Building Healthy CBOs

January 15, 2015 By Paul Kawata

This is a guest posted written by The National Minority AIDS Council, Director of Capacity Building Assistance Division, Kim M. Johnson, MD

For decades, **NMAC** has worked within communities of color, targeting community-based organizations, to build healthier communities.
Community-based organizations represent the backbone of the public health sector and play a vital role in eradicating HIV/AIDS. Today, community-based organizations (CBOs) are facing a rapidly changing health care landscape in which they must be able to adapt and change in order to be sustainable and viable. Now more than ever before, the principle of survival of the fittest is paramount.

The public health and health care systems are undergoing a paradigm shift fueled by the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, advancement of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, medicalization of HIV services and biomedical advances. In this rapidly changing landscape, only healthy organizations will survive. Healthy organizations have "the capacity to learn and keep changing over time. They have the ability to align, execute, and renew themselves faster than their competitors can, that is, adapting to the present and shaping the future faster and better than the competition."

In order to improve the viability, sustainability and relevancy of CBOs in this dynamic environment, **NMAC** will provide capacity building assistance that works to build healthy organizations.

Healthy organizations have the following characteristics:

- Organization alignment
- Capacity for execution
- Strategic partnerships
- Capacity for change and renewal
- Market-focused
- Invest in people
- High quality leadership teams

To that end, NMAC's capacity building assistance will work with CBOs to:

Align
the infrastructure and culture within their organizations

Coordinate
strategic collaborations and partnerships

Execute
High Impact Prevention interventions and client-centered services

Equip
CBOs to effectively navigate and lead change

Aligning organization infrastructure and culture

Building on its landmark Organizational Effectiveness Series (OES), a 15 volume set of organizational development manuals, NMAC will develop four new manuals focusing on Strategic Management, Organizational Change Management, Financial planning, and Resource Development and Marketing. Each manual will be in workbook format with web-based interactive components designed to enhance learning.

Creating strategic collaborations and partnerships

Given the changes buffeting the worlds of healthcare and CBOs, we are seeing more serious discussions of partnerships between CBOs and the healthcare sector than ever before. We're not referring here to short-term arrangements between a clinical provider and a social service nonprofit to collaboratively offer a program in response to a specially funded initiative, but rather to healthcare providers formally integrating networks of CBOs into their care delivery systems, and payers viewing CBOs as reimbursable providers of services that were previously the sole purview of clinicians. For partnerships between CBOs and healthcare providers or payers to be successful over the long term, both parties must be clear about their own interests, their assessment of what the other party brings to the table, and why working together is better than going it alone.

NMAC will host a series of consultations for CBOs and healthcare providers to discuss collaboration and partnership options and strategies. While the initial impetus for many of these discussions may be the big environmental shifts noted earlier, the best of the partnerships that ultimately form will be much less about a path to survival for the partnering organizations and more about a way for them to better serve their target beneficiaries. For healthcare providers, these partnerships offer an opportunity to actually improve the health of the individuals and families they serve rather than just treating them when sick, and to do so with a cost-effective approach. For CBOs, these partnerships may allow them to secure more sustainable sources of funding for their work and to scale up and serve far more persons than they might have previously imagined possible.

Executing High Impact Prevention programs and services

Many CBOS work with patient and peer navigators to engage PLWHA. In collaboration with the CDC, AIDS Project LA and the Denver Prevention Training Center, NMAC will host HIV/AIDS Navigation Services trainings. This training program aims to hone the knowledge and skills of navigators in HIV care, as well as provide them with the tools necessary to assist PLWHA in navigating the complexities of HIV care. The training program's format will be a combination of didactic sessions and interactive group exercises, including case studies to translate knowledge gained into courses of action driven by HIV AIDS navigation service protocols.

Equipping CBOs to navigate change

While facing the challenges of navigating the rapidly changing landscape, community-based organizations have a unique opportunity to establish a new niche for themselves by building upon their strengths and assets and learning how to successfully navigate change. Organizational change, however, is inseparable from individual change. NMAC's change management CBA program, focuses on building the capacity of CBO senior and mid-level executive leaders to lead change in their organizations and communities. The Building Leadership for Organizational Change and Sustainability program (BLOCS) and the Main Essentials for Mid-level Executives (MEMLE) program, build the capacity of CBO leaders to improve their change management skills and decision-making processes to effectively manage organizational change in a shifting healthcare environment. The programs offer in-person training, DiSC assessments, executive coaching and access to online change management resources.

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