

Illinois State University

## ISU ReD: Research and eData

---

Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development—Student Research      Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development

---

2016

### A Case Study on Establishing a Community Advisory Board: What Are the Main Challenges?

Erika Perez

Illinois State University, erikaperez1982@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/scced>



Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Perez, Erika, "A Case Study on Establishing a Community Advisory Board: What Are the Main Challenges?" (2016). *Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development—Student Research*. 35.  
<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/scced/35>

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development at ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development—Student Research by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact [ISUReD@ilstu.edu](mailto:ISUReD@ilstu.edu).

## A Case Study on Establishing a Community Advisory Board

---

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES?

Perez, Erika

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY | STEVENSON CENTER, SOCIOLOGY-APPLIED ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT

# **A Case Study on Establishing A Community Advisory Board: What are the Main Challenges?**

Executive Summary.....	3
PART I: INTRODUCTION AND THE AGENCY .....	4
1. Introduction.....	4
2. History of the Organization.....	5
2.1 Creating Client-Centered Services.....	6
PART II. THE LITERATURE.....	7
3. Community-Based Research.....	7
3.1 Community-Based Groups.....	9
3.2 Existing Community Advisory Groups: The Establishment Process.....	11
3.3 Community Organizing Approaches and Effective Outcomes.....	15
3.4 Different Types of Community Organizing.....	19
3.4.a. Congregation-Based Organizing.....	19
3.4.b. Youth Organizing.....	20
3.4.c. Cultural Organizing.....	22
4. Challenges.....	23
PART III. A CASE STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD.....	26
A. Client Ambassador Team.....	26
B. First Meeting: August 2015.....	28
C. September 2015.....	30
D. Meeting with Executive Director.....	30
E. Reflection One.....	31
F. October 2015.....	32
G. Staff Advisor Feedback.....	32
H. Challenges: Creating Structure and Support.....	34
I. November 2015.....	35
J. Lack of Consensus.....	36
K. Reflection Two.....	39
L. Preparing for the Next Meeting.....	40
M. December 2015: Meeting with the Leadership Team.....	40
N. December 2015.....	41
O. February 2016.....	43
P. Last Months.....	44
Q. May 2016.....	45
R. June 2016.....	45
S. Reflection Three.....	47

T. Final Thoughts.....	47
PART IV. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS.....	48
5. Bureaucracy .....	48
6. Lack of a Cohesive Group.....	50
7. Lack of Collaboration Between the Agency and Clients.....	53
References.....	56
Appendices.....	58
Appendix 1-Client Ambassador Team Initiative.....	58
Appendix 2-Feedback Proposal.....	60
Appendix 3-October CAB Meeting Minutes.....	64
Appendix 4-CAB By-laws.....	65
Appendix 5-Leadership Team Meeting Feedback.....	67
Appendix 6-Revised CAB Proposal/Initiative.....	69
Appendix 7-Client Bill of Rights.....	71
Appendix 8-Steps for Developing an Effective Advisory Committee.....	72
Appendix 9-December Leadership Team Meeting Feedback.....	76
Appendix 10-February CAB Meeting Minutes.....	77

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of my professional practice for my master's degree in Sociology-Applied Economic and Community Development, my main responsibility was to develop a community leadership group for a non-profit in Providence, Rhode Island. The agency, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, offers a variety of services to immigrants and incoming refugees. My role as a Community Advisory Board Coordinator involved establishing a community group while giving opportunities for leadership and client input on services received from the agency. Community boards serve an important role in any organization as they offer valuable input in creating high-quality services. However, organizing community groups involves strategic planning and methodology in order to achieve desired success. This paper documents the processes taken to establishing the group, the challenges, and the lessons learned. Specifically, this paper gathers a wide range of literature detailing effective strategies to organize communities followed by a narrative section outlining my experience attempting to establish a community advisory board. Further, I argue the main barriers preventing the establishment of the group: bureaucratic issues, lack of a cohesive group, and lack of collaboration among the agency and clients. The goal of this paper is not to critique the agency nor its projects, but rather to offer practical implications for the establishment of community advisory boards.

## **PART I. INTRODUCTION AND THE AGENCY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

With different incoming immigrants and refugees from all over the world, delivery of high-quality services in United States can be a major challenge for agencies aiming to help address their needs. Immigrant and refugee needs vary from basic needs such as shelter and food, to assistance with finding employment or schooling. Although approaches, models, and design of services differ across agencies serving these populations, abundant evidence supports the use of using community-based research to bridge academics and community perspectives. According to Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker (1998), “community-based research is rooted in engaging community members and academic researchers equally and in recognizing the unique strengths that each brings.” In addition, the use of community based research has been shown to reduce health disparities among vulnerable populations (Israel et al., 1998). Moreover, the emphasis on the participation of community members allows for them to take part in the most, if not all of the research process in developing relevant programs. Collaboration and client input is thus a major component of community research and organizing.

This paper documents the story of organizing a community group and the role of the different dynamics involved at a non-profit serving immigrant and refugee populations. Through a reflexive analysis, I demonstrate the importance of community engagement and consensus among all parts involved. My analysis extends research on community organizing by highlighting the intended “bottom-up” approach and the strategies used to create a community group. Specifically, I illustrate the barriers faced throughout my experience as followed: a) bureaucracy of the agency b) lack of a cohesive group and c) the lack of collaboration between the agency and clients. The analysis of this research uses my experiences as the coordinator of a

community advisory board. I describe my experience establishing the diverse group while working together with other staff and clients. I describe the successes and challenges to then offer a response to the tensions between theory and practice of community organizing.

I draw on the literature establishing various community boards, strategies used within community organizing, different types of community organizing, and the implications on establishing community groups. Thus, this paper demonstrates the ways in which community organizing functions on the ground versus the ideal intentions of organizing. Using a qualitative explanatory approach, this paper explores the roles of staff and client engagement while documenting the strategies used in the formation of a client community advisory board. I explore the intentions of the agency and the reality of the way the project is carried out. I begin by describing a brief history of the agency, their intentions with the creation of a client group, trends in community based research methods and strategies, and challenges within organizing. Lastly, I offer a qualitative explanatory narrative on my role in establishing the community group. The contributions of this paper offer strategies to develop community-based programs considering structural strains.

## 2. HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island (DIIRI) is an organization that offers a variety of services to “those who are working to overcome cultural, educational, and economic and language barriers” (DIIRI, 2012). In the year 2012, DIIRI became the result of two agencies merging: Dorcas Place Adult and Family Center and International Institute of Rhode Island. Created by two women in the early 1980s, Sister Mary Reilly and Deborah Thomson, Dorcas Place set out to develop a literacy program for teen mothers (DIIRI, 2012). International Institute of Rhode Island started its mission in the early 1920s, by providing “casework and support to a

few hundred immigrant women and their families as part of a national movement by Edith Terry Bremer to create a membership-driven organization to build community for foreign born women in their new homeland” (DIIRI, 2012). The Institute went on to offer services in adult education, legal immigration and citizenship, and refugee resettlement. Currently, the merge has combined similar missions from both agencies and offers a range of services in education, employment, immigration and citizenship, refugee resettlement, translation, and clothing donations.

The merge however, according to some staff, has only brought on additional frustrations. Based on informal discussions and observations, new management has brought several changes in a short period of time. The new changes are affecting the quality of their job, as many employees feel overworked and under pressure. As a result, most new projects or additional community events, if not a part of their job description, are not a priority for most.

## 2.1 CREATING CLIENT-CENTERED SERVICES

Presently, as part of their strategic plan, the agency has placed some of its efforts into creating “client-centered” services. Creating client-centered services involves providing opportunities and support for client leadership development. Proposed by three staff members, an initiative known as the “Client Ambassador Team” was created in early 2015. The Client Ambassador Team was set out to create a team of client leaders while maintaining continued engagement between clients and the agency (See Appendix 1). In early 2015, the former executive director at International Institute received knowledge of the possibility of hosting an intern to complete their practice in the field of community and economic development. The former Director of Community Outreach was asked to apply for an intern through the Stevenson Center at Illinois State University. The Stevenson Center promotes economic and community development



through research, courses, and places its students in an establishment where they can apply their skills. Thus, this was the beginning of my professional practice at DIIRI.

Initially, the Client Ambassador Team had a general objective of engaging clients and staff to better improve services and meet client needs. One of the authors of the initiative stated that the agency was now serving a wide spectrum of immigrants and refugees from all over the country and some staff felt they needed client input and assistance to help meet the specific needs of clients. The intent was to provide clients with appropriate training to serve the needs of their own communities. The main purpose behind the initiative was to build a more active community in addition to improve communication between internal and external community, retention and an increase in job acquisition. The proposal however evolved into a different project as a new management team and changes within the agency would influence a different project. The project would eventually transform in what would be called the Community Advisory Board, where clients can offer feedback on services received to improve the quality and implementation of services.

## **PART II. THE LITERATURE**

### **3. COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH**

The following paragraphs describe the concept of community based research and how it can be used among several fields. I describe some of the processes and highlights of using community based research. In addition, I describe some of the concepts the agency attempted to employ within the DIIRI client ambassador initiative.

Participatory action approaches in research are called several different names: action research, participatory research, participatory action research, community-based participatory research,

popular education, and many more (Stoecker, 2013). Some common elements involving participatory action approaches in research include a focus on being useful, employ diverse methods, and emphasize collaboration (Stoecker, 2013). This type of approach is growing across a variety fields of including academics and governmental domains. In particular, agencies serving marginalized populations are attempting to redesign and target the disconnect that exists within its services and delivery of services. In order to support their clients, DIIRI developed a strategic plan that includes engaging and ensuring clients have access to receive the full range of services needed to achieve their personal goals. This illustrates an attempt to connect or address a disconnect between clients and their access to services. According to Jogosh, Bush, Salsberg, Macaulay, Greenhalgh, Wong, Cargo, Green, Herbert and Pluye (2015), “community based participatory research in projects genuinely oriented to shared decision-making and co-governance yielded solutions to research barriers and created benefits for individuals, communities, institutions, and policy development” (Jogosh et al., 2015: 2).

Jogosh et al. (2015) however emphasize the significance of creating a *partnership synergy* between the community and the researchers or agency. Partnership synergy is the process of a partnership that includes trust, community governance/resources, commitment conflict of resolution and negotiation process, and most importantly, continued trust overtime (Jogosh et al., 2015). Community-based participatory research highlights the essential components needed for effective organizing and without them; implications for organizing communities are inhibited. For instance, the convoluted relationships between the agency, the clients, and me, present a disconnection among all parts involved, as there is a lack of consensus.

Community-based research and programs developed to gather the input from community members directly affected by issues are intended to change or improve the “top-down” decision

making that is typically administered throughout multiple organizations. DIIRI attempts to readdress the top-down approach by using client input by creating and designing customer satisfaction surveys or focus groups. This input would then aid in their plan to establish high quality services and outcomes. According to Havlicek, Lin, and Villalpando (2015), “participatory practices reflect the cornerstone approaches seeking to redress the hierarchical, professional-centered, and top down decision-making that does “to” clients rather than does “with” clients (Havlicek et al. 2015: 109). As a result, many organizations have developed initiatives such as community advisory committees, to bring together issues, concerns, and suggestions for improvements directly from community responses.

### 3.1 COMMUNITY-BASED GROUPS

Organizations and businesses have many different reasons for establishing community based groups. The following section highlights some of the positive outcomes and the ways in which community groups can influence quality services, should appropriate strategies be applied.

Community advisory groups can be considered a form of community organizing, while simultaneously can be used as a mechanism to help improve services. Community advisory committees are widely used as a means to engage and give a “voice” to group members representing the agency. According to a study on Youth Advisory Board’s (YABs), “these boards bring together youth to discuss issues and concerns and advocate for child welfare system improvements” (Havlicek, et. al, 2015: 109). Other advisory boards or youth programs not only provide an opportunity to express opinions but also “provide training in community organizing and leadership, and contribute to creating positive community change” (Schwartz and Suyemoto 2013: 342).

Many agencies are now considering changes to the way they implement and deliver services. Ample evidence supports using community advisory groups as a method of tailoring services to hard-to-reach populations, while building a partnership to improve and ensure appropriate delivery of services (Ramsay, Smith, Thomson, O'Campo, Nisenbaum, Watson, Park-Wylie, Bryant, Tandon, and Farah 2012). Participating in advisory boards not only allow opportunity to give input on services received and involvement into the decision-making process, but also help build social capital, empowerment, civic engagement and many more positive outcomes. According to Krasner and Pierre-Louis (2009), community organizing is essentially a participatory process and it can consist of a "transformation for better living conditions in one's community, with additional resources, new skills, and increased capacity that will arm tone to face life challenges" (Krasner and Pierre-Louis, 2009: 673).

Empowerment is just one of the positive outcomes that results from participatory community organizing. According to Christens and Speer (2015), community organizing processes and outcomes include behavioral processes such as civic engagement and community participation. In addition, Christens and Speer (2015) include four more branches of psychologically oriented outcomes: relational, affective and attitudinal, cognitive, and developmental processes. A study from Speer, Peterson, Zippay, and Christens (2010) reported results from a mixed-methods study of civic engagement to support the hypothesis that "the civic focus of community organizing efforts is likely to influence participants to become more active in community and civic affairs" (Christens and Speer 2015: 205). Moreover, McMillian and Chavis (1986) have conceptualized community members' connection and membership to their community in four dimensions: membership-the sense of belonging in a community, influence-the sense of mattering in that community, need fulfillment-the sense that community members' needs will be met, and shared

emotional connection-the sense of shared history and common bond” (Christens and Speer 2015: 208).

In addition to the positive effects for community members who take part in the participatory process, research demonstrates the need for policy makers to understand how to best support marginalized populations (Havelicek et al., (2016); DeCamp, Polk, Chrismer, Giusti, Thomson, and Sibinga (2015); Rich, Goncalves, Guardiani, O’Donnell, and Strzelecki (2014); and Ramsay et al., 2012). Community advisory groups contribute to addressing current gaps in the traditional “top-down” decision-making. Currently, literature trends on techniques regarding guidelines on the establishment of community advisory boards are limited. However, the field of participatory community organizing and some formed community advisory groups offer a process that could support to establish an effective community group.

### 3.2 EXISTING COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS: THE ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

There are many types of community advisory boards and methods employed to create them depending on their purpose(s). One of the main contributions from this study is to document the process of the establishment of the community advisory board. The following section describes the processes used to create community groups within several different fields.

While applying the processes and procedures used in successful community organizing and the creation of community advisory boards, I attempt to offer practical implications for the development of the group based on my reflexive experiences. After illustrating the community organizing and community advisory group process and outcomes, strategies used, and present

challenges to mobilizing groups, I offer a roadmap narrative. The narrative will detail the steps taken to develop the group, challenges and successes, and lessons learned.

As mentioned earlier, community advisory committees are widely used now as a means to remodel approaches and services specifically aimed at serving marginalized populations. However, there is currently a lack of literature and specific information about establishing advisory boards. In particular, the medical field has begun a more frequent use of patient engagement. Patient engagement refers to “collaborative partnerships between patients and their families to improve health and health care across various levels of the health care system including individual health care, organizational design and governance, and policy making (DeCamp et al., 2015: 521). DeCamp et al., (2015) documented lessons learned from an advisory board composed of Latino families who were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP).

The LEP board intended to promote client engagement to then share information with other health care organizations, addressing any disparities in access and quality of care. Establishment of the board illustrated improvements made in the physical health facility and educational materials. Prior to the creation of the board, there were a lack of resources and specific information regarding the procedures to follow when forming an advisory group with this targeted population. The methods used to establish the Latino Family Advisory Board (LFAB) included:

- *secured funding with stipends for family participants,*
- *input from staff regarding the specific needs and issues of the LEP Latino population,*
- *partnership development (noted as a key step from community-based participatory research),*

- *recruitment of bilingual (volunteer) staff and families (including those that claimed they did and did not face challenges), and*
- *organized meetings, recorded data and coded themes created, meeting participant reflections, semi structured individual qualitative interviews, and periodic member check-ins, with efforts made from the LFAB coordinator*

The processes described above can be applied and customized to the creation of community advisory boards, considering the specific client need. However, although the implementation of LFAB produced rich feedback from non-staff participants, learned opportunities for family participants, and patient engagement, successful sustainability remained a challenge. Upon completion of funds, the board was terminated. In addition, while clinical outcome improvements may be possible at the individual-level, it is difficult to implement changes based on the specific patient experience solely to an advisory board (DeCamp et al., 2015). Further, full integration of community members in the research process remains an obstacle for community-based participatory research teams (DeCamp et al., 2015).

Similar to the LFAB described above, a Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) established in a hospital offered similar stories of successes. The TAC was established to give teen patients more ways to be included in their care as well as the opportunity to socialize with others experiencing similar illnesses. TAC obtains one teen coordinator and five staff facilitators. The Teen Advisory Committee has a mission including the following:

- *Serve as a forum to explore areas of interest to teen patients and their siblings,*
- *Make recommendations and suggestions of ways to enhance the quality and quantity of programs and practice that affect the teen patient population through self-advocacy,*

- *Inform the hospital administration, clinicians, and other hospital employees of the work of the committee, and*
- *Provide teens with leadership experience, practice writing proposals, and public speaking opportunities* (Rich et al., 2014)

Unlike the Latino Family Advisory Board, TAC members were unified as a group by having a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis. The committee was created as a follow-up to a *Teen Time* monthly event. In addition, TAC members participated in projects addressing their illness, followed strict guidelines for their participation, and was an on-going committee even after “graduation” of its members. The group remained sustainable as a result of developing a sense of community, building social relationships, and having a legitimate chance to shape their communities as a result of a partnership between staff and teens (Rich et al., 2014). The documentation of TAC remained limited however, as challenges and the aftermath of the group were not discussed.

Recently, a national study tracking the success and challenges on youth advisory boards (YAB) was conducted (Havlicek et. al, 2015) in an effort to learn more about these types of advocacy groups. Common barriers gathered were the recruitment of members and a high member turnover, inconsistent meeting times, lack of funding, lack of evaluations, lack of recognition from stakeholders, and overall a lack of reliable research or reliable programming procedures to follow (Havlicek et. al, 2015). A community advisory panel (CAP) designed to create community participation and elicit feedback on health care to improve services at a hospital, demonstrated further implications. The CAP, although had major successes in launching programs and services at the hospital, illustrated a lack of familiarity or visibility throughout the hospital and community (Ramsay et al., 2012). Similar to the YAB’s discussed above; the community advisory panel also had difficulty recruiting members and a pattern of inconsistent



meetings. Barriers also addressed the lack of information surrounding CAPs, lack of information about the role of the CAP, and a lack of resources to sustain the community advisory panel (Ramsay et al., 2012). The strategies used and challenges described above should be considered when implementing community or client groups. Nonetheless, the challenges illustrate the specific attention that should be given to the construction of a community advisory board.

### 3.3 COMMUNITY ORGANIZING APPROACHES AND EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES

Similar to the purposes for forming a community advisory board, community organizing builds systems of support, social cohesion, and serves to build skills and knowledge (Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2013). Thus, techniques used within community organizing can be used to structure groups such as community advisory boards. Research has shown participation in community organizing most often come from experiences of oppression and injustices (Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2013). Further, community organizing offers a “system of techniques to restructure civic involvement within a community and thus acts as a civic change agent” (Canham-Clyne, 2009: 2; Willingham, 2008). Although a formal practice theory is not available when conducting community organizing, several studies reveal models and designs that have produced desired outcome and impacts.

Understanding how community organizing leads to social change is crucial. Certain procedures, approaches, practices, and guidelines are substantial when mobilizing groups. Brady and O’Connor (2014), conducted a study seeking explore a model of Formal Practice Theory (FPT). The methods for this study include using the expert experiences from ten community organizers. Researchers used the Delphi methodology which is based off of using the expert knowledge of those involved in a particular field; models are then constructed to then be tested. FPT would thus allow for organizing practitioners to “have direct guidance for how to do practice and the

process of community organizing derived from the real world experiences of seasoned community organizers” (Brady and O’Connor 2014: 211). Their theoretical model was categorized into three stages: community building, organization of a plan, and mobilize. The interrelated stages led to various outcomes when combined together. In addition to the stages, trust proved to be an essential and binding force needed to mobilize. Walls (2015) also notes that certain types of community organizing models, such as the Interfaith Based Community Organizations (IBCOs) (discussed ahead), have had substantial triumphs working with diverse groups and creating demographic change on the local, regional, state, and national levels (Walls 2015).

According to Stall and Stoecker (1997), one form of community organizing involves the process of building relationships with the community to foster social change. Models such as these strive to connect communities and use the relationship to bond to motivate individuals to act.

According to Canham-Clyne (2009), “the key principle of community organizing is to make lasting connections between people, information, and institutions (Canham-Clyne, 2009: 2).

Thus, communities who have often experienced marginalization not only benefit from networking but also establish cohesion among their own community. Strength and cohesion enable group members to strive for social change. Community advisory boards, though there is currently a lack of literature detailing the process, involve a system of building partnerships with outside communities and organizations as well as engaging community members to cultivate a culture of empowerment. Further, the literature described above highlights the importance of items to consider when mobilizing groups.

Although community organizing has no single agreed upon definition (Szakos & Szakos, 2007), it is widely used by both professionals and nonprofessionals. Stoecker (2013), uses the theory of

Foucault's (1991) concept *power/knowledge* to describe a form of participatory action research. Stoecker (2013) states that the work of Foucault includes the concept *action*, where "action refers to putting potential power into motion to produce actual results" (Stoecker 2013: 37) and when community groups are given power engagement "stock of resources that allows them to influence their own life circumstances" (2013: 37). They are thus able to generate effect and new knowledge. Communities are able to use their knowledge in understanding the cause-and-effect relationships that explain how power works and distinguish effective from ineffective action (Stoecker, 2013). Furthermore, the participatory process in which communities are able to define their own issues and solutions promote the empowerment of community members. According to Way (2013), empowerment is described as a process resulting in positive ends as an outcome of "agentic means." Empowerment is described as a "mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities increase or gain mastery or control over their lives and become active participants in efforts to influence their environment" (Rappaport 1987: 33). The participatory process thus aids in development of inclusion, engagement, connections, and builds community power.

Numerous studies illustrate an abundance of positive results and outcomes for community members who participate in community organizing efforts. However, the organizing process must involve a strategic method in order to achieve desired outcomes. Community organizing may involve a series of different approaches, however, when using "best practices" or common elements, certain results are attained. Stoecker (2013) describes his project-based research model: diagnose, prescribe, implement, and evaluate. The diagnosing stage involves the community to identify the needs or issues that need to be addressed, then prescribe by exploring the strategies and methods in which to address the issues. Implementation of desired solution

follows, however, prior to implementation taking into account if all necessary resources are available as well as the understanding or foreseeing the challenges and barriers. Evaluation or assessment occurs while a project or program is active and running. Speer and Christens (2012) use a similar method following a set of common elements (1) assessment/relationship development, (2) participatory research, (3) action or mobilization, and (4) evaluation and/or reflection. Speer and Christens (2015) offer an example of community organizing that tracks and exemplifies the key features for success.

According to Saul Alinsky, famously known in the field community organizing, the process community organizing should emphasize community members attaining political power. A case study surrounding the construction of a public library in Southern Connecticut used an Alinsky-inspired process to create a space to meet the needs of its residents. Initially, the process began with a type of needs assessment meeting to gather and prioritize the needs of community members. To meet their visions, the library staff fostered networks of support (Canham-Clyne 2009). Community members then collectively prioritized ideas and offered methods in how the library would be able to meet those needs. The library staff remained engaged with community members throughout the entire process and followed up with proposed ideas. Staff called upon the residents to “put their words into action” and take part in helping with the services they had proposed. The staff and board also secured funding based off the goals projected by community members. This bottom-up approach seeks to “balance knowledge and decision-making between clients and professionals, empowering clients to be active agents of change as opposed to passive recipients of services” (Havlicek et. al, 2015: 109).

The techniques described above have proven levels of desired successes. The processes however considered models, approaches, and mechanisms. Client engagement and client power, a type of

collaboration have also shown to produce action among the community groups. The techniques nonetheless offer items of importance to consider when mobilizing community groups.

### 3.4 DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Community organizing involves a variety of strategies used depending on their specific purpose. It is essential to understand the different types of strategies used to organize to reach desired outcomes. The specific strategies used involve certain models depending on their type of community group. The following section describes the different types of community groups and the strategies used to reach their mission. The models and approaches used within these groups may serve as a guide to create a community advisory board or group, considering the specific purpose.

#### *3.4. a. Congregation-Based Organizing*

It is important to consider the different types of community organizing in order to understand different outcomes that arise from working with different strategies. Interfaith based community organizations are one type of strategy used to catalyze. IBCOs are constructed of more than 3,000 religious congregations and include an additional 1,000 groups comprising of labor unions, public schools, and advocacy groups (Walls, 2015). Christens and Speer (2015) point out this type of model is the United States' preferred model of organizing as it can be described as "values-based" and influences the importance of interpersonal relationships, to then allow for sustainability of activity and trust that is necessary to effect community change (Christens and Speer 2015). An effective model used by Walls (2015) is the PICO organizing model (a national network of faith-based organizations):

*“One-to-Ones: One-to-one meetings are the building block of our model of organizing and have deep roots in our faith traditions. The one-to-one meeting is a 30-minute, face-to-face meeting that builds relationships that are based on mutual interest and respect for one another.*

*Research: Once people have identified an issue, we engage in research with those who understand that issue. Our way of doing research is participatory. Local community members use research as a way to develop the ability to analyze problems and strategize meaningful solutions.*

*Action: Actions are large community meetings (100-1000) where local leaders share research testimony and mobilize community and political support around their issues. Local communities demonstrate community support for their issues and develop accountability with public officials through actions.*

*Evaluation: Evaluation and reflection is how we improve our organization and leadership. We set aside time after every meeting and event to evaluate our work and identify ways to improve.*

*By holding ourselves accountable, we become better leaders and build stronger communities.”*

*(PICO National Network)*

According to Walls, asset-based and similar strategies have long been strong strategies in organizing. There is strong focus on creating awareness, inclusion, and target those that would be less likely to participate.

### *3.4.b. Youth Organizing*

Youth organizing tends to focus on creating developmental skills that will prepare youth to become involved with civic engagement. In addition, strategies used within youth organizing can aid in developing approaches to practice with organizing communities. Schwartz and Suyemoto

(2013), conducted a study documenting a youth community organizing program. Due to the limited amount of empirical evidence on individual impacts and the processes of youth organizing, Schwartz and Suyemoto aimed to construct a model of development among youth. Results indicated a structure for action led to a series of skills, knowledge, and networks of support (Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2013). The structure of the program was comprised with a clear focus: development of community organizing skills. The youth were engaged with a specific campaign, structured trainings, lessons, and had an expectation of participation in two action events. Upon completion of the program, graduates were compensated. Other youth programs aimed to focus on youth empowerment as a counteract for the attack on undocumented students in Arizona and the recent elimination of the ethnic studies programs in their schools (Wood and Lemley 2015). *Student Involvement Day* (SID), was facilitated by teachers and community leaders, involved lessons on the recent ban on ethnic studies, and taught strategies on how to respond, act, and advocate for one's community. The program met over eight hours within a semester and focused on the use of cultural maps to achieve their goals.

Another type of youth program focusing on character development, designed their program around sports participation and living healthy lifestyles. The program took place after school and participants met twice a week for three months while attending formal lessons and physical activity (Way 2013). Another example of youth organizing is the program Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE). This program collaborates with six Chicago community organizations and youth take part in participatory action research projects on educational policies. According to Christens and Speer (2015), "youth organizing is now widely viewed as both a viable method for building power and capacity to make community change, and as an important context for youth development" (Christens and Speer 2015: 200).

### *3.4.c. Cultural Organizing*

Understanding the strategies and practices already in use by groups of different cultures, is essential to know to then build upon them. In addition, it is also important to consider and recognize the histories and cultural oppression experienced by immigrants and refugees.

Currently, the Pan Valley Institute (PVI) in the central valley of California, has developed an education center where the focus is on organizing communities while highlighting their cultural practices. The PVI provides community members with a physical space to share and express their cultural heritage, while holding and organizing cultural events. The program is established to help find communities a sense of belonging and build a broader immigrant and refugee civic engagement in public life (Kohl-Arenas, Nateras, and Taylor, 2014). The purpose of the program is to “recognize, nurture, and resource indigenous practice to the move from a means of support and survival to a central force for social change” (Kohl-Arenas et al., 2014: 7). Another study among the Hmong community found that this population was vulnerable to cancer and cardiovascular disease (Kue, Thorburn, and Keon, 2015). As a result, researchers formed a community advisory committee to help conduct their community based research to learn more about cultural practices and understand any underlying factors related to their health. Thus, the community advisory board served as a bridge between community members and researchers. The advisory group helped endorse the research project and provide valuable input into the research process. The advisory board was established by a Hmong investigator who was familiar with the culture and community. Further, the advisory board was composed of community leaders and persons with strong interests in cancer.

Cultural organizing highlights the cultural differences and helps produce solidarity among populations that have traditionally been marginalized. The issues affecting and experienced by



ethnic groups unifies community organization by creating social cohesion among the group (Walker and Stepick 2014). Organizers however have also acknowledged assumptions about the naturalness of ethnic solidarity and avoid using symbols such as a country flag that would otherwise create a divide (Walker and Stepick 2014). Cohesion and shared goals serve as strategies to mobilize people however; several challenges arise when groups are not set up for success. Thus, while acknowledging cultural differences, it is crucial to create cohesion among communities to produce mobilization or social action.

Shared-values, interpersonal relationships, structure, cultural organizing, and solidarity among groups are just a few items of importance mentioned in the different types of community groups organized. The types of practices and tactics used, depending on the desired result, thus exemplify ways in which one can approach the organization of a community group. Further, the organization of community groups can at times consequently bring challenges and frustrations.

#### 4. CHALLENGES

As stated earlier, organizing community groups face problems towards sustainability of the group. Funding and adequate resources often cause the dissolvent of the group. In addition to acquiring and maintaining funds, cohesiveness within the group has proven to be an effective strategy in community organizing. The use of cultural organizing strategies not only help create a group identity but bonds members to strive for achieving the same goals. However, differences among missions and different cultural backgrounds may present differences that may impede collective organizing. According to Walker and Stepick (2014), a preponderance of evidence illustrates that diversity within groups often presents a challenge in organizing. For instance, “groups often find that these characteristics represent severe boundaries that thwart grassroots organizations’ capacities for developing collective identities, maintaining coalitions, and

reaching shared understandings about other considerations such as tactical approaches, appropriate organizing structures and cultural frames that resonate with key audiences” (Walker and Stepick; 2014: 970). Thus, establishing a group identity suggests to be an effective mechanism to mobilize culturally diverse groups.

The procedures and methods used within community organizing as described in the above section illustrate the significance of using effective strategies that can be measured and evaluated. The study on Youth Advisory Board’s (YAB) described above evaluated several YAB’s to find a common evaluative strategy used was a satisfaction survey. In addition to using a survey to measure outcomes, the construction of community advisory boards requires measurable outcomes for sustainability of the group. Havlicek et. al. (2016) state the evaluation strategies and procedures to target issues within boards such as retention or recruitment are currently lacking within academic literature. Further, specific purposes and evaluative assessments prove to be effective for the creation of community groups.

Literature on effective approaches used within community and cultural organizing offer guidance when establishing community advisory boards. The lessons and challenges presented also introduce items to consider for an effective and sustainable board. Reflecting on the funding, diversity, cohesive bond within the group, measureable outcomes, and evaluation strategies are just a few items to consider. The establishment of the community advisory board described in the following narrative illustrates the strategies used to construct the group and the challenges raised. Specifically, the process of recruiting members, creating a structured group, attempts to gather agency support, and overall determining the exact purpose for the group.

The literature described above offers an extensive amount of material on effective strategies, approaches, and models used to organize community groups. The literature informs the

following narrative to illustrate the lack of inconsistencies and challenges faced, which could have possibly been avoided by using some of the approaches or strategies described. In addition, both the literature and the narrative could possibly serve as a guide to continue to establish a sustainable group or for other organizations looking to establish a community advisory board of their own. Further, a conclusion and reflections section follows to describe the reflections on the barriers faced while simultaneously using the literature as support for possible solutions to those barriers.

## **PART III. A CASE STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD**

The following section outlines the process of establishing the community advisory board. I begin by describing the proposed project, the initial steps, the ambiguity with staff, and the changes in management which led to what the group has become. The format follows a chronological description of the process, outlining the outcome of every monthly meeting with group members. In between the meetings, you will find some sections describing the agency's attempt to define the purpose of the group. Upon reading some of the difficulties faced, you will be able to distinguish the reality and theory of organizing a community group, in spite of its good intentions. Despite the successes described in the literature section, the practical steps taken to develop a group should be considered.

### **A. CLIENT AMBASSADOR TEAM**

In July 2015, as part of my professional practice in Sociology, with a focus on applied community and economic development, I was given the opportunity to help establish the Client Ambassador Team at Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island. As a student from Illinois State University in collaboration with the Stevenson Center, my objective was to understand and apply concepts, themes, and theories learned through their program. My practice would last 11 months and require me to work for 35 hours a week. In the following section, I begin to describe my experience at the agency.

Upon my arrival at the agency, the former Director of Community Outreach and one of the authors of the Client Ambassador Team initiative, who was also supposed to supervise my work, was no longer at the agency and the initiative was now under new management. At the time of

my arrival, I was told the Client Ambassador Team was composed of five refugee clients and had the goal of creating a more diverse team to include and represent clients from different populations and communities. Since the agency helps serve immigrants and refugees from many different cultures, the agency aimed to represent many of those cultures. Prior to my arrival, the group of five had met a few times to discuss the initiative. After their initial meeting in early 2015, the group remained inactive until my arrival in July. The group was still in its initial phases when I arrived, as staff advisors were still in the midst of creating a new name for the group.

The initiative was created by three different staff members: The Director of Community Outreach and Welcoming Rhode Island, the Employment Services Coordinator, and an English as a Second Language teacher. At the time of its creation, the purpose for the group was to build confidence and self-esteem by investing in DIIRI clients. The agency would also expect to improve retention on those they serve, better communication, and increase job acquisition. After discussing the initiative with one of the main authors, she felt the initiative was created with each author having a different vision for the group. A lack of consensus on the purpose(s) for the group would eventually be problematic in establishing the success of the group. I felt this was the beginning of the bureaucratic issues that were to come with the development of the group.

As part of my job description, I was to be given management training to eventually manage the group. I would soon learn that was not the case as the agency seemed to have other priorities. I began my journey by researching similar groups established at other agencies or non-profits. I found very few had successfully established community committees. The most common barriers were due to time conflicts and lack of staff to manage the groups. Those that were successful, had common features such as a focus on specific departments/areas, composed by community

members with same ethnic or similar cultural backgrounds, and secured funding. I conveyed this information to two of the staff advisors, John and Ann. While I felt the need to follow the steps of those successful groups, the other staff advisors continued to strive for a heterogeneous group that represented all departments and cultural identities. As the literature described above has illustrated, cultural diversity within groups can be problematic considering grouping together people with similar ethnic backgrounds creates a collective bond (Walker and Stepick, 2014).

My first goal was to recruit and find more members to join our group. John, my supervisor, and Ann, one of the authors of the initiative, provided me a list of names and contact information to reach out and invite clients to the group. John and Ann would also serve as staff advisors for the group. They would provide me and the group with support.

I immediately called everyone on the list and informed them that this was an opportunity for them to get involved and help improve services at DIIRI, while at the same time become leaders and advocates for their community. Most seemed interested and even stated they would attend our next meeting in August, but most did not. In addition, it did not help that I was an outside and did not know of any clients myself to recruit.

#### **B. FIRST MEETING: AUGUST 2015**

August was my first meeting with the members and we had a total of seven members attend. During this meeting, we mainly gathered feedback from clients about services received at DIIRI. The objective at this meeting was to elicit information on quality of services to then write a proposal (See Appendix 2). The members, including myself, were told this proposal would be given to the Board of Directors. This meeting also allowed me to meet the current members and assess the next steps to be taken to establish the group.

It was at this meeting that members identified items of need as well as suggestions for improvement regarding services. For example, members expressed a desire for longer support after receiving services, suggestions for creating a more individualistic assessment for services, and proposed making connections with the Education Department in Rhode Island to allow exceptions for some refugees to continue on their education paths. After writing down the feedback, our next step was to meet with three of the group members and create a formal proposal to then share with the Board of Directors. We also created a new name for our group. After taking a vote on proposed names from a staff advisor, members voted for the name *Community Advisory Board (CAB)*. Next steps also included recruiting more members, creating structure for the group (by-laws), preparing an overview of DIIRI and its services for our next meeting, creating goals and measureable objectives, leadership training, and identifying leadership roles. At the time, we established to meet on a monthly basis.

Upon meeting with three of the members and writing a formal proposal on the feedback, my next objective was to focus on more outreach to create a more representative group. I continued to call the people on the list I was given after August, as we still needed to create a more diverse group. I did my own recruitment by reaching out to other staff who could recruit clients to become members of this group. I did not have much luck as my emails went unanswered. I received one response and this was from the Coordinator of Volunteers. She recommended several clients and gave me their contact information. I also decided to take action and attended a few ESL classes to invite ESL students to join the group. This type of recruitment also went unsuccessful as many people stated they were interested but never responded to my phone calls or messages.

### C. SEPTEMBER 2015

Our second meeting held on Saturday, September 5, focused on updating the formal proposal from the feedback received at the last meeting. We had a total of eight members attend with the addition of four new members. We also created a mission statement for the group:

*We as Community Advisory Board members are a group of multicultural leaders who bring a voice and resources to all in the community. We accomplish this through advising DIIRI staff, sharing information, and creating opportunities for engagement. We advocate for the community at large, and connect with different organizations.*

Creating the mission statement was aligned with our goal of creating an identity for the group. In addition, we discussed upcoming events and community events to participate in. Participating in community events would allow members to gain greater client community engagement. Due to a limit on time, this meeting did not allow for some items on our agenda: by-laws, an overview of DIIRI and its services, creating goals and measureable objectives, discussion of leadership training, and identifying group roles.

### D. MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Prior to meeting with the CAB in October, I had a meeting with my boss, the Director of Communications and the Executive Director of the agency. The group seemed to be developing on its own without any input or guidance from anyone else other than just the two staff advisors, and myself. I needed feedback from them to advise me on how to integrate CAB into the agency infrastructure and to find out who the group would report to. After all, we had gathered valuable feedback from the members and did not have anywhere to send the proposal. The Executive Director seemed concerned about the members' understanding of what the CAB group is and



what their role is within the group. The group seemed to be morphing into an advisory group with proposed projects to participate in the future. The group started out as a group with several different purposes however; the group was morphing into something different than from what it initially sought out to do. There seemed to be an uncertainty with everyone involved concerning the main purpose of the group. As a result, there was a lack of a specific action plan and measurable objectives. More importantly, I was uncertain how to manage the group which direction I would lead it to.

The Executive Director suggested we implement leadership skills through meaningful activities, create by-laws and subcommittees, and create a more representative group (all of which were written in our agenda but time had not allowed for). The recommendations given were undoubtedly useful however, were already written in our plans. She also suggested we start with a small project for instance, a *client bill of rights*. This document would serve as a formal document stating the rights that clients would like to have as patrons of the organization. The staff advisors and I decided to follow up with creating a client bill of rights. At this point, I was still not able to find out who would oversee the group.

#### E. REFLECTION ONE

Two months after taking the initial steps in developing the community group, I had a few concerns that I felt needed attention. To begin, the agency wanted to elicit feedback on services received and create a proposal; however, we did not have anyone or anywhere within the agency to submit the proposal. I asked who would oversee the group, but the agency did not have a clear idea. In addition, the Executive Director wanted a more diverse group however, as an outsider without interaction from clients, this was a difficult task considering staff ignored my emails regarding this matter. Thus, without anyone to oversee or finalize proposed projects from the

CAB, the structural strains on the development of the group began to show. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic issues began to impede in the creation of the group.

#### F. OCTOBER 2015

The CAB meeting in October allowed for more progress, with a total of nine members in attendance. We started to plan our first tangible projects and events. I had been in contact with the agency's Coordinator of Volunteers. In fact, she was the only staff member who had been helping me recruit clients. In addition, she took initiative and introduced me to the community and the events held in the surrounding areas. She informed me of the national project StoryCorps that came to Providence. This project consists of audio recordings of interviews conducted on any person on any story they would like to tell in order to preserve their history. The interview is recorded and then archived at the Library of Congress. The purpose of this project is to preserve people's culture, heritage, and voice in history. We had one of the board members from the library of Providence attend our CAB meeting and give a presentation to our members. One of the staff advisors suggested we create an event out of StoryCorps with CAB members.

Unfortunately, this event was never followed up on, as the group had other priorities such as creating structure and the client bill of rights.

#### G. STAFF ADVISOR FEEDBACK

Staff advisors agreed with the Director on the need to implement leadership skills. In addition, they stated the progress of the group was a lot slower than anticipated. One of the staff advisors stated that the project CAB was working on (the mission statement), was a method of creating leadership. However, the concept of leadership training was different in my opinion. I was led to believe that leadership skills would be introduced with trainings or workshops.

Ann, the staff advisor, felt that it was taking a while to develop a consistent group and at this point, it seemed like we had one. At this point, I had recruited more members and we had a total of fourteen members. However, staff advisors expressed a need to add more members, even though I had no assistance with recruitment. As an outsider and without the direct interaction with clients, recruiting was a difficult task. In addition, adding members to the group contributed to more challenges. The group was evolving and transitioning while trying to find its group identity; the additional members would therefore interfere with the transition.

Ann mentioned that creating a mission statement would allow members to create a timeline and “weave it into other things that should be accomplished.” Although the thought seemed vague to me, I believed we would soon create an “action plan.” In order to unify the group and get to know them, I suggested we create a client profile and questionnaire for members. This would allow me to get to know the members and ensure they benefit from being a participant in this group. I was told that this would be a “challenge” as the group does not take things home and perhaps a discussion would be a better solution. Unfortunately, I only received two questionnaires.

The structure of the meetings did not allow for many topics to be covered considering we have many new topics to cover and only one hour and a half (once a month). Further, Ann recommended we do more “leading” as the group was eager, engaged, and continuing to show up. I agreed that the group did attend meetings but disagreed with the perception that they were eager and engaged. The proposed plan for the group was then to have CAB support DIIRI staff by leading conversation groups and identifying community resources to help create client centered services over the next months. Proposed projects in the future also included leadership trainings, but our discussions did not include specific methods of implementation. In addition,

the staff advisor proposed creating subcommittees, dividing up the members into smaller groups. Lastly, I was told that the group has spent too much time “complaining” about the agency’s shortfalls, and now we would be able to create an opportunity for members to help improve services. The staff advisor believed that once outcomes are identified, the direction of the group will become clearer and staff would have a better idea of what they would like to see from the group.

#### H. CHALLENGES: CREATING STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

At this point, I intended to create two items to give structure to our group: group by-laws and help establish a group identity. It was challenging to create a group identity and structure to a group while still continuing to recruit new members. We also continued to update our mission statement, as we had new members attend each meeting. The group and all staff involved discussed other projects and next steps:

- by-laws,
- client bill of rights,
- an event to spread awareness of resources to our communities,
- create a presentation on cultural awareness, and
- create a CAB logo, and fill out a member profile form

Please see Appendix 3 for CAB meeting held on October 3, 2015.

During the month of October, outside of our regular monthly meeting, I met with a few CAB members and completed our first draft for our by-laws and the client bill of rights (Please see Appendix 4 for bylaws). Unfortunately, at this time, one of the three staff advisors and authors of the original initiative informed us that she could no longer take part in the establishment of the group, as she had other priorities. We were left with two staff advisors, one of which was one of

the original authors of the initiative. I wanted to immediately replace her with another staff member as I felt staff support was crucial, but one of the remaining staff advisors stated there was no immediate need. I asked another staff member from the admissions department if she was interested in helping support the Community Advisory Board. Although she expressed interest and agreed to help with establishing this group, this staff member did not have the opportunity to advise CAB as she left the agency in December.

The lack of structure and support was becoming a bigger challenge. In addition, the Community Advisory Board was led to believe that they were invited to the agency's Board meeting. I was thrilled to hear that CAB would finally get the recognition and meet other staff in managerial positions. However, after talking to the Executive Director, the Director of Communications informed me that this would not be happening for reasons that were not disclosed. Retracting the invitation was difficult for me to convey to our members.

## I. NOVEMBER 2015

By November, I was still trying to recruit new members as per request from staff advisors. Yet again, I was faced with a challenge as I did not know many clients nor did I have the opportunity to directly interact with clients. I reached out to staff that assisted clients on a day-to-day basis (teachers, staff in the Refugee Resettlement Department, and other staff). Unfortunately, I did not receive many responses. I had even invited a past client who was now a staff member if she would like to join; she declined by stating she was busy every Saturday.

The agenda for the month of November included our usual announcements regarding community events, review and finalize the client bill of rights, by-laws, and mission statement. A total of eight members attended. We also allowed the opportunity for members to vote and assign member roles that were integrated in the by-laws. However, members expressed a lack of

integration within both the group *and* the agency. As a result, most members felt they were not ready to neither vote nor take on certain responsibilities. We felt this was a set-back for the group however, understood that the group did not illustrate solidarity or a group identity that unified them. Due to this set-back, we did not discuss ideas for our first big project; something that we have been trying to accomplish since the beginning of the group. Thus, we as staff advisors decided it was best to begin incorporating team skills and integrate the team into the agency.

#### J. LACK OF CONSENSUS

At this point, it was crucial for me to convey the group challenges to the agency, primarily the directors of the agency. I felt it was crucial to not only gather feedback on our progress thus far, but to also seek approval for finalizing our documents. I am not in a position to implement projects and thus, input from permanent staff would give guidance and permission. I asked my boss and was then invited to attend the Leadership meeting, which consists of all of the directors of the agency (see appendix 5). I introduced the community advisory board and the small projects we have worked on (client bill of rights, client feedback proposal, and by-laws). I gave them a copy of the initial initiative for the CAB. I specifically addressed that the purpose of this initiative was to:

- Build a more active and engaged DIIRI community, including: students, clients, alumni, and staff
- Empower, build the confidence and self-esteem of participants, and develop leadership within DIIRI and the external community
- Increase retention of those we serve currently, and increase connection with those whom we formerly served

- Better communication within the internal and external community on topics such as events, programs, internal resources, community partners, legislation, and more
- Increase job acquisition and self-sufficiency

Upon understanding what the group was about, some Directors stated they had never seen the document before (even though I was told by staff advisors that it was “approved” by all of the Directors). The Executive Director stated that there were too many purposes for the group and the group purpose should be narrowed. I did not understand why the initial initiative was “approved” if this was the case. I figured this initiative was not concrete and perhaps no one at the agency was certain on what the purpose of the group would be. Regardless, my supervisor and I updated the initiative to create a narrower purpose for the group (even though we were not original authors of the initiative) (See Appendix 6):

- ✓ Provide consistent and informative feedback to DIIRI management, and suggest improvements in the customer experience to ensure high-quality, client-centered services
- ✓ Develop Ambassadors’ leadership and advocacy skills to effectively represent and outreach to the client community
- ✓ Foster greater client community engagement through social events, community workshops, and updates on agency services

One of the staff advisors later admitted not being aware of the ability to make changes to the initial proposal. This was conflicting information to me as the other staff advisor had stated the initial proposal was concrete and did not need to be “updated” as it was approved and finalized by the directors (even though some claimed to not having seen the proposal). Further, one of the staff advisors revealed that the initial proposal created by different authors had different

perspectives and visions for the group. As a result, there was an inconsistency for the direction and vision of our group. At this point, I had already realized that many staff members were not only unfamiliar with this initiative but there was also a lack of direction and guidance for the group.

In addition to describing the purpose of CAB, I also introduced the client feedback on services used. The feedback was gathered in August and September of 2015. Initially, I was under the impression that I would gather the feedback to then distribute it to the Director or Board of Directors. I kept asking the other two staff advisors what we should do with all of the feedback we gathered. The directors read the feedback but the Director of Education seemed to be the only one that was interested. Further, I gave them a copy of the *Client Bill of Rights* and many seemed pleased however were concerned with being able to implement and satisfy all of the points in the document (Appendix 7).

During the meeting, I pointed out that some of the CAB members felt disintegrated and not connected with the agency. Some Directors suggested holding a social or a type of meet-and-greet event for both CAB members and staff every 6 months. In December of 2015, I hosted a potluck for both staff and CAB members to meet and socialize as a way to begin the integration process. All of the agency directors and CAB members were invited to attend. Unfortunately, many staff directors never responded to my invite and there was a very low CAB member attendance. Directors also suggested we start with leadership skills training beginning with CAB members conducting a focus group, while gaining facilitation/leadership experience.

After the meeting, I still had some unanswered questions:

- Where does CAB exist within the agency? Specifically, under which department?



- Who do we follow-up with on any formal documents we create? (e.g. by-laws, bill of rights, etc). Who oversees the CAB?
- Where is the line of communication between CAB and the agency?

Some Directors suggested for CAB to report directly to Directors directly, while others felt they should report to the Board of Directors. It was later confirmed by the Executive Director that the group should report to the Directors of the agency and not the Board of Directors. There were also many concerns from Directors regarding the sustainability of this group; especially after my contract with the agency ends. I questioned if current staff advisors or new staff are invested in keeping CAB sustainable. I suggested placing CAB responsibilities be built into a staff member's job description (or a few staff members).

## K. REFLECTION TWO

During the months of October and November, I was faced with more issues. For instance, the structure of the group was in development staff advisors seemed to want to continue the recruitment for the group. This was problematic as the group experienced a number of inconsistent members and created disintegration within the group. In addition, group members were not eager to become involved in subcommittees (as written in our by-laws) or take on more responsibilities within the group. It was also clear there was a lack of collaboration between staff and clients specifically, management staff seemed to be unclear and did not have an understanding on what the agency wanted from this group, with some even claiming to say they had never heard of the initiative to create this group. More bureaucratic issues were presented with one of the staff advisors and a future staff advisor leaving the group. In addition, the agency could not detail a list of specific objectives or goals for group. Members also expressed feelings

of disintegration which could be associated with both the bureaucratic issues, a lack of a cohesive group, or a lack of collaboration between them and the agency.

#### L. PREPARING FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Taking the next steps with the group required gathering staff input on our progress. This was done in the previous meeting with all of the Directors of the agency. All of the CAB documents had been updated by group members however, I still needed staff input before proceeding on finalizing these documents. My main goal now was to not only secure support and on-going communication from the agency, but develop a few measurable objectives to accomplish within the next three months. I asked the staff advisors to read a useful guide to help establish our group: *Steps for Developing an Effective Advisory Committee* (Appendix 8). It lists and details the steps we should be taking in order to compose an effective CAB.

#### M. DECEMBER 2015: MEETING WITH LEADERSHIP TEAM

In December, I was asked again after asking for more follow-up to attend the director's meeting to update them on our progress (see appendix 9). I informed them that we need more staff awareness on our group and the work they have done for the agency. In addition, I stressed the importance on leadership trainings, an action plan, and ideas on sustainability after my departure. The directors replied to my concerns by asking me how we would like to be supported. The directors would also like to see more representation within the group (include members who represent all of our clientele) and in order for them to help with recruiting, they would like for me to create a nomination form. Most emails to staff regarding nominations for CAB members remain unanswered. This has been happening since I arrived, which led to me to question if CAB was a priority for the agency. I tried other venues, such as office hours held at both locations, class presentations, and personally asking some staff for help with this, unfortunately these

strategies were less than successful. The team would also like a timeline for what the group would like to achieve and then present this timeline for possible approval. I was expecting for the directors to give me guidance and tell me what they would like to see from the group, but it appears this was not a concern for them. Since my arrival, I did not receive specific training to manage this group nor a specific action plan. It seemed no one knew how to specifically manage this group nor took the time to invest in researching how to create an effective and sustainable group. There also remained the questions that in needed answers to: Where does CAB live within the agency? How will we be supported? What resources can the agency offer for CAB to be sustainable, including staff? Further, two of the people who initially proposed the initiative are no longer at the agency or not involved, and in addition, the project has evolved into something different. I delved deeper with my questions and wanted to get to the root of why this initiative was proposed in the first place. I asked the following questions:

- What is the *need* or gap that needs to be filled with the establishment of CAB? In other words, how will this group help fill or address that need proposed by the agency?
- Is there any *research* stating that there is specific need for establishing CAB in the agency? For instance, have there been any observations or research stating that the community is in need implementing group like this?

There is no specific research from the agency answering the needs of the agency.

#### N. DECEMBER 2015

By December, I became very concerned as we had our lowest CAB member attendance. We had four members out of the 15 that I had recruited. Our agenda was to communicate the feedback we had received from the directors about the CAB, and in return gather their feedback on *their* visions for the group. In addition, we proposed the implementation of a client survey and asked

for assistance from members. This was an idea from the agency as it was embedded in their strategic plan.

After the meeting, I immediately contacted and emailed the other staff advisor who had not attended the meeting as well as my boss and the executive director. I expressed concerns over our low attendance (possibly due to a lack of interest) and lack of communication from members. In addition, I asked for more staff support, resources including funds, and a need to recruit members that fit the purpose of this group. Earlier that month, we held the potluck social event with staff which had also gathered a low turnout.

Specifically, I explained the elaborate research based on Community Based Research (CBR), I found on strategies and effective community advisory boards. I found groups like CAB are more successful when there is:

- Funding
- A shared identity –although we may have this (collective identity based on social class or shared experiences) the structure has not allowed time to create a group identity/*Cultural organizing* is also proven to be successful
- Specific purpose (one or two doable and *measurable* outcomes)
- Initiative is based on community-based research
- A diagnosis was done prior to implementation (this is where research is done showing a community need identified by the community)
- Staff support *and* visibility, internally and externally
- Commitment (from all ends, community, management staff, etc.)
- When action follows feedback
- When community *trusts* agency

- Evaluations/Assessments

Because the executive director was out of the county, I received a response a couple of weeks later. My boss asked for my supervisor and myself to attend a meeting with her and the director. At this meeting, they realized we needed a community assessment to determine the direction this group would take. The idea of a client focused survey came up as project for CAB members to implement. This project would then allow for them to learn leadership skills, according to staff. While I was uncertain of how CAB members would feel about this idea, I agreed to introduce this idea to them at our next meeting. In addition, the executive director had even offered to come to our next meeting to introduce this idea to them herself.

The month of January passed as there were delays in establishing a date for our next CAB meeting. Finally, we established for our next CAB meeting for February 13, 2016.

#### O. FEBRUARY 2016

For the first time since my arrival, the Executive Director and the Director of Communications and Development attended our CAB meeting (see appendix 10). The purpose of this meeting was to address the CAB members' concerns and discuss future steps. Members revealed they would like to receive leadership training in order to work with different cultures and communities. Members also expressed the need for the agency to integrate CAB into the organization, as they feel disconnected.

The Executive Director asked members for their input on what they would like to receive from being participants in the group. Members revealed they would like the following:

- Leadership training
- Maintain engagement with the agency

- Help other clients with the aligned mission of the agency (creating self-sufficiency)
- Become advocates for their community

In addition to gathering client input, we discussed the impact CAB has made on the agency. For instance, the creation of the Client Bill of Rights had produced the implementation of a complain/suggestion procedure for all DIIRI staff to utilize. Future projects include members to distribute an agency wide survey and host educational forums. The educational forums would consist of a panel of outside experts to bring information and resources to the community on a series of topics. Group members would take responsibility in organizing and facilitating the forums.

Lastly, members expressed the need for the agency to create a follow-up system with clients to not only ensure good quality of service but to also maintain client engagement.

#### P. LAST MONTHS

During the month of March, I held two CAB meeting dates. Only four members attended the first meeting and no one came to the second meeting. As a result, I notified my fellow staff advisors, boss, and the Executive Director to inform them on the lack of participation among the group. I was advised to only hold meetings when the group would be planning an event. The meeting was in fact to plan our first educational forum. Due to the lack of participation, the focus on the group shifted to other tasks. Recognition of the group was something we had always wanted to give the group.

The agency recently hired an Associate for the Communications and Development Department and part of her job is to bring light to the stories and mission of the agency. Specifically, she would be interviewing CAB members on their stories and association with the agency. The

stories would then be posted throughout the agency and our social media to recognize our CAB members. Thus, during this time I would seek out possible people to help with our educational forums while CAB members would be interviewed.

Q. MAY 2016

During this month, some of the Congolese CAB members had expressed having a division among their community. These members confided in me to discuss concerns regarding lack of trust with other Congolese community members. We currently have several Congolese members within our CAB. Some of these members came forward seeking help in mediating the division in their community with the help of the agency. However, not all of the CAB Congolese members came forward and we had only heard one side of the conflict. At the moment, I was not aware of the issues and history of the division within this community. The division was and is apparently causing community members to hesitate to work together, including our own CAB members. After meeting with some of the CAB Congolese members, I decided to bring in outside experts and conduct a professional training. Due to time restraints, another staff advisor who will oversee the group will be responsible for conducting a professional development training.

R. JUNE 2016

Our last meeting in June involved discussions on future steps for the group. The group has plans to conduct educational forums on issues that affect their communities. The educational forums would consist of the following topics:

- a. **CAB Monthly Community Forums & Info Sessions**
  - i. Fraud Protection
  - ii. Understanding the Healthcare System

- iii. Understanding the Public Education System
- iv. Available Education & Training Opportunities (i.e. RIC Outreach)
- v. Effective Parenting & Appropriate Child Discipline
- vi. Family Dynamics & Law Enforcement – Cultural Differences
- vii. Gender Equity
- viii. Financial Empowerment & Building Credit
- ix. Home Ownership

Group members also expressed a need for professional development trainings in addition to several other concerns. The following are some main points that have been expressed by group members:

- Consensus on the lack of support and disconnect after receiving services; there is no follow-up system in place; CAB members would like to see a system set up for continued support
- Follow-up system will also be used as an assessment to determine if service used was successful or if and how it can be improved
- There is a need to connect with outside community leaders to create opportunities of engagement and create more partnerships to then help communities

Finally, the group would like to be integrated into the agency and have more recognition. The agency is currently documenting the stories of the group members to then publish and post around the agency as a way to give recognition to the community advisory board. Thus, this would be their way to address the issue of lack of recognition and praise members for their work at the same time.



## S. REFLECTION THREE

The past six months gathered more staff support despite losing momentum with the group. For example, the Executive Director came to one of our meetings and met some of the group members. I believe most members felt a sense of relieve as they were finally acknowledged.

While most members left the group and have yet to return, we ended up with a consistent eight group members. The agency introduced the idea of CAB members creating a client satisfaction survey to then implement throughout the agency. Staff advisors claimed that the survey project would help members develop leadership skills. Clients revealed a number of times they wished to receive leadership training however, the agency seemed to have a different idea of how they would implement that. Again, there seemed to be a lack of collaboration and consensus between the agency and the group members.

## T. FINAL THOUGHTS

The community advisory board, though it has had some successes, continues to develop and find its home within the agency. The initiative did not begin with a lot of staff support and I feel this continues to be problematic. After the 11-month service, I feel the community advisory board is beginning to at least get some recognition and attention. The following section outlines the reflections and possible solutions to address the existing problems. My reflections, again are not to serve as a critique of the agency, but rather to offer practical resolutions with the use of the successes outlined within the literature section.

## **PART IV. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

Initially, the establishment of the community group was presented as an idea to engage clients with the intention of improving services and meeting the needs of every client. The shift in management however created something similar with a few differences. Currently, the project has evolved into a group with a more specific purpose. Specifically, the purpose of the group was narrowed to the following:

- Provide consistent and informative feedback to DIIRI management, and suggest improvements in the customer experience to ensure high-quality, client-centered services
- Develop Ambassadors' leadership and advocacy skills to effectively represent and outreach to the client community
- Foster greater client community engagement through social events, community workshops, and updates on agency services

Despite its good intentions, the agency seemed to have invested their time in other efforts.

### *5. Bureaucracy*

Upon my arrival to the agency, the initiative I was to work on was transferred over to new management. The person who was to oversee my work had left the agency and no one had taken ownership of the initiative. As a result, the initial proposal for the project I was given evolved to something different. The progress for the group became slow as a result of not having a clear idea of what the group was nor what the agency wanted from the creation of this group. There was a lack of a clear action plan with specific measurable objectives to achieve. I began to focus my time and efforts into understanding the dynamics within the agency. I volunteered my time to

work in other departments to understand the client needs and the ways in which services were implemented.

During my involvement in other departments, I realized a lot of staff were not aware of services that were offered in other departments and felt disconnected from them. The agency offers services in education, citizenship and immigration, refugee resettlement, translation, and clothing donations. Every department functions differently and each has a different number of staff.

When discussing my work with other staff, no one had knowledge of the project the agency was trying to build. Most staff expressed difficulty meeting their job responsibilities in the allotted hours they were required to work. Thus, most staff seemed too busy to involve themselves or be aware of agency projects outside of their department.

In addition to my own project being placed under new management, the agency has also been experiencing changes as a result of the merge. Based on several informal discussions with staff in different departments, there are too many changes occurring in a short period of time. Most feel the agency is becoming more of a for-profit corporation and are under pressure to bring in more revenue. The changes are affecting their job to the point where people are working under pressure. Some have begun to look for employment elsewhere while others contemplate on how to continue to manage their responsibilities. It became clear why I was unable to receive assistance to recruit members for the community advisory board.

Described above is Foucault's concept of power/knowledge where community members are given a "stock of resources that allows them to influence their own life circumstances" (Stoecker 2013: 37). Community members are then equipped to generate effect and new knowledge.

Community members are able to specify their own issues and develop solutions in which to solve them. Although the agency had included in their initiative to provide leadership training

and professional development workshops, the development of the group seemed at a constant ambiguousness. Further, although initially some members and I had created a proposal with client feedback, the feedback was not acknowledged as the agency could not specify immediately responsible staff who would oversee the group.

In addition to empowering community members with knowledge and power, effective strategies to mobilize groups discussed above included prioritizing client ideas, create own solutions, and securing funding (Canham-Clyne, 2009). Securing funding became a challenge as the group did not begin establishing with a clear purpose. As a result, attempts to secure funding remained an issue as there was a lack of specific ways in which funds would be used. Further, the lack of proposed specific prioritized projects or issues of the group were not put into action as a result.

Clear structure has proven to be an effective strategy when developing community groups. The community advisory board attempted to develop structure with bylaws, a narrower and clearly defined initiative, and structured monthly meetings. However, the lack of appropriate management support, resources, and funding, the group was unable to have a successful beginning. Perhaps, the agency could have benefitted from defining the exact specifics of the project prior to recruiting clients with a vague idea of the project. Creating internal and external structure could have aided in developing a clear idea and methodology to successful create the group.

#### *6.Lack of a Cohesive Group*

Upon my arrival to the agency, the community group was composed of five refugee members who happen to all be from the Congo. The staff advisors however wanted to create a group that represents the clients they serve. My first priority was then to recruit clients from different

backgrounds. Coming in from the outside, it became challenging to recruit clients as did not have knowledge nor previous interactions with clientele. I began to contact staff to help with recruitment for the group. Most requests went ignored with the exception of the Coordinator of Volunteers who was more than happy to help. At one point, I had recruited 15 members for our group from different cultural backgrounds.

Due to the slow progress and constant back and forth between the group and the agency, most members stopped all participation with the group. The introduction and instability of members coming and going to meetings became challenging as the group was unable to find a common ground. The inconsistencies also contributed to a lack of progress as the group could not specify individual responsibilities with the creation of their bylaws. The group also seemed to be disconnected from one another and therefore we could not find a collective ground.

As mentioned above under “Community Organizing Techniques,” a useful technique to create cohesion and stability among community groups is the process of building relationships with the community to foster social change (Stall and Stoecker, 1997). The community advisory board remained unstable due to the constant addition and departure of members. The group was thus unable to begin establishing relations amongst themselves. Other than the monthly meetings held, the group did not have any outside engagements with each other or with other surrounding communities. Although it was written in the initiative, members were supposed to attend three external community events per year, however the group did not have any accountability despite being given a list of community events at the start of every meeting.

As stated earlier, “the key principle of community organizing is to make lasting connections between people, information, and institutions (Canham-Clyne, 2009: 2). Communication and creating connections among all parties involved always remained problematic due to the

instability of the agency defining the group and its exact purpose. In addition, due to the process of trying to establish a specific purpose for the group, I felt group members perceived a different idea of what the group was and would offer them. As a result, there remained a lack of cohesion among the group and among the group and the agency.

Strength and cohesion enable group members to strive for social change. Shared values or “values-based,” as mentioned above, influences the importance of interpersonal relationships to then allow for sustainability of activity and trust that is necessary to effect community change (Christens and Speer 2015). Unfortunately, the structure of the community meetings did not allow opportunity to create interpersonal relationships which could have opened the opportunity for building trust. In addition, the values of the members were not made explicit and thus, we were unable to create solidarity among the group.

Another effective strategy to produce cohesion and integration among the group discussed above is cultural organizing. The group was culturally diverse, as this was a desired goal from the agency, however some group members confided in me that they felt the group was created to serve the Congolese community, as they outnumbered every other culture representing the group. I felt the cultural difference created division among the group and it became a difficult issue to address. In addition to the fluctuating members coming and going, cohesion among the group became a difficult task. Upon my arrival to the agency, I had researched methods and strategies being used by other organizations who had community advisory boards. Most, if not all, claimed to have boards with the same cultural background in order to address their specific needs. I conveyed this information to the agency but they felt creating a representative group with different cultural backgrounds would be a better idea. While some may argue a naturalness about

creating cohesion among people with similar needs, the lack of cohesiveness within the group proved otherwise.

### *7.Lack of Collaboration Between the Agency and Clients*

Throughout my experience with group members, I was constantly asked by group members what the agency wanted from them. In response, I also asked agency staff what they specifically wanted from the group. Unfortunately, there was a lack of consensus on what the clients wanted and what the agency wanted. Once we developed more clear purposes for the group, it seemed the direction was now a purpose that would be more in favor of the agency. For instance, the intended leadership group had now become an advisory board that would help create client centered services. I felt group members would have preferred to receive training to help specifically meet the needs of their own communities. Although the intention seemed good, the feedback given to us by clients was never used to improve services. In addition, the creation of this community group did not stem from a community need addressed by the community. Rather, the authors of the initiative felt they were not meeting the needs of the clients and the creation of a community advisory board would help address this issue.

The initiative, although it was created with the intention to help clients, was created by authors each with a different vision for the group. One of the authors confided in me that one author wished to create a leadership group, while another wished to create a group where members would learn skills to retain or look for employment. While the intentions nonetheless are very much client oriented, the authors failed to take client input or feedback into the proposed project. In other words, the initiative did not include client input where they would have the opportunity to state their specific needs or address their own community issues and ways in which this project could address those issues.

Cultural organizing includes recognizing the oppression and marginalization experienced by certain groups to create a sense of belonging. In addition, outside groups have the opportunity to learn about the different approaches and cultural practices that exist within the different groups involved. Thus, conducting a community needs assessment that includes client input, approaches, solutions, and cultural practices would nonetheless help with creating a practical group with specific issues to address. Collaboration between clients and the agency is thus essential in organizing.

Stoecker (2013) describes a project-based model emphasizing collaboration and client input into the following method: diagnose, prescribe, implement, and evaluate. The first step involves client input as they can address and diagnose their own community needs. The community members then proceed by developing a process in which they can target those needs.

Unfortunately, the creation of the community advisory board initiative did not take into account a “diagnoses” step where clients would provide their own needs and develop an initiative to specifically meet the client needs. Although later throughout the evolution of the group, group members were given the opportunity to express what they would like to gain from the group, the lack of clarity of management for the group failed to take accountability.

The initiative however did attempt to proceed using the “bottom-up” approach. Clients did have the opportunity to give input and propose future projects. The group however will need recognition and support from the agency. In addition, new management for the group should create a clear action plan detailing a structured methodology with specific measurable goals to achieve. In addition, it is crucial that the group receive leadership or professional development trainings to prepare them to work with surrounding communities. The group although not a requirement for success, could also benefit from creating a group identity where group members



feel a bond or attachment to one another, this will create trust. Lastly, funding will secure sustainability for the group.

Eleven months after my time at the agency, the group is still continuing to form their foundation.

The group still needs training and overall time to become leaders of their communities. The group could still benefit from recognition and integration into the agency. This will require support and overall prioritization from the agency.

## References

- Brady, Shane R., & O'Connor, Mary K. 2014. "Understanding How Community Organizing Leads to Social Change: The Beginning Development of Formal Practice Theory." *Journal Of Community Practice*, 22(1/2), 210-228.
- Canham-Clyne, Melissa. 2009. "Organizing Together: The Library as Community Organizer." *Urban Library Journal*, 15(2), 1-9.
- Christens, Brian D., & Speer Paul W. 2015. "Community Organizing: Practice, Research, and Policy Implications." *Social Issues & Policy Review*, 9(1), 193-222.
- DeCamp, Lisa R.; Polk, Sarah; Chrismer, Marilyn C.; Giusti, Flor; Thompson, Darcy A.; & Sibinga, Erica. 2015. "Health Care Engagement of Limited English Proficient Latino Families: Lessons Learned from Advisory Board Development." *Progress In Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, And Action*, 9(4), 521-530.
- Dobbie, David. 2009. "We Make Change: Community Organizers Talk About What They Do—and Why," by Kristin L. Szakos & J. Szakos. *Journal Of Community Practice*, 17(3), 337-338.
- Havlicek, Judy; Lin, Ching-Hsuan, & Villalpando, Fabiola. 2016. "Web survey of foster youth advisory boards in the United States." *Children And Youth Services Review*, (60)109-118.
- Israel, Barbara A.; Schulz, Amy J.; Parker, Edith A.; & Becker, Adam B. 1998. "Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health." *Annual Review of Public Health*, (19) 173-202.
- Jagosh, Justin; Bush, Paula L.; Salsberg, Jon; Macaulay, Ann C.; Greenhalgh, Trish; Wong, Geoff; Cargo, Margaret; Green, Lawrence W.; Herbert, Carol P.; Pluye, Pierre 2015. "A realist evaluation of community-based participatory research: partnership synergy, trust building and related ripple effects." *BMC Public Health*, 15(1), 1-11.
- Kohl-Arenas, Erica; Nateras, Myrna M.; & Taylor, Johanna. 2014. "Cultural Organizing as Critical Praxis: Tamejavi Builds Immigrant Voice, Belonging, and Power." *Journal Of Poverty*, 18(1), 5-24.
- Krasner, Michael A., & Pierre-Louis, Francois 2009. "Social Capital and Educational Organizing in Low Income, Minority, and New Immigrant Communities: Can the University Strengthen Community Organizations?". *Education And Urban Society*, 41(6), 672-694.
- Kue, Jennifer; Thorburn, Sheryl, & Keon, Karen L. 2015. "Research Challenges and Lessons Learned From Conducting Community-Based Research With the Hmong Community." *Health Promotion Practice*, 16(3), 411.
- McMillan, David W., & Chavis, David M. 1986. "Sense of community: A definition and theory." *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6-23.
- Ramsay, Jason T.; Smith, Peter; Thompson, Alison; O'Campo, Patricia; Nisenbaum, Rosane; Watson, Priya; Park-Wylie, Laura; Bryant, Toba; Tandon, Reena, and Farah, Mohammed 2012.

"Evaluating Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Community Advisory Panel Model for Enhancing Service Delivery to Marginalized Populations." *Public Health Nursing* 29, no. 4: 302-312.

Rappaport, Julian 1987. "Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory of community psychology." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, (15) 121-148.

Rich, Christine; Goncalves, Adrienne; Guardiani, Miranda; O'Donnell, Ellen & Strzelecki, Jessica 2014. "Teen Advisory Committee: Lessons Learned by Adolescents, Facilitators, And Hospital Staff." *Pediatric Nursing*, 40(6), 289-296.

Schwartz, Sarah & Suyemoto, Karen 2013. "Creating Change From the Inside: Youth Development Within A Youth Community Organizing Program." *Journal Of Community Psychology*, 41(3), 341-358.

Speer, Paul W. & Christens, Brian D. 2012. "Local community organizing and change: Altering policy in the housing and community development system in Kansas City." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 22(5), 414-427.

Speer, Paul W.; Peterson, Andrew N.; Zippay, Allison & Christens, Brian D. 2010. "Participation in congregation-based organizing: Mixed-method study of civic engagement." In M. Roberts-DeGennaro & S. J. Fogel (Eds.), "Using evidence to inform practice for community and organizational change." (pp. 200-217). Chicago: Lyceum

Stall, Susan & Stoeker, Randy 1997. "*Community organizing or organizing community? Gender and the crafts of empowerment*" (A COMM-ORG Working Paper). Retrieved September 4, 2008, from <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers96/gender2.html>

Stoeker, Randy 2005. "*Research methods for community change: a project-based approach.*" Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005.

Walker, Edward T. & Stepick, Lina M. 2014. "Strength in Diversity? Group Heterogeneity in the Mobilization of Grassroots Organizations." *Sociology Compass*, 8(7), 959-975.

Walls, David 2015. "What's Next for Community Organizing?." *Social Policy*, 45(1), 49-54.

Way, Amy K. 2013. "Organizing girls' empowerment: Negotiating tensions through community engaged research." *Tamara Journal For Critical Organization Inquiry*, 11(4), 79-92.

Willingham, Taylor 2008. "Libraries as civic agents." *Public Libraries Quarterly*, 27(2), 97-110.

Wood, Gerald K., & Lemley, Christine K. 2015. "Mapping Cultural Boundaries in Schools and Communities: Redefining Spaces through Organizing." *Democracy & Education*, 23(1).

Appendix 1-Client Ambassador Team Initiative



---

- 
- 

### **Role of Ambassadors**

- 
- 
- 
- 

*[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]*

Comment [JP4]: As stated

**Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island**

**Community Advisory Board Feedback**

**September 29, 2015 (last updated 12/7/15)**

**Introduction:**

On behalf of the Community Advisory Board, the purpose of this document is to give feedback and offer suggestions for improvement on DIIRI services. DIIRI's Community Advisory Board is given the opportunity to comment and evaluate services they have used, to then propose suggestions for improvement.

**Statement of Problem/Challenges and Possible Solutions:**

*Employment Services and Career Academy*

*Challenge:* Community Advisory Board members have expressed a challenge with the current structure of the Employment Services. For example, once the process to find employment begins and the client remains *unemployed* for a long period of time, the client will then be placed at the back of the line to continue receiving assistance, as new clients have become a priority. The client not only remains unemployed, but is also unable to continue to receive immediate assistance. The challenge may also continue with the new clients seeking employment, and thus perpetuating a cycle.

*Solution:* In order to avoid this issue, members have proposed a continuous follow-up process that may not only speed up the process to help clients find employment, but also prevent clients from returning due to their unemployment status. The follow-up process would consist of DIIRI staff to have direct communication with the client and check their employment status. Should the client remain unemployed, a staff member could offer further assistance. The follow-up process also aids in empowering the client to eventually become self-sufficient.

*Challenge:* Although the Employment Services Department collaborates with various employers to potentially hire DIIRI clients, Community Advisory Board members indicated that many clients seeking employment mostly have the option of choosing between two major employers. Considering the range of clients' skills, clients could benefit from choosing from a wider variety of employers. Members suggest for Employment Services to thus create a wider range and connection with more prospective employers in the community.

*Challenge:* In regards to employment training, members of the board expressed that an individual-assessment of obtained skills and experiences would aid in better placement for career development. Members suggest assessing individual skills including English level, work experiences, and special relevant job skills to then place an individual in a more appropriate

vocational training. Clients can then build on the skills they attain and develop a strong career background.

### The Education and Training Program

*Challenge:* Members of the Community Advisory Board have shared frustrations over the type of assessments currently being implemented for assessing English levels. For instance, members have communicated that a computer test may not fully capture the appropriate English level. For instance, some clients may not be familiar with using a computer and challenges with using technology may conflict with appropriately measuring the English level. In addition, many clients possess different levels of English in each of the language components (reading, writing, and speaking). While they may be able to read and write English at a high level, their speaking skills may be limited.

*Solution:* Community Advisory members suggest changing and implementing an assessment that would capture all three levels. Further, staff should be made aware if a client is unable or uncomfortable using the computer, and thus make accommodations. A proposed solution to solve the issue of computer illiteracy would be to implement a course to introduce the basics of using a computer.

*Challenge:* Members have expressed the use of individual assessment for ESL classes offered at DIIRI. For instance, members stated that individuals who sign up for a class have a different purpose for taking the class. One person may wish to pursue a college degree, while another may want to gain knowledge about American culture. Other students may simply wish to take an English Conversation course. In addition, frustrations over the combination ESL class levels have been shared among the members. Members expressed that learning in a combined-level English course was impeding her learning.

*Solution:* To help clients reach their personal goals, members suggest creating an individual assessment to understand the goals and objectives of each student. A suggestion to address this issue of mixed-level courses is to have a more focused class to teach for a specific level of English.

*Challenge:* Many members of the board have expressed a concern over unmotivated students in their class. Members believe because some students are obligated to take the course by DHS, their motivation levels may not be as high as someone who is paying in full for the class.

*Solution:* Members suggest having an orientation that would serve as a motivational workshop for students.

### Case Management

*Challenge:* A major concern for members of the board and clients of Case Management is the challenge of not receiving immediate assistance. Members have stated that the problem may be

due to an understaffed department. Members also expressed concern over other clients not having immediate assistance due to language barriers.

*Solution:* A proposed solution would be to hire more case workers who are not only qualified for the position, but multi-lingual. Members suggest hiring more interpreting assistance which would be available upon request to assist appointments with case management.

*Challenge:* Members pointed out clients form a trusting relationship with their case workers however; they have seen a high attrition rate with many employees only staying with the agency for a short period of time. The high attrition rate with staff becomes problematic for clients as they have to develop a trusting relationship with a new worker who may not understand their complete background.

*Solution:*

If possible, members suggest hiring refugees with required experience. Overall, hiring more case workers would be beneficial.

### All Services

*Challenge:* Cultural sensitivity was an issue raised by the board members. Members stated that some staff members have treated clients in a manner that was less than professional. Members stated that clients have felt offended and mistreated. For instance, a client seeking employment assistance was told that a job cannot “simply be pulled out of a pocket.”

*Solution:* Members suggest implementing an orientation for staff with continuous follow-up on cultural differences and sensitivity. This orientation would be conducted by appropriate and qualified staff and given to staff members, interns, and volunteers. Members also suggest having follow-up meetings with staff about client confidentiality protocol. In addition, members suggest training all staff to become knowledgeable of outside resources available, if not offered at DIIRI. Staff can then effectively implement referrals to outside services.

### Recommendations:

In order to have greater support for DIIRI clients, Community Advisory Board members recommend connecting with local community leaders. Community leaders also have direct connection and engagement with community members. To better assist clients, it was suggested for DIIRI to work together with community leaders to have a better understanding of the community needs. Working together would also help in promoting DIIRI and its services to different communities of need. Members suggest having a physical space at DIIRI for members to meet with other CAB members or with other community members.

Members also recommend DIIRI to conduct more advertising for all of the classes offered to the community, in a manner that will reach most of the community. Members claimed that many



clients are unaware of the schedule of classes and more advertisement could aid in solving this issue. In addition, members suggest communication between clients and the agency when there are changes to the structure of the classes. Clients would like to give input and feedback when changes are made to the agency. Clients feel the input and feedback will better assist in meeting the needs of the community.

Clients have also expressed the lack of knowledge about public assistance or other forms of aid offered by DIIRI. For example, most clients are not aware of the bus passes or free ESL classes offered if receiving public assistance. A proposed solution would be to communicate this with students, perhaps a speaker in the classroom on the first day.

*Other:*

Members have raised the difficulties that may arise due to a client's unique background. For example, the resettlement process often takes a number of years and as a result many will grow out of the U.S. school age (18 yrs.). Consequently, the young student is not able to continue their education at the average school setting. Community Advisory members propose that exceptions should be made for clients with special circumstances. In addition, other alternative options should be made available for people who have unique situations who also wish to pursue an education.

*Solutions:*

- Implement a follow-up program to ensure employment
- Connect with other prospective employers in the community
- Individual employment assessment
- Utilize appropriate and different forms of assessment for English levels
- Hire more case workers, including multi-lingual workers who are committed to staying with the agency for a long period of time
- On-going staff orientation for cultural sensitivity and confidentiality protocol
- Connect with local community leaders
- Advertise schedule of classes in a manner to reach more potential students
- Allow for client input and feedback when making changes to the agency
- Staff awareness of alternative education programs

## Appendix 3-October CAB Meeting Minutes

Saturday October 3, 2015

1:00-2:30 p.m.

### Notes on CAB meeting

#### A. Announcements:

- Members agreed to attend board meeting on December 16, 5 p.m.
- Members are aware they have a space reserved at 220 Elmwood Ave. Room 119

#### B. Mission statement revised:

*We as Community Advisory Board members are a group of multicultural leaders who bring a voice and resources to all in the community. We accomplish this through advising DIIRI staff, sharing information, and creating opportunities of engagement. We advocate for the community at large, and connect with different organizations.*

#### C. CAB Logo

- Members will individually bring their own design to our next meeting. Members will decide on a logo of choice to then combine with DIIRI's logo.

#### D. Our proposal/Timeline

- Members agreed to work on the following projects in the next 3 months:
  1. Client Bill of Rights (meeting to take place on October 17),
  2. Establish and create bylaws (to be drafted before our next monthly meeting on November 7; Aline, James, and Bendu will assist)
  3. Create a draft for ways in which members can spread awareness of available resources to our surrounding communities (one month)
  4. Create a presentation on cultural awareness
  5. Homework:
    - Members are to fill out a questionnaire profile detailing background information and explaining their vision for our CAB
    - Members will bring a design for a logo for our next meeting in November
    - Members will meet October 17 to create a draft of a client bill of rights document
    - A scheduled time is to be set with Aline, James, and Bendu to create bylaws for our CAB

**Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island**

**Community Advisory Board**

**By-laws**

**October 14, 2015 (last updated 11/19)**

**ARTICLE I-NAME AND PURPOSE**

Section 1- *Name*: Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Section 2- *Purpose*: The Community Advisory Board is organized under the agency Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island. The purpose of our board is to:

- Provide consistent and informative feedback to DIIRI management, and suggest improvements in the customer experience to ensure high-quality, client-centered services
- Develop Ambassadors' leadership and advocacy skills to effectively represent and outreach to the client community
- Foster greater client community engagement through social events, community workshops, and updates on agency services

**ARTICLE II-MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Section 1-*Membership*: Open to any past or current DIIRI client who has an interest in representing the DIIRI client community to agency leadership and engaging community members in the agency's work in a multitude of ways.

Section 2-*Attendance*: Members will be accountable for attending all regular meetings. If the person is unable to attend, they should notify a staff advisor and the CAB secretary, prior to the meeting. If a member is absent for 3 consecutive regular meetings without any communication to CAB, the member will no longer be eligible to serve as a CAB member. Members who are absent for more than half of the monthly regular meetings within 12 months will also no longer be eligible to serve as a CAB member.

Section 3-*Responsibilities*: Members should participate and dedicate time to attending all meetings, trainings, and a community event of their choice. The group is not a decision-making board. The agency will develop partnership collaboration with CAB, and will follow policy protocol to implement any change to the institution.

Ambassadors are expected to:

- Gather feedback from community members about common issues of concern on an ongoing basis.
- Fulfill duties of any leadership roles taken upon themselves within the CAB, such as officer positions and committee chairs.

- Participate in at least three community events per year to establish and strengthen relationship to the community.

### **ARTICLE III-MEETINGS OF MEMBERS**

Section 1-*Regular meetings*: Meetings will be held on the first Saturday of the month and alternate from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Meetings will last approximately one hour and a half, unless otherwise noted.

Section 2- *Notice of Meetings*: A phone call and/or email one week prior to meetings, will serve as a reminder for all members. Unless there is a vacancy, all meeting reminders will come from the CAB Secretary.

Section 3-*Quorum*: In order to hold meetings and initiate votes, at least 2/3 of the total membership must be present.

Section 4-*Voting*: All decisions and election of officers will be voted on and decided by a simple majority; the quorum will be upheld.

### **ARTICLE IV- COMMITTEES**

Section 1-*Type of Committees*: Committees will be established based on client need and suggestion.

### **ARTICLE V-OFFICERS**

Section 1-*Titles and Responsibilities of Officers*:

- *Chair*: Responsible for facilitating meetings and CAB events; have a strong understanding of the immigrant and refugee community issues, strong leadership skills; ability to advocate on the immigrant and refugee communities' behalf; public speaker for CAB events.
- *Vice-Chair*: Responsible for taking over in the absence of the Chair.
- *Secretary*: Responsible for documenting discussions at meetings, keeping attendance, informing members with information if they were unable to attend any meetings or social events.

Section 2-*Selection of Officers*: Officers will be elected by a majority vote. The terms will last for one year. Officers are allowed to serve two terms.

### **ARTICLE VI-HOW BYLAWS CAN BE CHANGED**

Section 1-Any change to the CAB bylaws can be made by a sub majority 2/3 vote, upholding the quorum.

## Appendix 5-Leadership Team Meeting Feedback Leadership Meeting

November 10, 2015

### Feedback:

- Kathy believes our current purposes seem overwhelming and could be **narrower, more specific, and better defined**. For example, would we really be increasing job acquisition? How would we increase retention as stated on the initial proposal? We could also include in the proposal what they will do and perhaps what they will *not* do as a CAB.
- Defining our purpose and goals will help bring more manageability. Currently, it includes too many purposes.
- Include **specific** activities for them to do and perhaps include that in the by-laws.
- As far as preparing our CAB members for doing the hands-on projects, Bruno suggests beginning with short term projects and then build up to larger events.
- To better integrate and engage CAB with the agency, it was suggested we could do a social or a type of meet-and-greet event for both CAB and staff, every 6 months. (Brandon and I have discussed holding a pot-luck next month)
- To better help get the CAB members to socialize, it was suggested we leave the first 30 minutes for informal conversation including lunch, and then conduct our monthly meetings.
- Kathy suggests for our next step to start with leadership skills and facilitation training.
- Can begin with CAB conducting a focus group, while gaining facilitation/leadership experience.

### Questions asked:

Where does CAB live? How do we follow-up with progress or any formal documents we create? (e.g. by-laws, bill of rights, etc).

- Kathy would like for us to report to the leadership group as well as CSI. They would like to start by having us (staff advisors) and some of the CAB members come to their next meeting and present our progress: **December 11 @ 12 noon**. The leadership group would like to look at the client bill of rights and by-laws to make any suggestions or improvements (I was told to email them right before their next meeting). They would also like to gather feedback on the CAB members experiences, and introduce what they have been doing (I will call and invite some members).
- There were many concerns about this group being sustainable; especially after I leave. I was asked if the current staff advisors are invested in keeping CAB running. I suggested hiring someone who would be responsible for CAB or to have CAB

responsibilities be built into a staff member's job description (or a few staff members).

Other:

They also asked about the levels of commitment of the individual members. I think us as advisors, would also benefit from getting to know them and why they are a part of CAB. This is something I tried to do by having them fill out the member profile (only a couple of responses were submitted). This could be something we do at our next meeting.

## Appendix 6-Revised CAB Proposal/Initiative

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island

Community Advisory Board

August 18, 2015 (last updated 11/17)

### **Introduction and Mission:**

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) is made up of current clients, and alumni, who are committed to the mission of Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island (DIIRI). CAB members are taking on the role of “Ambassador” to represent the various clients and communities served by the agency. Through leadership and service, Ambassadors will engage in meaningful advocacy, awareness, outreach, and community-building activities to the benefit of all current and potential DIIRI clients. Ambassadors will provide DIIRI with a permanent feedback mechanism so that the agency can continuously improve the quality of services and ensure that the agency remains client-focused.

Ambassadors have developed a mission statement aligned with DIIRI’s mission:

*We as Community Advisory Board Ambassadors are a group of multicultural leaders who bring a voice and resources to all in the community. We accomplish this through advising DIIRI staff, sharing information, and creating opportunities of engagement. We advocate for the community at large, and connect with different organizations.*

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this initiative is to:

- ✓ Provide consistent and informative feedback to DIIRI management, and suggest improvements in the customer experience to ensure high-quality, client-centered services
- ✓ Develop Ambassadors’ leadership and advocacy skills to effectively represent and outreach to the client community
- ✓ Foster greater client community engagement through social events, community workshops, and updates on agency services

### **Structure:**

The Ambassadors will convene as a Community Advisory Board. The CAB will consist of maximum of 15 members. Potential members can be nominated by staff, CAB members, or be self-selected; with the goal of having a comprehensive membership representing a variety of communities that have utilized the full range of services provided by DIIRI. As the group becomes more established, the intent is to grow formal opportunities through committees.

Although DIIRI clients, students, and alumni may serve on different committees, all those serving on the CAB will be known as Ambassadors. As the Ambassadors’ participation grows, the committees will be able to focus on more specific action items.

### **Development:**

The ultimate goal is a successful leadership program that engages Ambassadors, the client community, and staff. Every three months, we will formally evaluate CAB progress and impact. The evaluation will allow CAB to consistently revisit its mission and make necessary adjustments as it moves forward in its work. It is the CAB's intent to:

- Establish and maintain a group of representative Ambassadors
- Help create and implement a comprehensive client survey in conjunction with DIIRI staff
- Participate in at least three community events per year
- Develop two initiatives and or community events per year
- Create a new CAB member orientation

### **Incentive:**

Participating in this effort may result in a cost to members for things such as childcare and travel. It would be ideal to be able to offer a stipend to members in order to cover their cost of participation and provide some refreshments. Other incentives for Ambassadors include: public recognition within the agency and on social media, invitation to DIIRI special events, networking opportunities, and the ability to affect positive, client-focused change within the agency.





**Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island**

**Client Bill of Rights**

Created by our Community Advisory Board

**As a client, I have the right to:**

- ✓ Receive good quality services that include excellent customer service, knowledgeable staff, and staff who are able to refer to outside resources or services, as needed.
- ✓ Feel welcomed, safe, and receive a description of the service I am being given in a language that I understand, whenever possible, including dates of service, a detailed description of the service, and other relevant information.
- ✓ Receive translated materials in a language that I comprehend. Services should be interpreted in a manner where I understand completely, whenever possible.
- ✓ Be aware of services offered at a reduced cost to assist low-income families or individuals.
- ✓ Access and responsibility to adhere to applicable departmental and agency policies and procedures, related to services being delivered.
- ✓ Refuse a service and understand the consequences of not receiving service.
- ✓ Expect privacy and confidentiality from all agency staff members, and when appropriate, request reasonable accommodation when discussing culturally sensitive matters.
- ✓ File a formal complaint to appropriate personnel if any of the above rights have not been respected.

## Appendix 8- Steps for Developing an Effective Advisory Committee

**1. Establish the purpose of the group.** To build the membership of your advisory committee, you will first need to develop or clarify its purpose and scope. For example, an advisory committee whose first priority will be to increase partnership collaboration and communication will likely have different membership than one whose primary purpose is to organize match activities or raise additional funds for special events. If the advisory committee's purpose is not clearly defined in your grant, refer to the section earlier in this article for common reasons for forming an advisory committee.

The following questions may also help you define your group's purpose and structure:

- Do you want an advisory committee that can advocate for your program and increase its visibility, both internally and externally?
- Do you want a working committee that can take on specific tasks to support your activities, or an advisory group that can provide informed input as you plan new activities or develop policies and procedures?
- Do you need the advisory committee as a structure for keeping partners engaged and community members informed, or would it be most helpful to have a small group of people with specific skills and connections that can help you get things done?
- What decisions can this group make? Will your board of directors need to approve any actions the group wants to take? How will the advisory committee communicate with the board of directors?
- Who will staff the advisory committee? Are any funds available to provide such basics as refreshments at meetings?

## **2. Recruit members that fit with the group's purpose.**

As you begin to develop the advisory committee's membership, it will be natural to turn first to people you already know, or those who have already expressed interest in being involved. This base of supporters is a good start, but you will soon need to think more strategically about whom you want to serve on your committee and the skills they will need. Examples of potential members might include:

- Current or former clients
- Representatives of partner organizations
- Representatives from key community based organizations that serve immigrant and refugees
- Advocates in your community
- Representation from your community's cultural, racial, and ethnic minorities

Other criteria for membership may include diversity of opinions and experience, and a balance of cultural, racial, age, and gender representation.

The skills you look for as you build your committee depend on its purpose. If it is primarily to raise funds, look for members with grant writing, event management, business, or marketing

skills. If you need members to articulate your mission, skills in public speaking or journalism might be helpful. If you need help with program policy and procedures, skills in management and attention to detail will be important. In addition, all members should be able to communicate well, listen and learn, and provide constructive advice. Above all, they should be enthusiastic and have a genuine interest in helping you with your mission.

As you recruit members, ask for suggestions from other staff members, your board of directors, partner agencies, and others. Develop a simple written application that gathers basic information about the person's skills, interests, and motivations. This will help you track the mix of skills and representation that will be effective in carrying out the group's mission. Once your group is established, have participants determine policies and procedures for recruiting and selecting new members.

**3. Build your team and develop structure.** Once you have selected the core group, begin developing teamwork and a sense of ownership. Your first meeting is likely to be devoted to getting acquainted and learning about the program. But it is a good idea to start working on a specific task as soon as possible to more fully engage members. One necessary task is the development of the committee's basic operating procedures: whether there will be officers, how often the group will meet, meeting structure and guidelines, term of service, and so on. Even if some of these have been set up in advance, the group should review them and suggest improvements.

**4. Prepare members for their role and the work they will do for your program.** Once members have become acquainted and have established some basic operating guidelines, they will be eager to take on the work they were recruited to do. Before determining exactly what that work should be, they need to understand what your program is all about and what their mission and level of involvement will be. Prepare them by:

- **Providing a thorough orientation to your program.** Describe long-term goals and objectives, current activities, and any successes or challenges. Include information about the people you serve, partnerships, and other program basics. Give enough background so that members will understand how the program works and can offer suggestions that make sense. Be sure to provide information in writing to review and refer to later.

- **Reviewing the advisory committee's mission.**

If committee members were not involved in creating the mission, they should review it and see if it reflects why they are there. It should be something they all feel reflects what they want to be. Let them know in advance if there are any requirements dictated by your funding source that limit changing the mission.

- **Clarifying the extent and limits of authority.**

An advisory committee can make recommendations or give opinions but in most cases has no true decision making authority. Make sure that members know what decisions they can make on their own, how their advice is used, and how final decisions are made in the agency. Develop a communication link between the board of directors and the advisory committee so that your group sees that their work is recognized and taken seriously.

**5. Empower the group to develop a clear scope of work.** Advisory committee members may look to staff for direction on what their specific role should be and what activities they will be

involved with, but in order for them to be fully invested they need to develop their own work plan based on the information you provide. Walk them through a planning process that might look like this:

- Facilitate a conversation about which program areas would benefit from the group's support, such as volunteer recruitment and training, fundraising, or community awareness.
- Discuss which of the identified areas need support right now and which could wait or need little support. Ask them to pick one or two areas for immediate action and one or two as a long-term goal. Allowing them to establish these priorities will help ensure their commitment, but it's your job to make sure the priorities they set are realistic and fill a real program need.
- Have the group establish measurable objectives and specific activities for the areas they have agreed to work on. For example, if expanding the volunteer pool is their first priority, the group might have an objective of increasing the number of businesses that encourage their employees to be mentors. To accomplish this objective, they each agree to contact five businesses over the next three months and report on the results.
- Identify a lead person for each area of involvement the committee plans to take on so program staff don't have to do all the work of encouraging people to follow through on agreed-upon tasks.

### **Tips for Maintaining Your Advisory Committee**

An advisory committee is like any other part of your program: it needs ongoing nurturing, maintenance, and an occasional dose of new energy. Here are a few tips to keep your advisory committee running smoothly:

- Encourage committee members to take the lead, but make sure their goals are realistic and compatible with your program's mission. Don't let them take on activities that are more work than they can handle or that require more staff time than you can provide.
- Establish and maintain a structure that works for everyone. At a minimum, this should include regular meetings, a chair or co-chair who can be your primary contact person, and a way to record the group's work.
- Seek out new members and provide a thorough orientation for those who join. Involve your current membership in recruiting and orienting new members.
- Provide regular updates about your program and let members know how their work has helped you progress toward your goals.
- Ask for opinions or involvement only when it fits with the group's mission and role as advisors. Be sure members understand what you want from them when you involve them in a decision or in planning a new program.

- Thank members regularly in many different ways—in person, in handwritten notes, via e-mail, in your newsletter—for the work they are doing.

The bottom line is that an advisory committee needs a sense of purpose, doable tasks, a timeline, praise and recognition, and a belief that its input is valued. Advisory committee members need regular guidance from you to be sure they are staying on task. With a little work, your advisory committee can be a real asset to enhancing and sustaining your program.

## Appendix 9-December Leadership Team Meeting Feedback

**December 8, 2015**

### **Notes from Leadership Team Meeting**

- we need staff awareness on CAB and our work (e.g. Client Bill of Rights).
- there are questions that still remain: Where do we report to? Where does CAB live within the agency? How will we be supported? What resources can the agency offer for CAB to be sustainable, including staff?
- we need leadership training for members.
- there was a concern expressed over the language of the bill of rights document; how will we target what is written on the document?
- I agree with Jessica that the agency should consider and create an action plan for staff support, resources, and sustainability before I leave (who will take accountability, manage CAB, etc.).
- Team would like to see representation from the group but I would like *support* with this. Most emails to staff regarding nominations for CAB members remain unanswered. This has been happening since I arrived, which led to me to question if CAB was a priority for the agency. I tried other venues, such as office hours at 220, class presentations, and personally asking some staff for help with this, unfortunately these strategies were less than successful.
- Team would like a nomination form or more concise information in order for them to help recruit clients for CAB. This would be a great idea if all staff received this nomination form but again, without accountability or support for recruitment, I am not sure how successful this measure would be.
- Team would also like a timeline (I think a timeline should be done with the Team or whomever they report to, as we also need to know what we can and cannot do).

## Appendix 10-February CAB Meeting Minutes

**February 20, 2016**

### **CAB Meeting Minutes**

*What would CAB members like to get out of being a member in this group?*

- Assist different communities with leadership training involving appropriate cultural approaches (learning how to lead different communities considering culture)
- There is a disconnect for many clients after the refugee process, CAB is a way to maintain connection and remain engaged for continued support
- CAB can help bridge a relation between agency and clients
- CAB can be resource for all clients, with the support of the agency (CAB can facilitate adjustment for clients after receiving services)
- CAB can help advocate for woman issues in addition to many other issues related to the refugee/immigrant experience
- DIIRI is like family and it aids in educating clients in education, healthcare, laws, however, there is a disconnect and feelings of exclusion after receiving services. CAB gives an opportunity to elaborate on some of these issues to the entire community
- The opportunity to bring information and awareness of resources to my community; aligned with mission to create self-sufficient individuals and families

*Client bill of Rights*

- Currently, the agency does not have a system in place for complaints/suggestions
- The agency will now develop a system where each department will inform and train staff to follow a complaint process
- The new system is internal and it will take time to develop
- The bill of rights have been shared with directors of agency and the program committee; There is an agreement to the principal of the document

*Client Services Improvement Committee*

- CSI would like to create and implement a survey using the input and feedback from CAB
- CAB members can best inform us on what they would like to see in the survey
- CAB members know and understand community needs (where information is shared back and forth)

*CAB Members' Main Concerns*

- Consensus on the lack of support and disconnect after receiving services; there is no follow-up system in place; CAB members would like to see a system set up for continued support
- Follow-up system will also be used as an assessment to determine if service used was successful or if and how it can be improved
- There is a need to connect with outside community leaders to create opportunities of engagement and create more partnerships to then help communities

#### *Next steps*

- What can DIIRI do to keep clients engaged?
- CAB can organize a series of town hall type of meetings where we bring in experts on certain topics. Topics include family and parenting roles, navigating through the education system, learning about healthcare and doctors, document protection scams, etc. (Topics based off CAB member suggestions)
- CAB members will create a list of topics at our next meeting
- Staff advisors will assist in outreaching to appropriate experts or community partners, arrange for a location, and the overall organization

#### *Future Steps*

- Leadership training (could be in-house training)
- Translate client bill of rights into the following languages:

-Spanish

-Kunama

-Swahili

-Creole (Haitian) (Cape Verdean)

-Portuguese (Brazilian)

-French

-Tigriniya

-Vietnamese

-Mandarin/Cantonese

-Cambodian

-Arabic

-Nepali



- Somali
- Burmese
- Russian
- Lao
- Kinyarwanda
- Polish
- Kirundi
- Lingala