Primarily Immigrants	10	44%
Immigrants & (Agricultural) Migrant Workers	5	22%
Refugees & Immigrants	5	22%
Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers	1	4%
Primarily Refugees	1	4%
Refugees & Asylum Seekers	1	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

**CHART 1**



Within the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, the client population of grantees is typically referred to as “immigrants and refugees” for simplicity, even though a small portion of those served are actually migrants or asylum seekers.

### **CLIENTS’ COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN**

Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Colorado come from a broad array of countries. The numbers of new arrivals from different cultural/linguistic groups tend to vary over time. The largest cultural/linguistic groups being served by SIRFI grantees are as follows, together with the number of grantees who serve them:

- Mexican (16 grantees)
- Central and South American (5 grantees)
- Russian, including Commonwealth of Independent States (3 grantees)
- Bosnian (3 grantees)
- African (3 grantees)
- Middle Eastern (3 grantees)
- Vietnamese (3 grantees)
- Hmong (2 grantees)
- Korean (2 grantees)

### **DIRECT AND INDIRECT MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS**

The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute recognize that there are many factors that contribute to an immigrant or refugee’s mental health. For this initiative, prospective grantees were asked to focus their proposed projects on direct mental health care (e.g., counseling and psychotherapy) or indirect mental health services (e.g., cultural adjustment), recognizing that indirect mental health could be difficult to limit in scope. The Request For Proposals provided the following examples of eligible mental health programs:

- Individual, family and group counseling
- Parenting classes for parents of children of all ages
- English as a Second Language classes – curriculum or activities specific to cultural adjustment or cultural competency

- Social contact, networking and support group opportunities for immigrants or refugees
- Substance abuse prevention
- Domestic violence prevention
- Elder programs
- Youth violence prevention/gang prevention activities
- Teenage pregnancy prevention
- Life skills training/cultural orientation
- Mentoring/peer networks
- Conflict resolution/mediation
- Self-esteem/empowerment.

Among the 23 funded program proposals, seven are classified as direct mental health care, while the remaining 16 are considered to be indirect mental health programs.

### **OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS**

The 23 SIRFI grantees represent a broad range of nonprofit organizations, as reflected below:

- Nine of the grantees are organizations with annual budgets over \$1 million that house the program being funded under SIRFI as one of many. The remaining 14 are smaller, independent nonprofits with budgets under \$1 million and fewer programs.
- Fifteen of the SIRFI grantees are “grassroots” organizations with close ties to the communities where their target populations come from. Of these, two are mutual assistance associations – grassroots membership organizations of immigrants sharing a common birthplace.
- Four of the grantees are part of a national or statewide “umbrella” organization. Even so, these grant applications were written independently by the local office, which usually operates with significant autonomy.
- Grantees are distributed among five geographic regions within Colorado: twelve of the grantees are located in the metropolitan Denver area, while the rest come from smaller cities and rural areas across the state.
- SIRFI grantees represent a continuum of organizational stages of development, from “emerging” (typically newer) organizations to “sophisticated” (typically more mature) ones.
- A range of culturally and linguistically distinct populations across the state can be found among SIRFI grantees. Primary language groups being served by grantees include: Spanish, Kanjobal (Q’anjob’al), Hmong, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Russian, Korean, Arabic, Somali and Amharic.
- While a demonstrated level of cultural competence by potential grantee organizations was a requirement for funding, fewer than half of the organizations involved are headed by individuals from the target culture(s); however, the majority of these organizations employ bilingual and bicultural staff members.

# THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MODEL AND PHILOSOPHY

The Colorado Trust has a long history of providing for and encouraging the use of technical assistance to grantees under many of its initiatives. Lessons learned through the challenges and successes of these past experiences provided instruction as to how to craft technical assistance for The Colorado Trust's Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative.

The Colorado Trust contracted with the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning to develop and implement a process for delivering technical assistance. The Colorado Trust provides technical assistance through an intermediary organization, the Spring Institute, and funds it with a separate pool of money from that budgeted for direct grantmaking. In this way, grantees are not put in the awkward position of receiving technical assistance directly from a funder, nor of having to "spend" part of their project funding on technical assistance.

The Spring Institute has the responsibility to assist grantees in choosing and overseeing their technical assistance providers. In each case, grantees selected an independent lead consultant, known as the project consultant, from among a pool of candidates picked by Spring's project director in consultation with the grantee. In this way, Spring is directly involved in assessing technical assistance needs, but in most cases does not provide technical assistance itself. Once chosen, the project consultants help grantees determine their technical assistance needs, locate technical assistance resources (when the needs are outside their own expertise) and generally make themselves available to guide the delivery of technical assistance services, resolving any problems that occur along the way. After the initial selection of project consultants, the role of the Spring Institute as an intermediary varies, but includes oversight to ensure grantee satisfaction and assistance in identifying appropriate technical assistance resources and making referrals to possible providers.

The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute use the term technical assistance to mean: organizational development, content-based (or discipline specific) consulting, leadership development, institutional strengthening, management assistance or capacity building. Thus, it is much broader than technical assistance directly relevant to the funded program of the grantee. The aim is to develop the overall strength of the grantee organizations, focusing on the inner workings of the organizations, thereby making them more effective and ultimately better able to serve those they are funded to serve.

Some key elements of the technical assistance philosophy developed by The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute are as follows:

- **Partnership** – The Spring Institute partners with the grantee organization to identify and deliver technical assistance that is most valuable to the organization.
- **Independence** – The project consultant is independent, not a representative of The Colorado Trust or the Spring Institute.
- **Choice** – Each grantee has the ability to choose its project consultant, so that a good relationship is established and trust develops. The Spring Institute's project director assists in this process by identifying candidates who seem to fit the character and needs of the organization, but also considers any project consultant candidates suggested by the grantee.

- **Learning** – Technical assistance is offered in such a way that mutual learning occurs and the capacity of the grantee is increased. Bringing in technical assistance in order to simply provide an “extra hand” to the organization is not the intention.
- **Strength-based** – Grantees and their work are valued and their strengths appreciated, as a foundation for the capacity building, so that grantees need not feel too vulnerable in acknowledging areas where they can improve.
- **Customized** – Technical assistance is not delivered on the one-size-fits all model. Though more expensive, this approach results in more targeted and relevant technical assistance than offering a series of classes.
- **Cooperative** – The Spring Institute also seeks opportunities for grantees to cooperate with one another in receiving or offering technical assistance. Where needs overlap, or where one organization’s needs match another organization’s resources, Spring seeks to match them up, which contributes to both the community capacity and the cost-effectiveness of the technical assistance.

Technical assistance takes many forms, depending on the grantee and the pattern of needs among several grantees. These various forms of technical assistance include:

- **Direct Consultation** – When a consultant works one-on-one with a grantee, be it an individual, a small group or the entire organization.
- **Training** – Provided to a group of staff members at a single grantee organization or, in some cases, to more than one grantee. The latter is done both in customized situations as needs arise and overlap, and during the annual SIRFI conference where a variety of speakers and trainings are offered with the needs of all grantees in mind.
- **Training the Trainers** – Designed to build the capacity of grantee staff, who in turn train community members in specific areas.
- **Resources and Materials** – The Spring Institute maintains an extensive library of resources that is available for use by grantees. Spring also compiles databases on the organizations being served and their capacities, to facilitate partnering with technical assistance providers.

## DELIVERY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The process by which technical assistance has been provided to the SIRFI grantees is outlined below.

### RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The first step is to develop relationships between the project director and the grantees, and to provide clarity about roles and opportunities. This was accomplished in the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative by first scheduling face-to-face meetings between the project director and each grantee within the first six to eight weeks after each grantee was notified that they were to be part of the initiative. During these meetings, the project director had the opportunity to explain:

- The relationship between The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute, emphasizing that Spring’s role is not to play a monitoring role for The Trust
- That The Trust’s intent in providing for technical assistance is to build organizational capacity so that grantees can sustain their efforts over time; the intent is not for grantees to simply use consultants to accomplish work tasks for which there are no other budget options



- That technical assistance is to be custom-tailored for each grantee except that, when appropriate, technical assistance resources can be shared through joint training with other grantees
- That the grantee will be given the opportunity to select a project consultant they feel comfortable working with
- The role of a project consultant
- That grantees will not have to pay for technical assistance out of the grant they received from The Trust
- That each grantee will receive a minimum of 50 days of technical assistance over the three-year grant cycle.

These personal meetings also offer the opportunity for a preliminary discussion of the types of needs for which the grantee might choose to request technical assistance. And, aspects of the organizational culture can be explored with the intention of using that information to profile potential candidates for project consultants.

## **SELECTING AND ORIENTING PROJECT CONSULTANTS**

The next step is to identify potential project consultants and to develop position descriptions for the technical assistance providers. For the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, the potential technical assistance providers were matched to the “profiles” developed by each grantee. The project director then sent each grantee profiles on a minimum of three candidates from which to choose a technical assistance provider. And, if the grantee knew of a person who met the qualifications, that individual was included in the pool. Interviews were conducted by grantees and selections were made and forwarded to the Spring Institute.

An orientation meeting was scheduled for the chosen SIRFI project consultants in order to build rapport, clarify roles and encourage collaboration and networking. During this session, project consultants were:

- Asked to identify their specific skill sets
- Informed as to the degree of freedom each consultant would have for making independent decisions
- Made aware of some of the unique issues they would likely encounter as they worked with organizations serving immigrant and refugee populations
- Encouraged to make site visits early on and to consider voluntary involvement in community events
- Asked to personally provide technical assistance when requests fell within their area of expertise, and to work with the project director to seek other resource people when they could not meet the needs
- Asked to gain an understanding of the organization’s needs and to work with staff to plan the most effective use of technical assistance resources over the three-year funding cycle.

## **DETERMINE ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS**

Based on feedback from project consultants and the inconsistent development among grantees of long-term technical assistance plans during the early stages of this initiative, The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute decided to make organizational assessment a standard part of initiating technical assistance. With this in mind, a user-friendly tool – the Organizational Assessment Process (OAP) (attached as Appendix B) – was developed for use by all project consultants. The

OAP contains instructions, dialogue questions and specific assessment benchmarks for the staff and board members of grantee organizations to use in rating their organizational capacity in different areas. This allows them to compare the benchmarks with their strengths and weaknesses and set priorities for capacity building needs.

The OAP is designed to build relationships among participants in the process as well as a common understanding of the organization's capacities and technical assistance needs. The objectives of the OAP are to:

- Assess the grantee's development in various organizational capacities in order to create an effective technical assistance plan
- Discuss with the grantee – ideally with board and staff members – the organizational strengths and resources that can be leveraged, as well as the needs to be addressed
- Provide a base of understanding from which a relationship can be established between the grantee and the project consultant.

The dialogue questions and assessment benchmarks in the OAP are divided into 10 sections, each covering a different area of organizational capacity:

1. Governance (board)
2. Management
3. Human Resources (staff and volunteers)
4. External Relations (stakeholders), plus a Communications addendum
5. Strategic Planning
6. Financial Resource Management
7. Service Delivery
8. Evaluation and Organizational Learning
9. Community Organizing
10. Coalition Management.

Once the OAP was completed by the grantee organizations, a technical assistance work plan was developed within SIRFI acknowledging that future revisions would likely be needed. The intent of the facilitated process in filling out the OAP is to engage board and staff members of grantee organizations in substantive conversations about strengths and opportunities, and to ensure that project consultants are relatively well informed of the priorities to be addressed through technical assistance.

Finally, this process serves to re-emphasize that project consultants are not expected to do all the consulting and training themselves, but rather to act as conduits to bring in the most qualified resource people to work with grantees in each area of need. This distinction was emphasized frequently to SIRFI grantees, as they tended to develop a strong identification with their project consultants.



## SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

In the broadest terms, the types of SIRFI technical assistance needs fall into three categories:

### PROGRAMMATIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Enhancing program quality
- Preparing to conduct program evaluation
- Conducting program evaluation
- Implementing model programs and best practices
- Developing linguistically and culturally appropriate programming

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

- Organizational assessment
- Fundraising and sustainability
- Board development
- Strategic planning
- Staff hiring and retention
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Financial and budgetary management
- Staff training
- Team building
- Performance evaluation
- Management coaching and development

### COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Public outreach and awareness
- Media relations/communications
- Collaboration with other community organizations
- Outreach to immigrant and refugee populations
- Referrals and follow-up with other organizations.

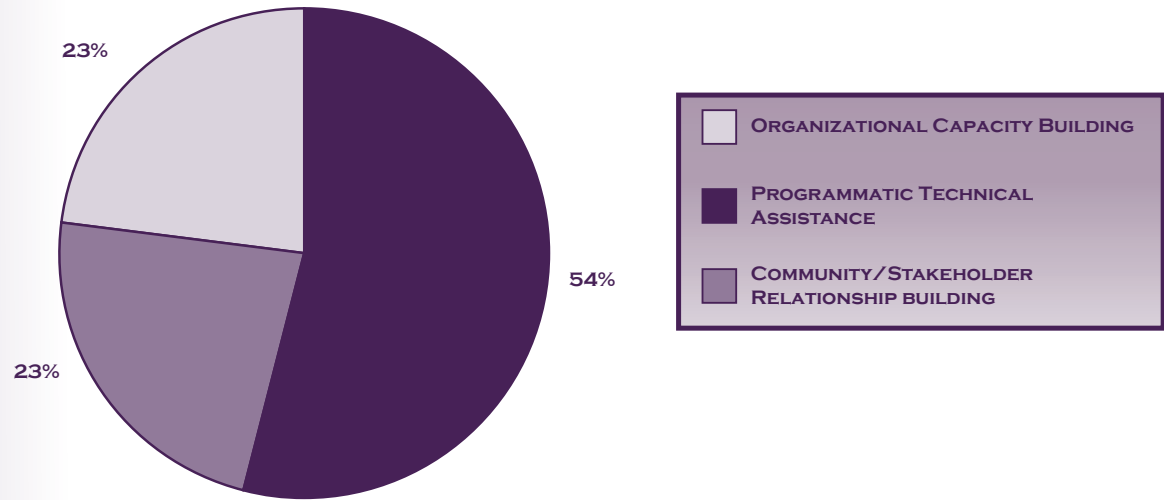
One-and-a-half years into the four-year Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, a survey among the project consultants was conducted to get a sense of the distribution of technical assistance needs already addressed or planned to be addressed with the grantees.

The survey helped to identify 158 unique technical assistance needs among the 23 grantees. Of this total, 94 (nearly 60%) had been addressed, at least in part, by technical assistance already initiated during the first year-and-a-half. Another 76 (almost half) of the technical assistance needs were a part of technical assistance plans for the coming two-and-a-half years. (Together, they exceed 100% because a number of the services initiated were also part of future technical assistance plans.) It is anticipated that additional technical assistance needs will be identified during the remaining grant period, and that will increase the number of unique needs ultimately addressed. Therefore, there is a match between the needs identified by the grantees themselves and the technical assistance already provided, as well as technical assistance planned for the future.

The pie chart below, Typology of Technical Assistance Needs (Chart 2), shows that the identified needs for technical assistance are roughly distributed about one-half in the organizational capacity building category, and about one-quarter each in the programmatic technical assistance and community/stakeholder relationship building categories. It is significant that three-quarters of the identified technical assistance needs are not directly related to programmatic needs. Nevertheless, there is a real benefit in addressing those issues because they can impact the broader goal of increasing the nonprofit sector’s capacity to respond to the new and emerging needs of immigrants and refugees in Colorado.

**CHART 2**

**TYPOLGY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS**



The most frequently identified technical assistance services or needs of SIRFI grantee organizations are:

1. Organizational assessment (17)
2. Fundraising and sustainability (14)
3. Public outreach and awareness (13)
4. Board development (13)
5. Program evaluation (12)
6. Strategic planning (12)
7. Collaboration with other community organizations (10)
8. Enhancing program quality (10).

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

A total of 12 project consultants serve as the coordinators and frequently the providers of technical assistance to the 23 grantees. Each project consultant serves in this role for between one and four grantees. In addition to serving these grantees, project consultants with needed skills are sometimes called upon by other project consultants to serve grantee needs for which they are better suited. There is also a database of some 75 other technical assistance providers whom Spring and the project consultants may invite in to meet specific technical assistance needs. To date, about 40 technical assistance providers — in addition to the project consultants themselves — have provided technical assistance to SIRFI grantees.

Important characteristics for project consultants include:

- Living in geographically diverse areas of the state (e.g., not just the Denver-metro area)
- Significant prior experience consulting with nonprofit organizations and/or previous experience leading such organizations
- Foreign language fluency
- Significant cross-cultural experience.

**TABLE 2**

Table 2 summarizes the areas of expertise that the project consultants specialize in.

Strategic planning	5
Board development	3
Leadership development/coaching	4
Fundraising	2
Community development	7
Collaboration	8
Organizational change and development	6
Public policy development	1
Communications/public speaking	3
Conflict resolution/mediation	5
Evaluation	1
Facilitation	6
Management	6



## LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### LESSONS IN IMPLEMENTING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The experience of implementing a program of technical assistance under SIRFI has produced numerous insights. Some of the lessons that are most significant include:

#### ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

- It is important to clarify roles, especially when using project consultants as “intermediaries” or “liaisons” with grantee organizations. How that role intersects with the role of more specialized technical assistance providers can be somewhat confusing to recipients. At best, the project consultant becomes a good conduit for needed expertise beyond grantees he or she is working with. At worst, there is a tendency to under-utilize technical assistance or become too attached to the project consultant as the provider of all technical assistance.
- The coordinating agent and project consultants should be prepared to address feelings of vulnerability from grantees in response to discussion about areas to improve upon.
- An effective project consultant must develop cultural competence and build trusting relationships in the community where he or she is working. There is no prescription for accomplishing this, but experience has shown that living in the community and attending community events may be beneficial. Understanding the dynamics that affect immigrant and refugee issues is a process of ongoing discovery and must take place outside of the office or training room setting.
- Technical assistance is most likely to be used effectively when the project consultant is successful in “penetrating” the grantee organization beyond the director or primary contact. This can be a difficult task since some managers prefer to define organizational priorities; however, input and buy-in from other staff members and board members may be critical for a feeling of ownership to develop.
- It is important to develop relationships of trust and a sense of appropriate pace when providing technical assistance over a three-year period. The timing of interventions must be done sensitively, recognizing that an organization may be juggling multiple priorities.
- Even while the focus on grantee-initiated technical assistance needs to remain strong, the coordinating agency and project consultants sometimes need to be more assertive in identifying need areas and possible approaches to meeting those needs.

#### PROCESS

- In an initiative where the grantees are so different in terms of their needs, staff resources, sophistication and readiness to utilize technical assistance, it is crucial that the approach to technical assistance delivery be customized and flexible. The coordinating agency needs to develop a systematic plan and timetable for working with grantees, while recognizing that extenuating circumstances will invariably occur.
- The value of up-front organizational assessment, consistently implemented, should not be underestimated.
- It is worth striving to produce a focused technical assistance work plan near the beginning of a funding cycle as it makes planning easier, implementation more likely to occur and enables the coordinating agency to develop a high quality resource pool.
- It may be possible to address overlapping needs with a standardized solution that is customized to each grantee’s needs. A good example is the database that was developed by

a project consultant that assumed a certain similarity of data and evaluation needs of SIRFI grantees. This work could be done once, and the development costs distributed among those grantee organizations that decide to participate. However, no matter how many similarities exist in terms of basic content, a certain amount of customization is needed.

- The benefits of joint trainings, and the opportunity for networking that can grow out of those opportunities, should be promoted.
- The experiences of grantees that have been funded early on in the initiative can accelerate the learning process for grantees that obtain funding in later cycles. The emphasis on networking among grantees can be facilitated by linking specific organizations with similar program objectives. A valuable “mentoring” relationship can be developed and the learning will likely be mutually beneficial.

## **MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

- Regular progress reports from project consultants can significantly assist the initiative management process. Although technical assistance consultants do not have responsibility for monitoring grantee compliance, they are in a unique position to inform members of the initiative management team about developments and changes. Brief progress reports every two months can be useful without putting a great burden on project consultants.
- The development and use of a database for tracking technical assistance activities and contacts can simplify technical assistance management.

## **LESSONS ABOUT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTENT**

In deciding to offer technical assistance that fills the larger bill of agency capacity building, and not just improvement in programmatic skills, The Colorado Trust took a larger view of the potential impact of technical assistance in serving immigrant and refugee families. Below are some of the lessons learned about the content of technical assistance provided.

### **FOCUS ON THE BIG PICTURE FIRST – STRATEGIC IMPACT**

Just as strategic planning can help an organization to focus its resources toward more productive and targeted outcomes, so does an organizational assessment help identify technical assistance needs that might take strategic priority. In prioritizing the grantees’ needs for various kinds of capacity building, it is significant that “big picture” issues like strategic planning, board development and sustainability take precedence over programmatic technical assistance.

One lesson learned in identifying these services is that most of these nonprofit organizations, from the very new to the more mature and sophisticated, typically lack the resources necessary to devote as much priority attention to these matters as their corporate counterparts do. By supporting the strategic development of the organization, its board and its long-term outlook, the capacity for sustainable community impact is multiplied rather than added to, since it may have an effect on all of the agency’s programs. For example, in the case of one organization, this is taking the form of a complete reorganization of the agency’s governance structure, from one suited to its original grassroots nature to one better suited to its current programmatic orientation, which is funded by outside sources.

In the case of another large and complex organization with five major program areas and dozens of individual programs, the refocusing and enlivening of the organization's vision and the introduction of logic modeling into the strategic planning process are providing a basis for the board and management to have an effective dialogue on organizational priorities and sustainability.

A third example is illustrated by a stand-alone nonprofit devoted primarily to the delivery of mental health services and case management. This organization recognized the importance of its external relations, media relations and advocacy efforts as central to its mission. As a result, they are exploring how to mobilize community partners, business contacts and volunteers to increase their reach while minimizing additional demands on staff time that might compromise delivery of their core services.

### **LEVERAGE TRAINING FOR COMMON NEEDS OF MULTIPLE GRANTEES**

Another advantage to systematically identifying grantee technical assistance needs early on is the possibility of meeting those needs more efficiently and effectively through joint training. Because of the overlaps in basic needs among grantees that were discovered, the Spring Institute has experimented with various ways of offering training to meet these common needs.

In one case, two grantees with a similar need to replace lost government funding for their primary program received joint training grant writing from a well-qualified technical assistance provider, which their project consultant also attended. Not only was this type of joint training more economical, but the questions raised by one grantee also helped the other, since both were in similar situations. The benefits continued as the project consultant assisted the grantees in developing "boiler plate" proposals (based on the training) and then customizing these proposals for various funders. And, because of their willingness to share information, the grantee that first completed its model proposal gave a copy to the other grantee to use in its development of a similar proposal. This collaborative effort continued when a third grantee joined with these two grantees and they jointly submitted a federal grant proposal.

Another example is the joint training of the project consultants in "culturally sensitive logic modeling." Early on, logic modeling was identified as a common need for many grantees, with a range of benefits – clarifying desired outcomes, improving the process of strategic planning, writing better proposals and preparing for evaluation. Rather than have one or two project consultants already familiar with logic modeling attempt to consult with a wide variety of grantees, the choice was made to offer the project consultants a common foundation in logic modeling that in turn could be customized by the project consultants to suit their respective grantee situations.

Finally, during The Colorado Trust's annual SIRFI networking conference a range of topics of relevance to the grantees are offered. Well in advance of the 2001 and 2002 conferences, grantees were polled about the areas they would find most relevant. Topics have included such diverse subjects as volunteer program management, board development, diversified fundraising approaches, culturally competent practices, ESL curriculum development, specialized clinical issues, outreach, community partnerships for integration, effective communication and media relations.

## **CUSTOMIZE TRAINING AND CONSULTING**

One of the lessons learned is the need to customize training to the appropriate level, depending on the grantee's stage of development and staff skills. For this reason, it is not always suitable or practical to carry out joint training, even when there are overlaps of needs.

In trainings and facilitations in the areas of fundraising, strategic planning and evaluation, the technical assistance has looked different depending on the grantee's abilities and needs. Even if a project consultant is skilled in these areas, if he or she can't discern the level of the client's current capacity and customize the service to meet them where they are, the training will be of little use. For example, it was necessary to work with one grantee on several fundraising proposals in order to build the skills necessary to help them write strong proposals customized to the requests of an RFP. In the case of other grantees, one training session might have been enough to accomplish a similar result.

Related to this is the need to customize training and facilitation based on the culture (social, geographical and organizational) of the grantee. For example, when to use pencil and paper instruments and when to use interviews in data gathering is a choice affected by these factors. Similarly, how to get the word out about community workshops can be greatly affected by culture. For some cultures the importance of hearing about a workshop from a trusted friend instead of by a flyer is absolutely crucial. Clan structures, such as those that exist among the Hmong, also impact channels of communication.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE VS. HIRED HANDS**

In the case of many grantees, it is tempting to co-opt the opportunity to receive technical assistance into an opportunity to have an extra pair of hands actually doing the work. It has been necessary to guard against this tendency in administering the technical assistance program, so that what is being offered clearly builds the capacity of the grantee for the long-term and doesn't simply supplement their "staff" for a short period of time. For example, an experienced grant writer may have the skills to complete a proposal quickly and efficiently; however, the objective of building capacity is that the consultant ought to work with grantee staff members so that their capabilities will be enhanced as part of the process.

One way this has been handled in the SIRFI effort was to request, in the proposal, affirmation of the grantee's interest in technical assistance and some of their ideas for its utilization. Both in the RFP and later in the contracting phase the purpose of technical assistance was clarified. Even so, it often falls to the project consultant, in consultation with the project director, to discern in each individual scenario what is appropriate and what is not.

Clearly, one should not be rigid or doctrinaire in applying criteria across the board. A degree of judgment must be applied so that certain contributions are allowed which can move an organization forward in a timely manner. The most difficult situations are when an organization consistently perceives its staff to be so overworked that there is no time for capacity building or for personal or professional development.



## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Under The Colorado Trust's Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, grantees receive funding for three years. This makes it possible for grantees to look at the issue of sustainability from a broader and less rushed perspective than the simple need to replace funds on an annual basis. Nonetheless, it's important to look at the issue of sustainability early on. Several of the cycle one SIRFI grantees have been doing just that, and mid-way through the three-year cycle, there is a project consultant-led group effort to create a joint proposal involving several of the grantees that are seeking to continue funding of the SIRFI programs after The Colorado Trust grant ends.

Often, however, sustainability is thought of only in terms of financial resources. One valuable resource on the broader scope of this issue that the Spring Institute shared with both grantees and project consultants was the "Sustainability in Perspective" report from the California Wellness Foundation (see [www.tcdf.org/reflections/2002/feb](http://www.tcdf.org/reflections/2002/feb) for more detail).

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCE LESSONS**

Because of the nature of SIRFI – targeting organizations serving immigrants and refugees – one of the major thrusts of the capacity building arm has been to deliver culturally competent technical assistance. Here are some of the lessons learned in this regard.

### **DESIRABILITY OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCE**

The desirability of language competence is mentioned first only because it is the most obvious, not because it is the most important. In an ideal world, it would be best if all of the project consultants serving the grantees spoke the language of the immigrant population. Certainly, it makes delivery of technical assistance easier and understanding of cultural norms less of an issue. In 10 out of the 23 grantee organizations, the project consultants serving the grantees speak the primary language of the organization's client base and staff; however, this only covers those grantees whose primary language is Spanish or English. Of the 13 other grantees, the project consultants do not speak the native language of the client base, which include Hmong, Vietnamese, middle Eastern/African, Muslim and Latino organizations.

In the case of smaller refugee communities, the trade-off is that limiting technical assistance resources to those with language proficiency can make it difficult to find the right technical expertise. It also can be challenging to find a technical assistance provider considered to be neutral in a cultural community with relatively few people. To mitigate this, The Colorado Trust made known their willingness to bring in technical assistance resources, as needed, from other parts of the country where particular immigrant refugee populations are better represented. In one instance, key staff members from grantee organizations traveled to a city in the Midwest to learn from similar organizations that had greater experience in serving the needs of its target population.

Experience through the SIRFI effort confirms the notion that other factors, in addition to language skills, are equally important in the establishment of cultural competence.

## **VALUE OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEIVED INDEPENDENCE**

Individuals with previous knowledge of a refugee or immigrant community are in a better position to offer culturally competent services. Previous knowledge allows them to know the power dynamics within a community that can be a stumbling block for the uninformed. However, when a project consultant is also a member of the community he or she serves, the project consultant might not be seen as neutral, but rather as a part of that web of power dynamics and coalitions that in some cases inhibit their effectiveness. So, alongside community knowledge, it is important to place the value of perceived independence. In some cases, having a project consultant who is perceived as independent by the organization may be more important than their pre-existing knowledge of the community

## **IMPORTANCE OF “GETTING OUT” INTO THE COMMUNITY**

Regardless of the extent of prior knowledge, there is no substitute for increasing the project consultant's familiarity with the community and enhancing his or her relationships via informal interaction with community members outside the venue of the organization's office. The Colorado Trust and the Spring Institute encourage project consultants to attend social functions within the community they are serving. Those who have done so have generally formed closer relationships with their clients, and they develop a perspective on the community that is not wholly informed by the view of the organization's leaders.

## **INTER-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE KEY**

Absent experience in a particular culture, project consultants who have a greater breadth and depth of inter-cultural experience tend to be more effective. The characteristics of cultural competence that they typically display include curiosity, sensitivity and flexibility. The larger goal of cultural competence is not just to understand the ways of a particular culture, but also to be able to communicate across the cultural divide.

## **CONTINUOUS LEARNING**

The relationships that seem to work best are those in which the project consultant and the grantee develop a mutual interest in learning from each other. Not only does this balance the relationship, but it also builds trust and allows for the systemic interventions in organizational development that would not otherwise be possible. For example, in one case, the project consultant's counsel to the grantee organization to reorganize its board would not have been possible – either for the project consultant to discern the need or for the client to be receptive to the recommendation – without a good relationship and a mutual interest in learning.

## SUMMARY

Providing tailored technical assistance to nonprofit organizations is an effective means to help support individual programs of grantee organizations and, more importantly, to develop the overall organizational strengths for the long-term. The first step in accomplishing this is to carefully pair technical assistance coordinators – or project consultants – with grantee organizations. Once a project coordinator is selected, he or she should first work to establish strong relationships with board and staff members of the grantee organization and then, together, they can systematically identifying organizational needs.

One of the key lessons learned through The Trust’s Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiatives is the importance of using a tool, such as the organizational assessment process, that provides clarity early on as to the critical, overall needs of the grantee organization. After all needs have been uncovered, the project coordinator and the grantee can work together to prioritize programmatic, organizational capacity building, community/stakeholder relationship building and other needs, and to determine how to incorporate new and emerging needs into the technical assistance strategy. Throughout the process, careful consideration should be given to ensure that technical assistance is provided in a culturally competent manner.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **GRANTEES OF THE COLORADO TRUST'S SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE**

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### **A.F. WILLIAMS FAMILY MEDICINE CENTER**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area, Colorado Springs and Grand Junction)*

Assisting refugees with all aspects of health care. The clinic provides the federally mandated health screening for all refugees who arrive in the metropolitan Denver area and offers ongoing health and mental health services, particularly for refugees experiencing a mental health crisis. The center also provides training to other health care providers and agencies that are caring for refugees.

### **ASIAN PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

*(serving El Paso County)*

Providing victim assistance and mental health services in more than 10 different languages. The center also is developing outreach and education programs to eradicate negative community attitudes toward people who need mental health services, and developing further human services resources within the Asian American/Pacific Islander community.

### **ADULT EDUCATION CENTER OF DURANGO/LA PLATA UNITY COALITION**

*(serving the Four Corners region)*

Promoting mental health and cultural adjustment for immigrants in southwestern Colorado. Together, the coalition partners offer outreach services to help immigrants navigate government agencies, a bilingual family literacy program and services to prevent and treat substance abuse. The coalition also assists Latinas who have experienced domestic abuse.

### **BOULDER COUNTY IMMIGRANT COLLABORATIVE**

*(serving Boulder and Weld counties)*

Providing a variety of training programs on immigrant rights, advocacy skills for Latino families, leadership training and institutional change. The collaborative – a joint effort by the Community Development Corporation, El Centro Amistad and El Comité de Longmont – also holds workshops for Latino parents about how the education system works and ways to become better advocates for their children.

### **CATHOLIC CHARITIES NORTHERN**

*(serving the City of Greeley and Weld County)*

Facilitating cultural adjustment, teaching basic coping skills and organizing recreational and leisure activities for low-income Hispanic immigrant and refugee families who primarily work in agriculture. The project focuses on residents of the Amigos de la Comunidad Plaza del Milagro.

### **CATHOLIC CHARITIES PUEBLO**

*(serving Crowley, Otero and Pueblo counties)*

Offering mental health and literacy services to migrant communities. Mental health services focus on family issues, including domestic violence, substance abuse, acculturation, isolation and depression. The organization also offers literacy classes and a women's class.

### **COLORADO WEST REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

*(serving Routt and Moffat counties)*

Identifying and providing services for immigrant and refugee children with possible social and emotional needs, learning issues or cultural adjustment. The center also educates the community about the importance of social and emotional development of young children.

### **CRAWFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER, AURORA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*(serving Aurora)*

Providing outreach, family advocacy, education and support services to immigrant, refugee and migrant families in Aurora who have limited proficiency in English. The center also helps families connect with appropriate health, mental health and human services in their community.

### **ETHNIC COUNSELING/CONSULTATION COMMUNITY OUTREACH SERVICES**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area)*

Helping indigent Latino immigrant families access mental health and related support services to assist them in their acculturation process. The program uses a model that recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong cultural identity while developing English skills, learning about social systems and building culture-specific support systems.

### **FAMILY TIES WEST**

*(serving Montrose, Delta, San Miguel, Ouray, Gunnison and Hinsdale counties)*

Providing classes on parenting skills and English as a Second Language to immigrant and refugee families. To help reduce the stress associated with living in a new culture, the center also offers advocacy and mental health services.

### **FAMILY VISITOR PROGRAM**

*(serving Garfield and Pitkin counties, and the Basalt/El Jebel area of Eagle County)*

Increasing Latino immigrants' ability to access education, health and related human services. The program helps enhance family functioning by improving relationships, support systems, problem-solving skills and mental health. Also, culturally- and linguistically-appropriate parent and child development education resources are available to families.

### **FINDTHEGOOD.ORG/COLORADO MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area, Fort Collins and Colorado Springs)*

Encouraging nonviolent behaviors within immigrant families experiencing the stressors of relocation, language differences and limited income. The Muslim Circles for Family Support develops groups that offer support, resources and a better understanding of nonviolent faith beliefs to participants.

### **FOCUS POINTS FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area)*

Offering bilingual, bicultural family advocacy and support services to Spanish-speaking families with young children. The center's home visitors train parents, staff and neighborhood teachers in children's mental health and behavioral issues and provide mental health counseling to individuals and families.

### **HMONG AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area)*

Promoting greater trust and awareness between health providers and the Hmong community. The association – which includes clans, churches and businesses – also offers mental health training to health care providers and promotes activities in the community that encourage seeking help for acculturation-related mental health problems.

### **JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area)*

Facilitating the psychological adjustment of refugee and immigrant students through school-based, bilingual counseling. The program, offered at South High School and Merrill Middle School, also educates teachers, staff, parents and students on the issues that refugee and immigrant adolescents face.

### **PLAN DE SALUD DEL VALLE, INC.**

*(serving Adams, Boulder, Larimer, Morgan and Weld counties)*

Providing area immigrants with information about mental health services. A network of community and migrant health centers, Salud is working to improve immigrants' access to

mental health services and to address disparities in services. The network offers training and education to both immigrants and mental health care providers.

### **ROCKY MOUNTAIN SURVIVOR'S CENTER**

*(serving Colorado statewide)*

Assisting survivors of torture and war trauma, and their families, to create a new future through counseling and support services. The center also provides training and education to personnel from other agencies that assist torture and war trauma survivors.

### **RURAL COMMUNITIES RESOURCE CENTER**

*(serving Washington and Yuma counties)*

Providing community advocacy to promote positive mental health and cultural adjustment in the immigrant Mexican community. In collaboration with the Federal Rural Health Outreach Grant partners, the center offers leadership development services, peer support and increased access to community resources.

### **SAN LUIS VALLEY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTER**

*(serving Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache counties)*

Providing immigrants with assistance and advocacy services. The Immigrant Resource Center includes education and outreach components and tailors programs to minimize immigrants' isolation and culture shock. New services at the center include an English as a Second Language program and after-school tutoring.

### **SERVICIOS DE LA RAZA, INC.**

*(serving the metropolitan Denver area)*

Providing psychiatric examinations, medication prescriptions and individual and family therapy to Mexican immigrants. The agency also advocates for comprehensive, culturally proficient human services to the Latino and Spanish-speaking communities of metropolitan Denver.

### **ST. MARY'S FAMILY PRACTICE RESIDENCY**

*(serving Mesa County)*

Enhancing immigrant access to mental health counseling and support, and creating educational opportunities for migrant farm workers to further support and improve mental wellness. The program uses promotoras – outreach service workers – to educate the community about available services.

### **SUMMIT COUNTY FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

*(serving Summit County)*

Coordinating family services – particularly mental health services – for Latino immigrants. Through partnerships with other organizations, the center also provides employee/employer mediation, support and advocacy, and offers internship opportunities and a peer support network for immigrant youth.

### **VIETNAMESE ELDERLY ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO**

*(serving Adams, Arapahoe, Denver and Jefferson counties)*

Helping older Vietnamese (55+) adjust to life in the United States and access available services in metro Denver. The association provides refugees and immigrants with social contact, networking, support groups, English as a Second Language classes, life skill training and cultural orientation.



## **APPENDIX B**

# **ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

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**DEVELOPED FOR USE WITH GRANTEEES OF  
THE COLORADO TRUST'S  
SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE**

**BY GURUDEV KHALSA  
FOR  
THE COLORADO TRUST**

## **ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Organizational Assessment Process (OAP) has been designed as a means to engage SIRFI grantees in a participative process of organizational assessment at the beginning of their grant period. It is intended as a foundation for identifying, designing and delivering appropriate technical assistance to the grantee over the life of the SIRFI grant. In itself, it can be a valuable and insightful exercise for the leadership of the grantee to benchmark their organizational capacities and then decide, in consultation with their Project Consultant (PC), where assistance in building those capacities will be most fruitful. If desired, the OAP can also be re-administered at the conclusion of the grant period (or any other time) as a measure of progress and/or to develop new capacity building priorities.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the OAP are as follows:

- To provide an assessment of the grantee's development in various organizational capacities, preparatory to creating a capacity building/technical assistance plan that suits the grantee
- To engage the grantee in a substantive dialogue, ideally with both board and staff members, that highlights the organizational strengths and resources to leverage as well as the needs to address, thus creating a shared appreciation and understanding of the organization
- To offer a foundation of relationship between the grantee and the PC that is mutually respectful and strategically informative, thus enhancing the quality of the capacity building the PC can deliver and/or find appropriate resources to offer

### **TARGET OF THE OAP**

The questions and assessment benchmarks used in the OAP have been written in relation to the organization as a whole. Capacity building funded by The Colorado Trust (TCT) and delivered by The Spring Institute (Spring) and its contracted PCs is not limited to the particular project funded by TCT. However, the grantee may choose at which level it wishes to focus the OAP – for the organization as a whole or for the department or program that houses the SIRFI project. In most cases, the former is anticipated, but large organizations may wish to focus instead on the part of the organization most connected to the grant. In the latter case, adjustments to the questions will be required, as indicated under “Special Considerations.” In the case of coalitions, the OAP can be ideally administered simultaneously for the constituent organizations, if they are all adequately represented, and also address the capacity of “coalition management” together.

### **WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND WHEN?**

The OAP will ideally be conducted within the first three months of the grant period. It should be scheduled for at least one-half day, and as much as a full day, depending on the size and complexity of the organization and the depth of inquiry desired. Ideally, key members of staff as well as a selection of board representatives will attend. Having additional stakeholders present (or surveyed) is also a desirable possibility. The more the board, management, staff and other stakeholders' views are represented, the more valuable will be the dialogue, the relationship building, the learning, and the resulting plans. The details of the timing and design should be coordinated by the PC.

## STRUCTURE OF THE OAP

The OAP has been divided into ten sections, two of which are optional. Each section covers a different category of organizational capacity – the first four relate to different organizational groupings, the next four to key organizational processes, and the last two optional sections to community organizing and coalition building, if these are relevant.

- Governance (board)
- Management
- Human Resources (staff and volunteers)
- External Relations (stakeholders)
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Resource Management
- Service Delivery
- Evaluation and Organizational Learning
- Community Organizing
- Coalition Management

Within each section, there are two parts – dialogue questions and assessment benchmarks. The dialogue questions are intended to engage everyone in a dialogue about the area, giving an opportunity to hear stories of what is working well and to hear different perspectives on what could be improved. Following this dialogue, the assessment benchmarks offer an opportunity for everyone present to participate in rating the current status of the organization relative to a set of standards. The results of these ratings will be compiled by the PC and shown to everyone.

Each section is designed to be approached in sequence, first using the dialogue questions, then rating the organization according to the benchmarks. At least twenty minutes should be planned for each section, and up to 45 minutes if the optional exercises (Dialogue Question B) are used or if the number of participants is large. At the end of the day, when the ratings for all sections have been compiled, at least one-half hour should be set aside to review them in total and use them in a final process to identify priorities for capacity building over the next three years.

This OAP is intended to be flexible and adaptable for use in different ways by PCs and their organizations, as circumstances dictate. However, the following sections outline a recommended procedure as a starting point.

## DIALOGUE QUESTIONS (15-35 MINUTES/SECTION)

There are three dialogue questions for each section. The first (A) is an appreciative question designed to get people telling stories of some of the best aspects of their organization and experiences there. The second (B) is an optional question or interactive exercise that can be used to go a little deeper into that area and to have fun with it. The third question asks participants to review the list of benchmarks in the following part (but not rating them yet) and with the benchmarks as a springboard, identify one change that could make the most difference if the organization moved closer to the ideal. This question is intended to evoke an open dialogue about what the organization could do differently that would add to its effectiveness. This is not a time for debate or decision-making but of listening to different points of view, which will in turn inform the next step of individually rating the organization according to the benchmark statements.

Depending on the size of the group, the PC may choose to do some or all of the questions first in smaller groups, to give everyone a greater chance to speak their views. Of course, if small groups are used, it will be important to at least hear highlights in the whole group before moving on. In general, the optional (B) question is designed to be a full group exercise. Between 15 and 35 minutes should be allotted for the dialogue portion of each section, depending on the size of the group and whether question B is used.

### **ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS (5-10 MINUTES/SECTION)**

The assessment benchmarks are a set of statements intended to evoke elements of an ideal organization in relation to each category of organizational capacity. Once the dialogue for each section is finished, everyone is asked to individually rate the organization in relation to all of the assessment statements for that section. These are then turned in to the PC to be summarized anonymously, with the results posted on a flip chart. The whole process should take only five to 10 minutes, a little more if there are any comments to be made about the results. Return the sheets to the participants, so they will have them to refer to later (if you record the results as people bring them up, this can be done immediately).

### **PRIORITY SETTING (30-60 MINUTES)**

After the dialogue and assessments have been completed for all sections, it is time to review all of the results and set priorities based on what participants feel would be the most important areas in which to target capacity building or technical assistance. Post all of the flipcharted results around the room so everyone can look at them. Invite everyone to do a “gallery walk,” asking themselves the question, “What developments in organizational capacity would make the most difference for our organization?” Just because certain items are rated low does not necessarily mean this is an important issue for a particular organization, so now is the time for discernment in relation to what’s most needed.

After the gallery walk, participants should be invited to make recommendations about what they see as the top organizational priorities for capacity building. These can be summarized on a new flip chart and/or referenced to the item(s) on the flip charted assessment summary from which the recommendation is drawn. After a period of dialogue, participants could be invited to mark (using markers or sticky dots) their top three priorities. This then becomes input to the development of a technical assistance plan. Depending on who needs to be involved in making such decisions, it should be made clear to everyone how this input will be used, by whom, and in what timeframe, to develop such a TA plan.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As mentioned earlier, some organizations may wish to have the focus of their OAP be a part rather than the whole of the organization. In general, most of the questions can be easily adapted by substituting the word “department” or “program” in place of “organization” and the questions will work as is. In the case of governance, if the board has a relationship to that particular program or department, the questions might still be relevant, and can be included if desired, but need not be.

Users might choose to use some portions of the OAP with both board and management/staff, and other parts only with the latter, thus breaking the process into two shorter meetings. Also,

input can be requested in advance from other stakeholders who won't be at the meeting(s), by requesting that they fill out particular sheets, including the ratings and questions A and C.

## CREDITS

The OAP was developed by Gurudev Khalsa (Trilight Development) under contract to the Spring Institute, and revised with input from Karen Ashmore, Dora Lodwick, Christie McElhinney and Rich Wildau. In drafting the OAP, Gurudev made reference to four instruments, and wishes gratefully to acknowledge their authors:

- Diagnostic Checklist, developed by Rich Wildau, Spring Institute (rev. 12/20/00).
- Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT), developed by Richard Holloway (Pact-Zambia) and Zambian NGOs, based on Pact-Ethiopia's OCAT.
- Discussion-Oriented Organizational Self-Assessment (DOSA), developed by Beryl Levinger (Education Development Center) and Evan Bloom (Pact, Inc.). See [www.edc.org/dosa](http://www.edc.org/dosa).
- Collaborative Organizational Assessment Tool (COAT), developed by Sabrina Atwater for use with a Washington DC group of neighborhood collaboratives.

## COPYRIGHT AND MODIFICATIONS

Funding for the development of this OAP was provided by The Colorado Trust, to which I and the Spring Institute are very grateful for their far-sighted support. The Colorado Trust holds the copyright on this material, with the intention of making it readily available to other users. See their contact information below.

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Project Consultants of the Spring Institute are welcome to copy, adapt and modify the OAP to suit the needs of their SIRFI grantees, provided that acknowledgment of the original is made. In the spirit of mutual learning, please share a copy of any modified instrument with the author:

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# ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS (OAP) INTRODUCTORY NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS/RESPONDANTS

Thank you for participating in the Organizational Assessment Process (OAP) for this organization. The OAP is a participative self-assessment process for organizations to use with their boards, management, staff and other stakeholders. In each area of organizational capacity, the OAP invites dialogue about organizational strengths and improvement areas and allows participants to independently rate the organization against a set of benchmarks. The resulting perspective builds a shared understanding of the organization and will be very helpful in developing an appropriate capacity-building plan that leverages strengths while focusing resources on the most important areas for improvement.

If you are participating in a meeting where this instrument is used, instructions will be given by your facilitator.

If you are filling this out on your own, please follow these instructions:

## INSTRUCTIONS

Answer questions A and C for each page provided on the back side of the sheet. Then rate the organization according to each of the statements in the “Assessment Benchmark” section. Each statement describes characteristics of an ideal organization. Rate your organization in terms of how well it matches the ideal described in the statement, from 5 (strongly agree) down to 1 (strongly disagree). Circle the appropriate number for each line. If you do not understand the statement or it does not seem to apply, leave that line blank. If you agree with part of a statement and not with another part, choose a rating in the middle that reflects your response to the statement taken as a whole.

## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

“Stakeholders” refer to anyone with a “stake” or interest in the organization and typically includes board members, staff, volunteers and partner organizations, as well as constituents. “Constituents” (or “constituency”) are those served (or potentially served) by the organization within its mission, its clientele.

## I. GOVERNANCE (BOARD)

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Tell a story about a time when you thought the board functioned especially well. When the board is working at its best, what qualities do you observe?
- B. Optional exercise: Think about all of the skills, talents and resources you wish were present on your board. Make a list of them, and then rate on a scale of 0 to 3 the extent to which they are present in your existing board (0=not at all; 1= minimal; 2=adequate; 3=superb). Consider how the three most desirable missing (or underrepresented) resources might be added, whether via new board members, partners, or other advisors.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective governance. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The board is an independent governing body providing effective oversight to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The board well represents the diverse makeup and interests of the constituency served by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The board makes policy level decisions for the organization and doesn't micromanage operations.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	It is clear what the role of the board is in the organization and how that differs from the role of the staff.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The board and the staff work harmoniously and complement one another's efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The board has an optimal mix of the skills and resources needed to be of most value to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The board works well as a team and makes decisions efficiently that reflect the best wisdom of the group.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Board members are enthusiastically involved in fundraising and external relations.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	All board members set an example by contributing some money as well as time to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The board ensures that the activities and finances of the organization are in line with its policy, including an annual review against goals and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The board conducts an annual evaluation of the executive director and sets goals and objectives with him/her for the coming year.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The board meets regularly and has an effective committee structure to carry out more detailed work in between board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	A board member orientation is conducted for new board members.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	An agenda is planned for all board meetings and adequate minutes are kept of decisions reached.	1	2	3	4	5

## II. MANAGEMENT

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. What do you appreciate most about the management of your organization? When management is at its best, what does it do especially well?
- B. Optional exercise: In pairs or small groups, pick an animal that in some way symbolizes the management of your organization. Taking turns before the whole group, act out the behavior of this animal, until someone guesses it, and then discuss why you picked this animal.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective management practices. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The organizational structure is clear and serves the organization well.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Management empowers staff to take initiative with appropriate guidance.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The organization's plans (including program plans) are consistent with its mission and strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Plans are regularly reviewed by management and adjusted as necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Programs are developed with appropriate input from constituents and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The relationship of programs (and in particular, the one funded here) to the whole organization is clear.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Management exhibits a strong sense of teamwork among its members in leading the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Management has an excellent working relationship with the board.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Meetings of management and/or staff are well-organized, productive and enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Staff feel free to discuss concerns with management and their concerns are dealt with fairly and quickly.	1	2	3	4	5



### III. HUMAN RESOURCES (STAFF & VOLUNTEERS)

#### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Tell a story about something one staff member or volunteer did that makes you proud they work for your organization. What are the greatest strengths of your organization's staff and volunteers?
- B. Optional question: What is the best thing about working for this organization, whether as an employee or a volunteer?
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective human resource practices. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

#### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of organizational mission, program goals, and their specific roles.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Staff have written job descriptions that reflect their actual work.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Staff receive annual performance-based evaluations and set goals and objectives for the coming year.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The organization has an appropriate number of staff with the right mix of skills to achieve its mission.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Staff training is offered routinely that directly contributes to the organization's objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Staff are "culturally competent" to serve the constituencies targeted by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Staff morale is excellent and supported by surfacing and acting upon issues that warrant attention.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The efforts and accomplishments of staff are recognized and appreciation creatively demonstrated.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Staff are encouraged to take initiative and to raise questions, and they regularly do so.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	There are good opportunities for staff to develop as professionals and leaders in this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The level of staff turnover is acceptable, and the reasons why staff leave are well understood.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The organization effectively recruits and retains volunteers for as many tasks as appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Volunteers consider their roles meaningful contributions, and are well qualified for them.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Volunteers are well recognized by the organization and eager to return.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The gender and ethnic diversity of staff and volunteers reflects the community served by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Salaries and benefits paid to employees is consistent with comparable nonprofit organizations.	1	2	3	4	5

## IV. EXTERNAL RELATIONS (STAKEHOLDERS)

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Tell a story about one non-financial contribution from one or more of your stakeholders that has made a real difference for your organization.
- B. Optional exercise: Stakeholder Map. Draw a map of the organization's stakeholders, encouraging everyone to contribute to it, until the group feels it is a complete picture of the full diversity of constituencies interested in, contributing to, and/or affected by the work of the organization. Consider how well each of these stakeholder groups is informed about and involved in the work of the organization.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective external relations. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The organization is well known by its constituency in the community and well respected.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The organization regularly takes time to seek input from its constituency and responds to that input.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Expertise and resources in the community have been identified and are well utilized by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The organization successfully markets itself, ensuring maximum benefit to its targeted constituency.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The organization knows who all of its stakeholders are and understands the diversity of its constituency.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The organization has a relationship of mutual respect with its donors and communicates regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The organization has good relations with the business community, from whom it receives in-kind support.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The organization is known to and respected by the media, enabling good publicity and advocacy.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The organization is well respected by the relevant government agencies, which work well with the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The organization actively works with other nonprofits either for mutual learning or enhanced service.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The organization issues an annual report to stakeholders that encompasses program accomplishments, financial condition, acknowledgment of major donors, and significant changes.	1	2	3	4	5

A note on terminology: "Stakeholders" refer to anyone with a "stake" or interest in the organization and typically includes board members, staff, volunteers, and partner organizations, as well as constituents. "Constituents" (or "constituency") are those served (or potentially served) by the organization within its mission, its clientele.

A critical component of external relations is effective communications. Please address the questions posed in the attached "Addendum of Communications Questions" to more fully understand your communications-related strengths and needs.

## V. STRATEGIC PLANNING

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. What is it about the vision or mission of your organization that excites you the most and makes you want to be part of fulfilling it?
- B. Optional exercise: Imagine it is three years from now. Due to the success of this funded program and others, your organization has risen to a whole new stature in serving your community. Describe how it has changed, what it is doing, what its impact has been and what made this success possible.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective strategic planning. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The organization's mission and vision are current, clear and motivating for all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The organization has a strategic plan that is recent and relevant.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Plans are developed with input from constituents who will be affected and staff who will implement them.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The mission/vision and strategic plans of the organization are shared internally with staff and volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The organization regularly assesses its position in relation to the external environment (e.g., economic conditions, immigration law changes, competing or complementary service providers).	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The organization adheres to its mission and key goals, but also adapts them in response to change as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The relationship of program plans to the organization's strategic plan is clear and consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Management regularly refers to the mission and/or strategic plan in ensuring focus for its activities.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	With limited resources, the organization successfully uses its strategic plan to decide what NOT to do.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Progress against key goals in the strategic plan are regularly monitored and considered.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The balance of time spent in planning vs. implementing is just right in this organization.	1	2	3	4	5

## VI. FINANCIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Over the past couple of years, what financial accomplishment are you most proud of your organization having made (e.g., winning a large new grant, funding a new program, making strategic cuts to balance the budget while maintaining service, instituting new financial control systems, hiring a new director of philanthropy)?
- B. Optional question: In this time of tight financial resources, creativity in fundraising, resource sharing and cost-effective program implementation is essential. Brainstorm ideas that could help in any of these areas – be as wacky as you wish, and list them down. Then give everyone three sticky dots (or pen marks) to vote for the best ones.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective financial practices. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The organization prepares annual budgets and uses them well as a tool for monitoring expenditures.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The accounting systems of the organization are adequate to accurately track and report timely info.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Cash flow is evaluated monthly, generally keeps pace with the budget, and is adjusted as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Year-end financial statements are produced timely (B/S and I/S) and audited if budget is more than \$500,000.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Separate projects have separate accounts and funds are not co-mingled among them.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Financial information is effectively used in planning new projects and developing reliable projections.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The organization's strategic priorities are well reflected in funding allocations.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Effective contingency strategies are in place for revenue shortfalls below anticipated amounts.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The organization has a balanced fund development plan, relying upon a good mix of funding sources.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The organization has the skills needed to identify sources and write successful grants.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The organization is creative in developing earned income opportunities and in-kind donations.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Donors feel well acknowledged by the organization, act as partners and repeat their donations.	1	2	3	4	5

## VII. SERVICE DELIVERY

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Tell a story of providing service to one of your constituents that exemplifies what your organization is best at.
- B. Optional question: Another way of doing more with less is to imagine what value-added could be provided to your constituency at little or no additional cost in the course of providing services you already do. Brainstorm ideas for “little things that make a big difference” you might consider incorporating into your service plan.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective service delivery. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Stakeholders are involved in assessing needs and designing programs/ services that meet those needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Stakeholders are involved in implementing, monitoring and assessing project impact.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	A detailed work plan exists for all projects (and this one in particular) adequate to guide implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The people responsible for service delivery are well qualified and responsive to their clients.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Outreach plans are in place to reach difficult and diverse elements of the organization's target population.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The services provided meet and sometimes exceed the expectations of the organization's clients.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Guidelines are followed in providing services, and appropriate flexibility is also encouraged	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The organization is adaptive to the changing service needs of its constituency.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Relationships with other organizations that support your service delivery are clear and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The services provided by your organization really make a difference in the lives of constituents.	1	2	3	4	5

## VIII. EVALUATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. How do people in your organization learn from each other and from past experiences in order to make the organization more successful in the future?
- B. Optional question: During the course of your time with this organization, share one of your personal highlights of learning, whether as a result of your own actions or watching someone else.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing evaluation and organizational learning. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The organization collects base line information about its constituency before beginning a program.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The organization regularly collects monitoring information on program activities.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The organization gathers both quantitative and qualitative information on the impact of its programs.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Program monitoring and evaluation information is used in reviewing programs and developing new ones.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Program results are regularly communicated to stakeholders and used in advocacy as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	All stakeholder groups (internal and external) have chances to reflect on what's working and what isn't.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Information from the all of the above sources is well used to learn from and brainstorm improvements.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Indicators of impact are carefully chosen to balance the value of the information and cost of collection.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Adequate information systems (hardware and software) exist to efficiently track program information.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The learning climate encourages experimentation and learning from both successes and mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5

## IX. COMMUNITY ORGANIZING (OPTIONAL)

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Think about a time when your organization successfully created an opportunity for the community to come together (especially across ethnic boundaries). What were some of the most important outcomes, what made them possible, and what did you learn in the process?
- B. Optional question: People of different cultures, religions, races and ethnicities are often fearful or mistrustful of one another until they have a chance to know one another and/or work closely together. Imagine it is three years from now and the climate of trust and cooperation among diverse community members has been greatly improved, and your immigrants/refugees feel better understood and integrated in society. How did your organization contribute to this result?
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing aspects of community organizing. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your organization the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Members of the organization actively discover the needs and resources of the community, reaching out and networking with constituents and other groups.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The organization acts effectively as an advocate for its constituency with government and the media.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The organization is successful in mobilizing its constituents to influence the political process as issues arise that would impact them.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The organization regularly creates opportunities for its constituency to come together to celebrate their native culture and maintain linkages with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The organization is active, perhaps in partnership with other organizations, in sponsoring community gatherings across ethnic and cultural lines.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Projects of the organization have input and involvement from diverse segments of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The organization and its constituents are well represented in projects of the broader community.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The board and staff of the organization model good cross-cultural understanding and practice in their work with the community.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Important activities of the organization support cross-cultural encounters and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The organization actively seeks to reach and include the voices least often heard in their community.	1	2	3	4	5

## X. COALITION MANAGEMENT (OPTIONAL)

### DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- A. Tell me a story about a time when you experienced the benefits of working in collaboration with another organization. What made that relationship successful?
- B. Optional exercise: Have coalition members take turns blindfolding someone from another organization, then leading them on a walk around the area, preferably outside. This could be done in pairs or with members of each organization linked in a train and led by members of another organization. Debrief the experience afterward to find out what it was like for people and what it brought up.
- C. Look over the list of statements below describing effective collaboration. What one change in the direction of these ideals do you believe would improve your coalition the most? Why?

### ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

(Circle one per line)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Relationships among coalition members have been actively nourished as a foundation for work together.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	There is a common vision among members of the coalition as to the desired impact of the program.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Coalition members are in agreement about the program goals and primary strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The roles and responsibilities of the coalition members are clear and well documented.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Areas of duplication or potential conflict have been anticipated and/or well resolved as they arise.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The respective resources of coalition members are well leveraged for the benefit of the program.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Regular meetings are scheduled and held to assure the program is on track and all members satisfied.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	There is a spirit of trust among coalition members that makes it possible to work through even thorny issues.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Collaboration among coalition members extends beyond the program itself, evidence of good relations.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The coalition is an exemplar to the community, encouraging other coalitions to form as well.	1	2	3	4	5



The following list of supplemental questions was developed by Christie McElhinney, senior communications officer for The Colorado Trust. For organizations that have or are ready to develop a significant emphasis on external communications, answering these questions can help identify specific capacity building opportunities in this area.

1. Does your organization have a strategic communications plan?
2. Do you have clearly defined mission, vision, values and goals statements for the organization/this initiative?
3. Have you identified key constituents and target audiences for the initiative?  
Who are they?
4. Have you developed core messages for the work of the organization/initiative?  
What are they?
5. Have you identified and trained key spokespeople to meet with media and participate in speaking opportunities? Has your spokesperson (or spokespeople) received media training?
6. Have you identified and capitalized on key speaking opportunities?
7. Do you have materials (website, print, video) to help inform key constituents and the media about your organization/the initiative?
8. Have you identified key media to target for continuous media relations efforts. How do you work with these reporters (e.g., via news releases, phone calls, e-mail, fax, personal meetings, editorial board meetings, other)?
9. How do you typically communicate with your constituents/key audiences? Letters, phone calls, personal meetings, e-mail, newsletter, other (consider rank ordering these).  
How do you prefer to receive communication (same list)?

10. What types of communications work do you most need assistance with?  
(Check all that apply, and rank-order the top three needs.)

- Strategic communications planning
- Determining appropriate audiences for communication efforts
- Media/interview/presentation training
- Developing key messages
- Capturing human-interest stories and lessons learned
- Pitching stories to reporters
- Developing targeted media lists
- Tracking and evaluating media coverage
- Holding editorial board meetings
- Writing op-eds and articles
- Website development/maintenance
- Developing publications
- Producing videos
- Writing
- Editing
- Developing effective marketing strategies
- Carrying out marketing strategies
- Designing communication events (news conference, etc.)
- Other:



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