Organizational Readiness Assessment – Facilitator's Guide

Overview:
The Organizational Readiness Assessment Tool is designed to help you and the organization determine their level of readiness to embark on enhancing the organization's community building efforts. It can serve as a catalyst for discussion and help determine the most appropriate area of focus as the organization strengthens its capacity to support social change.

Preparation:
Prior to administering the tool, work with the organization's leadership to identify who should be invited to participate in completing the tool, and clarify who will be involved in reviewing the results. Engaging the appropriate stakeholders in the process will help to ensure that an accurate picture of the organization is created through the assessment process.

For best results, encourage the organization to invite a wide range of stakeholders – both internal and external to the operations of the organization – to respond to the assessment tool. This may include: leadership, staff, and volunteers within the organization, clients/participants/constituents, staff from partner organizations, and community members familiar with the organization and its operations.

In order to get the most accurate and candid responses to the questions, design a response approach that allows for anonymity. It is important that potential assessment respondents know that their responses will not be linked back to them as individuals.

Prior to conducting the readiness assessment, ensure that the organization has identified the individuals who will participate in the review and discussion of the assessment results. Again, this would ideally consist of a range of stakeholders who may then serve to guide next steps.

Administering the Assessment
First, provide context for the assessment respondents – Why are we doing this assessment? How long will it take? How do we expect it to inform us? How will we use the results? Understanding why the assessment process is being conducted and how the information will be used, will help them provide the most accurate rating for each of the areas to be assessed. This may be achieved through holding an orientation meeting, or through an informational email.

Provide a copy of the assessment tool to each respondent. For each item, the respondent is to select the statement that most accurately describes the organization for that area. Upon completing the assessment, have them total their responses in Part II.

Once all participants have completed and scored the assessment tool, it may be turned in anonymously to one central place. The facilitator or lead of the assessment process may then summarize the results – either by averaging all the scores, or compiling the range of results to present to the group that will use it to take the next steps. Thank the respondents for their time and let them know that their contribution to the work of the organization is meaningful and appreciated.

Utilizing the Assessment

Based on the scores, guide the reviewing team through a process to determine how best to proceed with building capacity in the four areas – Constituent Engagement, Partnering with the Community, Coordination, Collaboration and Collective Impact, and Social and Systems Change. The team may elect to focus on one at a time, starting with an area of strength, or an area where capacity building is most needed, or it may determine that working in multiple areas simultaneously makes the most sense. The decision should be based on the unique characteristics and readiness of the organization. There is no right way to begin to take the next steps.

Or, if the assessment reveals gaps in readiness that might hinder potential progress in building capacity, such as leadership that does not demonstrate inclusiveness, or the organization doesn't have a clear mission or vision related to social change, it is important to strengthen those areas before embarking on significant community development activities.

The review process may illuminate strengths to build upon, areas currently under development, or those in need of specific focus that the reviewing team members believe are integral to the success of the constituent engagement/community-building development process. Spending time to clarify these and explore potential paths, rather than moving quickly to next steps, will help ensure a process that results in change that becomes institutionalized.