ACCELERATING BUSINESS CAPACITY OF AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Key Learnings from an MCF Initiative

From 2016-2019 the Marin Community Foundation (MCF) piloted a new initiative aimed at strengthening the business capacities necessary for community-based organizations (CBOs) to pursue, secure and sustain health care partnerships. Five CBOs operating in Marin County participated in the initiative. **Here are the highlights.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Four CBOs signed a total of **nine contracts**

Services:

- Transportation
- Care coordination
- Housing preservation
- Conservatorship
- Physical therapy

Partnering Entities:

- Hospitals
- Health care systems
- Medical networks
- Federally qualified health centers

Increased collaboration across grantees

Stronger organizational integration

Improved infrastructure

Business relationships with for profit partners

New grants, resources and County contracts

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NEW COMPETENCIES IN TRADITIONAL DOMAINS

CBOs have always needed business acumen in **traditional** domains to operate effectively. To be well-positioned for health care partnering, however, **new** competencies in these domains must be developed.

	Traditional	New
Strategy & Planning	Inside-out strategic orientation involving planning at regular, pre-established intervals with a focus on CBO needs and resources.	Outside-in strategic orientation that considers needs and preferences of potential healthcare partners and adjusts dynamically to changing external conditions.
Market Knowledge & Foresight	Ad hoc market knowledge of the CBO's own sector gained via existing relationships and unstructured information-gathering to identify opportunities.	Comprehensive, targeted and continuous organizational processes to ensure understanding of current and emerging healthcare policies, programs, market trends and competitors.
Leadership	A focus on skills in decision-making, communication, hiring and managing, overseeing recurring activities and maximizing efficiencies.	Entrepreneurial leadership approach focused on conceptualizing and executing new business ideas; negotiating strategic partnerships; and adapting quickly and effectively to changing conditions.
Financial Acumen	Capacity to prepare realistic budgets and report against them.	Sophisticated understanding of complex financial management required to secure and sustain business relationships with healthcare organizations.
Control & Performance Management	Ability to document and report on outputs, such as units of service delivered and numbers of clients reached.	Skills to create and monitor performance-oriented control systems and practices such as establishing measurable goals, evaluating outcomes and creating a culture of accountability.

INSIGHTS

CBOs

- **PURPOSE** — Be clear on your organization's mission and core strengths. These will provide the clarity that guides you to sound strategic decision-making and a foundation that ensures that you never lose site of the community you serve and the value you provide.
- **PREPAREDNESS** — Set aside time for leadership to learn, explore, think and evolve. Credibility is established by demonstrating competency and deep understanding of the potential partners' challenges and priorities.
- **PEOPLE** — Be ready to staff your organization with people who understand the health care sector and have the skills needed for productive partnerships. Be mindful of the importance of building relationships with those with whom you wish to partner.
- **PATIENCE** — Partnering takes time. Prepare for slow return that may not come until years after you begin.
- **PERSISTENCE** — Increase your organization's tolerance for failure: When — not if — you experience a setback, acknowledge the team's disappointment, focus on the opportunity to learn and evolve and push past obstacles.

Funders

- **SCREEN AND SELECT** organizations that are ready to engage in a capacity building initiative focused on health care partnering.
- **SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS** for participation in the initiative.
- **SHAPE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** by focusing on topics to be covered, pedagogy to be employed and the balance of structure with flexibility.
- **STRUCTURE THE INITIATIVE** to be flexible to changing conditions and grantee readiness while also creating a sense of urgency for organizations to make progress.
- **SUPPORT COLLABORATION** among grantees as opportunities emerge.

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To learn more, visit this link to find learning briefs and evaluation briefs, or contact Shirin Vakharia, Director for Health & Aging, at svakharia@marincf.org or 415.464.2541.

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