

Building a Strong Foundation for Sustainability

Handout 4 - Organizational Capacity (nurturing a strong lead agency)

Fiscal Agent (Coalition Centric Model)

Qualities for Coalition Fiscal Agent (some of these will also apply to a convening organization for the community model):

- Strong links to, respect for, and from the local community.
- The respect of community organizations & key leaders, or at least perceived as a neutral entity.
- A deep understanding of community health issues, priority populations & local politics.
- Belief in collaboration, as well as the patience & confidence to “trust the process” of community engagement & shared decision making.
- Adopts positive health practices within its own walls that support the activities of the coalition (e.g., adopts clean indoor air policies, immunization services, wellness activities, & non-discriminatory health benefits).
- Has “deep pockets” or at least a reserve of resources to support the basic administrative needs of the coalition, i.e., office space, telecommunication & mail service, computer connections & services, printing, & funds to sustain the coalition “between times” of outside funding.
- Provides skilled staff with sufficient time to maintain coalition processes.
- Hires staff through its employment & benefits structure.
- Uses its development, media & advocacy capabilities to positively promote the coalition & its work.

A Convening Organization or Infrastructure (Community Centric Model)

- **Fully supports sustainability goals.** Has shared understanding of critical community health issues with members and community leaders. Agrees on the definition and importance of sustainability among coalition and/or partnership members and community leaders.
- **Serve as an objective broker of public health resources via a 501(C)3 organization.** As a neutral facilitator, a convening organization or infrastructure can enable multiple parties to develop effective strategies for achieving diverse community health goals (which is especially important when multiple initiatives are combined within the umbrella organization).
- **Able to solicit and accept funds** from a variety of sources. A convening organization or infrastructure must have the capacity to actively solicit funds from a variety of sources, such as grants, general contributions, member dues or appropriations, corporate appropriates, fundraisers, etc.
- **Appeal to a variety of community-based** organizations. Participating members and organizations must feel that the convening organization or infrastructure supports their work. The organization or infrastructure also attempts to coordinate and avoid conflicts with the financial, human resource, and visibility needs of member organizations.
- **Provide a strong internal infrastructure.** To manage competing interests, the convening organization or infrastructure should determine how decisions will be made and how conflicts will be resolved. The convening organization or infrastructure will should also set up a management structure that fosters collaboration among key community partners. This core group may also take the lead for identifying coalition training needs and arranging for training.

- **Have the capacity to shift priorities** to accommodate changes in goals, funding, leadership, and community needs. Community needs, assets, and priorities shift over time. Likewise, the convening infrastructure's priorities and solutions will need to shift to continue to improve community health profiles.