

Building Organizational Capacity for Social Justice: Framework, Approach & Tools

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NGEC

NATIONAL GENDER & EQUITY CAMPAIGN

A pilot project of Asian Americans/ Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy

This packet contains information about the capacity building framework and accompanying tools developed by the National Gender & Equity Campaign (NGEC), a pilot project of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) for use within its Organizational Fellowship Program (OFP) currently being tested in Minnesota and California.

If you have any questions about re-using or reproducing NGEC Tools, please contact NGEC/AAPIP directly or via email: info@aapip.org.

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BACKGROUND

The National Gender & Equity Campaign (NGEC) is the result of the decade long effort of many Asian American women activists working for social justice who desired to build a more powerful community that fully participates in the social justice movement at all levels. We envision strong and empowered communities who have a voice and the power to act to create a more just and equitable society.

NGEC began in 2006 as a pilot project of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP). As a part of our work, we are developing and testing capacity building approaches, frameworks, and tools in the NGEC's Organizational Fellowship Program (OFP) through 2011.

Recognizing that much has been done in the general field of capacity building of the nonprofit sector, we began our work by conducting extensive research to understand existing frameworks, tools and approaches in capacity building.

Through this scanning process we found it necessary to develop and create a more holistic, accessible and culturally relevant framework and accompanying tools to reflect our intention to build the social justice movement by supporting the development of social justice organizations.

Our work is carried out in alignment with our operating principles of full transparency with community, building on community assets, doing work that has immediate usefulness for participants, and being relevant in the community context. The focus of our capacity building work is organizational transformation for social justice organizations.

Contacts

If you have any feedback, requests or questions about the NGEC, our framework, strategies or any other information found in this packet, please contact: Bo Thao, BRIDGE Director at (612) 729-1994 / bo@AAPIP.org.

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Note: This packet only contains information about the capacity building framework and accompanying tools developed by the National Gender & Equity Campaign (NGEC) for use within the OFP in Minnesota and California.

This packet does not provide broader explanations of our chosen methods of community engagement and relationship building or discuss other aspects of the NGEC's work. Rather, we share these materials with you who may be working in the philanthropic or capacity building field, as well as, community members who may be thinking about and attempting to do similar work towards the building of a more just and equitable society. It is our hope that the materials are useful in terms of contributing to the body of work, new thinking, and continued exploration of partnerships.

We welcome your thoughts, comments and dialogue.

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OUR MODEL OF WORK: A CYCLICAL PRACTICE OF TRANSFORMATION

Our model of work is focused on transformation and is cyclical in process. Road tested throughout our history, we believe that each step builds on the previous and answers the questions of, “What’s next?” and “What’s changed?” for us. Our model is grounded in listening to and learning from community, taking what we’ve heard, formulating analysis in order to organize our strategies that then lead us to action. Our process does not stop at action; rather an intentional reflection follows our actions. Through this model, we believe practices, policy and behaviors of individuals, organizations and systems are changed and transformation happens.



It is our aim to amass key learnings from our work in the OFP and other efforts that may test our frameworks, approaches or tools in order to build a new social justice infrastructure building entity called **Building Responsive Infrastructure to Develop Global Equity (BRIDGE)** that will continue beyond the NGEC. Currently, the OFP is being piloted in Minnesota and California, two states with significant and growing diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander populations who have very varied experiences and capacities in social justice work.

Social Justice Movement

Our work starts on the premise that we can all do better to contribute to building a more inclusive social justice movement. We believe that movements for social justice are most effective when the three elements of community readiness, political moments, and social justice infrastructure are in place and work in concert with each other. Thus, through the OFP work, we’ve honed in on building the social justice infrastructure of community by increasing the capacity of social justice organizations to be more effective and sustainable.

Our Approach

We implement our work using the above model of work to ground ourselves in the experiences of those most impacted by social inequities, as well as, to stay mindful along each step that we must connect theory to practice. Additionally, our model of work asks of us to use approaches that are driven and guided by community assets, cultural competence and accountability. These various approaches have served to help us develop our most current framework and tools included in this packet.

Our Definitions

Capacity building:

Capacity building refers to the intentional development process of organizations to increase organizational ability, knowledge and resources to become more effective and sustainable social justice organizations.

Our chosen activities to develop organizational capacity include: organizational assessment, trainings, technical assistance, resource development, referrals, and peer-to-peer learning.

Social justice organizations:

Social justice organizations are key formations that build and sustain social justice movements. They are committed to base building, community organizing and developing coalitions and networks. They integrate strategies that create cultural change within communities and societal change more broadly. Social justice organizations foster effective accountable leadership from the ground up led by those most impacted by inequity.

Anatomy of a Social Justice Organization

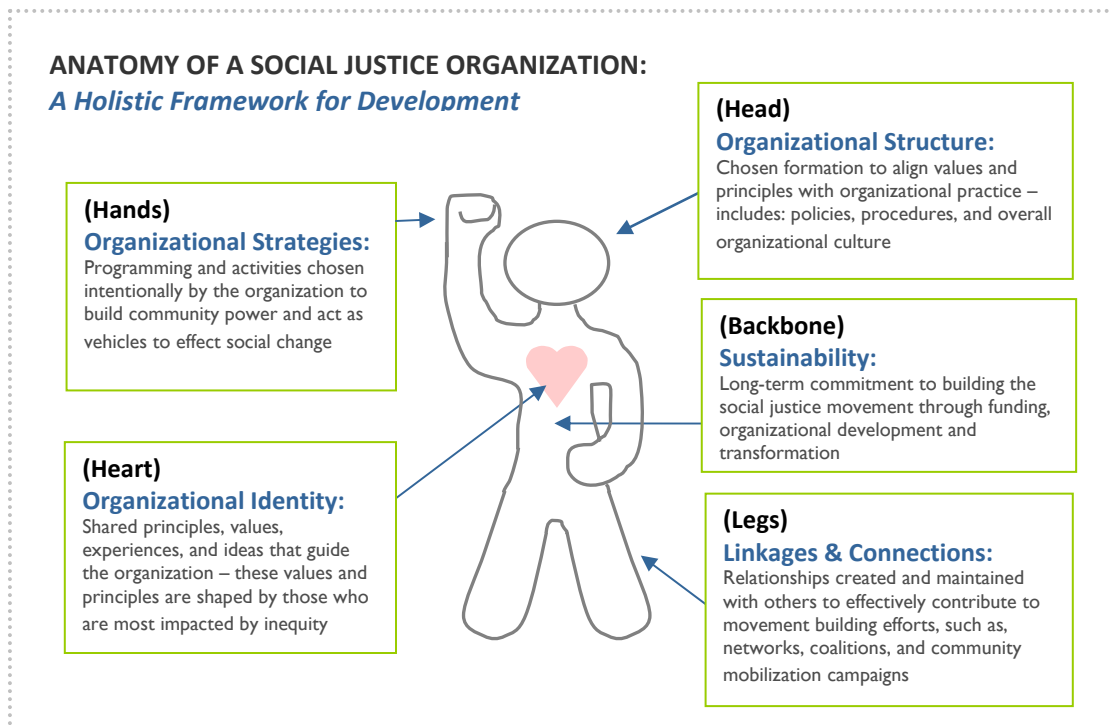
The National Gender & Equity Campaign (NGEC) defines **social justice organizations** as key formations that build and sustain social justice movements.

They are committed to base building, community organizing and developing coalitions and networks. They integrate strategies that create cultural change within communities and societal change more broadly.

Social justice organizations foster effective accountable leadership from the ground up led by those most impacted by inequity. NGEC believes that social justice organizations are imperative to social justice movement building.

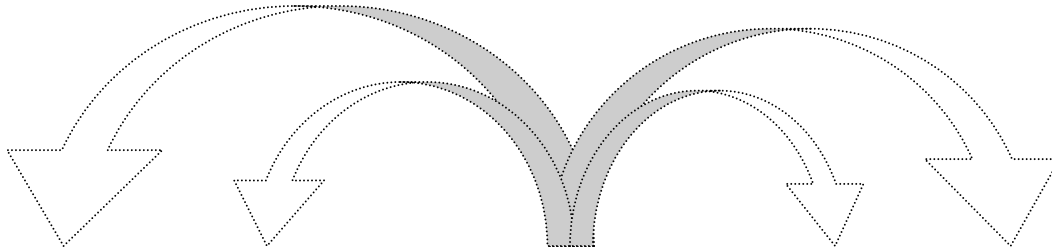
To that end, the ability to identify the necessary capacities and practices needed to be one, allows organizations to be more mindful in their development.

The **Anatomy of a Social Justice Organization** framework developed by NGEC attempts to articulate the necessary elements that must be paid attention to in order to be an effective and sustainable social justice organization. From a holistic vantage point, social justice organizations possess assets in their ability to grow and sustain themselves financially and structurally, to nurture relationships and partnerships within and across communities, as well as, to sync their values and identity with their programming and strategies.



With this premise in mind, we designed our framework, an accompanying **BRIDGE Organizational Assessment Tool (BOAT)**, and the **Continuum of Growth and Development** to help organizations identify their starting points (including their strengths and the areas for further development). This framework and the accompanying tools serve to help organizations make better timely decisions about their developmental path to be more effective and sustainable social justice organizations.

A Continuum of Growth and Development along Four Stages*



Each organization is different depending on their context; therefore, where an organization **begins** and **ends** in their development is along a **continuum**.
NGEC's work aims to help organizations move towards sustainability.

AWARENESS
Organization is open and willing to discuss new frameworks, gain new knowledge and skills; willing to engage their organization and community members in social change work

INTENTIONAL
Organization is conscious of their strengths and limitations; makes intentional decisions to address limitations by revising strategy, shifting their work methodologies and even structure in order to achieve its long-term social change goals

STRATEGIC
Organization connects their theory and values with their practice; measures its social change practices and impact; sees their role within the larger social justice movement; articulates their model to address root causes; and develops key strategic allies to advance agendas

SUSTAINABLE
Organization is effective, sustainable, and accountable for its actions; continuously builds its base and develops coalitions & networks with a shared purpose to increase political power; creates cultural and social change within community and society; and is able to articulate its health in terms of its identity as a social justice organization

*The complete, full-sized "Continuum of Growth & Development" document is available for download on our website http://genderandequity.org/featured_tools (or) you may contact us to obtain a copy. This full version incorporates the four stages of development listed above, and charts out potential actions that organizations may chose to develop towards scope and scale according to the Anatomy of Social Justice framework.

BRIDGE Organizational Assessment Tool (BOAT)

What is BOAT?

The BRIDGE Organizational Assessment Tool (BOAT) is a reflection tool that serves several purposes in the Organizational Fellowship Program (OFP). First, it provides each fellowship organization with a more holistic picture of areas of development. Second, it aims to uncover the organization’s internal assets, such as cultural competence, reputation and role in the community. Third, BOAT helps the organization better reflect and understand its starting point in each anatomy area as it considers what to focus on in terms of building “social justice capacity” so that it can more fully determine its path towards being a more effective and sustainable social justice organization. The BOAT has been tested with multiple community organizations outside of the OFP and continues to be refined.

“BOAT helped crystallize some of the areas we knew we needed to work on.”

- Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, May 2009

Who takes BOAT?

To gain organizational perspective, several people representing the various levels of leadership within the organization are asked to take BOAT. The results are tabulated into a visual chart that the organization then uses to analyze its strengths, areas for development, areas of disagreement, and areas of agreement. This provides greater guidance for each fellowship organization to understand and determine its starting point, as well as, helps the organization make decisions about its development. Each year the OFP organizations will take the assessment to reflect on their progress and continue making timely decisions about their development towards being more effective and sustainable social justice organizations. NGEC provides extensive technical assistance in order to compute the results, generate the visuals, and facilitate the process of information analysis to create understanding with each organization.

What does BOAT ask?

BOAT has a total of 75 statements broken down into five sections that reflect NGEC’s anatomy of a social justice organization framework. The individual is asked to read and rate each statement. Additionally, narrative questions throughout the tool and at the end, allows participants space to write down their thoughts and reflections that may not be captured in the rating sections.

How is each statement rated in BOAT?

Though we’ve chosen to use numbers, the rating system is not meant to be linear; rather, the numbers are meant to reflect the scale detailed below. Once completed, the scores of all individual raters from an organization are combined for an average in each anatomy area, as well as, kept separately by question so that when mapped onto a “spider-gram” chart, one is able to see the areas of congruence and differences between all the individual raters.

RATING	N/A	0	1	2	3
DESCRIPTION	Unknown or N/A	Not present	Needs much improvement	Needs some improvement	Needs little/no improvement
EXPLANATION	Unknown or not applicable	This is not present or has not been attempted in the organization.	This is present or has been attempted in the organization, but it needs much improvement.	This is present or has been attempted in the organization, but it may need some improvement.	This is present and strong in the organization.

Sample statements in *BOAT*

The following offers some examples of the kinds of statements that are in the *BOAT*¹.

Section A: Organizational Identity – “The Heart”

The organization “lives” its values by practicing internally the change it seeks externally (such as condemning any form of violence within the organization in its work to eradicate domestic violence).
The organization has an assessment of both the community's and the organization's strengths and assets.
The people who work for the organization are diverse in terms of age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, or other forms of diversity.
The organization has a theory of social change (a document that shares the organization's identity by explaining how it understands, plans and acts to build a better world)

Section B: Organizational Structure – “The Head”

The organization incorporates plans for sustaining its human resources (such as leadership succession and staff retention) so that its institutional vision moves forward.
Those most impacted by inequity are involved in the organization's decision making.
The organization's leadership takes responsibility to ensure the organization's systems and infrastructure best serves its long-term social justice goals.
There is an appropriate degree of management and staff capacity to achieve the organization's social justice goals.

Section C: Organizational Strategies & Programs – “The Hands”

The organization's staff, board and constituents are able to inform and activate others in supporting the organization's work.
The organization is able to organize across issues and / or communities.
The organization is a leader in recognizing and responding to key political moments or opportunities.
The organization is able to directly influence relevant public policy or public opinion as it relates to those most impacted by inequity.

Section D: Organizational Relationships & Linkages – “The Legs”

The organization seeks resources and knowledge through collaborations, coalitions, networks and partnerships.
The organization enlists culturally competent community members, leaders, consultants and other partners to further its work.
The organization identifies shared values and principles and explores common ground across issues and across communities.
The organization evaluates its current capacity and role before engaging in collaborations, coalitions, networks and partnerships.

Section E: Organizational Sustainability – “The Backbone”

The way that the organization structures itself, engages with others, and acts is consistent with its mission, vision and values.
The organization reflects and measures its impact in the community that it serves and society more broadly.
The organization is clear and deliberate about who it needs to involve at different levels of leadership and engagement in order to increase the scope and scale of the movement.
The organization intentionally connects its current programs and strategies to broader systemic issues.

Sample Narrative Reflection Question

“Please comment on how well your organization's systems, structure and infrastructure align with its current values, capacity, needs, and size.”

¹ This version of *BOAT* is not final as we are continuing to refine it based on usage and feedback from community groups.

