Assessing your Organization's Research Environment/Capacity

This document includes three items to help CBOs to assess and better understand how their organization perceives, uses, thinks about research: 1) Discussion questions for organization staff/stakeholders, 2) Assessment tool to be completed by organization staff, and 3) SWOT Analysis framework. It may be helpful for CBOs to consider and discuss the organization's research environment and capacity as a foundation for considering next steps. Also think about who at your organization should be involved in answering these questions/completing these tools: Leadership staff? Front line staff? Board/stakeholders? Clients/community members?

Adapted and developed by the Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities (ARCC)

#1: Discussion Questions for your Organization

- How does our organization currently use research?
  - Does our organization use research to make decisions about…
    - Program structure/content?
    - When, to whom programs are offered?
    - Changing an existing program?
    - Developing a new program?
    - Advocacy agenda?
    - Marketing services?
    - Fundraising
    - Any other central activities/focus?

- When our organization uses research….
  - Do we do it yourselves?
  - Do we use research done by others?
  - What are our sources for research?
  - How is research used in decision making (to inform, support, rule out, etc.) ?
  - Who in the organization uses research?

- How has our organization been involved in research before?
  - What role did our organization play?
  - How did that work for our organization?
  - What would we have done differently?
  - What would we do the same next time?

- What does our board think about research involvement?
  - the Executive Director?
  - Managers?
  - Staff?
  - Participants/clients?
  - Do we have support for research/involvement at <u>multiple</u> levels?

- What are COMMUNITY attitudes toward research?

- Do we understand attitudes about research from different perspectives?
    – Stakeholders?
    – Clients?
    – Volunteers?
    – Donors?
    – Others…?

- How do we build support for research across all levels of our organization?
    – What are the areas of strength? areas where growth is needed?
    – What are our strategies for building support?

Assessment Tool

Please answer the following questions thinking about your organization's current understanding of, involvement in, and use of research and/or community-engaged research.

You may wish to print this document out and discuss and/or complete this assessment as a group (including multiple staff/leaders/stakeholders from your organization) so that you can capture more than one person's perspective.

Some of the answer categories include multiple dimensions of community-engaged research capacity and your organization may fall into more than one category. Please select only 1 option that best fits each question.

1. Is your organization currently involved in any research? (involvement may include outside parties conducting research/collecting data at your site, your organization recruiting research participants for studies be conducted by others, your organization working collaboratively with outside parties (i.e. university faculty) to conduct research, etc.)
    Yes or No

    1a. If yes, does your organization have a way of tracking the research your organization is involved in?
    Yes or No

    1 b. If yes, how does your organization track research that your organization is involved in?

2. Does your organization have a research agenda? (A research agenda talk about gaps in understanding that an organization or community has and research questions or areas that need to be answered to fill those gaps.)
    Yes or No

    2a. If yes: how did your organization develop the agenda?

    2b. Have you identified priorities within that agenda?

    2c. Does your organization have a process for updating the agenda?

    2d. How does your organization use the research agenda? (e.g. proactively seek resources/partners to answer research questions, share the agenda with researcher who approach looking for partners, etc.)

3. Is research mentioned in your organization's mission or strategic plan?

   3a. If yes, please describe:

4. Which of the following best describes the value leadership in your organization places on research?
   o Research is explicitly discussed by leadership
   o Research is promoted by leadership
   o Leadership encourages staff to participate in research projects
   o Leadership uses research when evaluating or planning programs
   o Other:

5. Which of the following best describes the value staff in your organization places on research?
   • Research is explicitly discussed by staff
   • Staff voluntarily participate in research projects
   • Staff use research when evaluating or planning programs
   • Other:

6. Select from the options below all the ways in which your organization currently uses research (select all that apply)
   • Research is used when evaluating or planning programs/services
   • Research is used in grant writing
   • Research is used in advocating with constituents or policymakers
   • Others

7. Choose the answer that MOST reflects your organization's current **CBPR training capacity**
   • No staff members/volunteers have participated in CBPR training & no mechanisms have been developed to train staff or partners about research/CBPR
   • Some staff members/volunteers have participated in CBPR training and informally share some information with other staff or partners.
   • A substantial number of staff members/volunteers have participated in training. Information is formally shared through staff or other meetings.
   • A substantial number of staff members/volunteers have participated in training. Information is formally shared through staff or other meetings. Most staff members have basic understanding of CBPR/research. Some staff members have in-depth understanding & training. There are periodic CBPR trainings for staff.

8. Choose the answer that MOST reflects your organization's current **staff/volunteer engagement in CBPR**
   • No staff members or volunteers have dedicated duties or responsibilities regarding research. There is no administrative support for research activities
   • One staff person/volunteer is identified as the organizational point person for research. There is limited administrative support for research activities
   • One staff person/volunteer has dedicated responsibilities in their job description. There is administrative support.

- Several staff members/volunteers have dedicated responsibilities in their job description. There is extensive administrative support.

9. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **mechanisms for disseminating research**

> There are no mechanisms or existing mechanisms are not used for disseminating research results or projects. For example, newsletter, listserv, website, community events, journal articles are not used for disseminating research
> There is/are little effort/few mechanisms to disseminate research
> There are some efforts to disseminate research
> There are extensive efforts to disseminate research through a variety of mechanisms

> 9a. If you do have dissemination mechanisms, what are they?

10. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **capacity to navigate university or funder's systems for support of research**
   - There is no capacity to navigate university or funder systems. There is little or no understanding of these systems (e.g. timelines, requirements).
   - There is some experience navigating these systems (experience applying for a grant) & some understanding/ Attended workshop on university/funder systems.
   - There is substantial experience & understanding (e.g. received & administered university or other funds).
   - There is extensive experience and understanding such as successfully managed several research grants from local/national & private/govt. funders.

11. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **research policies and procedures**
   - There are no research policies or procedures (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), rules or engagement) for the CBO.
   - Planning efforts have begun to develop research policies or procedures (meetings with stakeholders &/or staff, gathered models from other CBOs).
   - There are some research policies or procedures but they are used inconsistently.
   - There are formal research policies & procedures & they are consistently understood & used throughout the CBO.

12. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **access to research funding opportunities and resources to support doing research**
   - There is no access to research funding opportunities and resources (i.e. students).
   - There is limited understanding of where and how to access research funding and resources.
   - There is some understanding of where & how to access research funding and resources.
   - There is extensive understanding of where & how to access research funding resources.

13. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **fiscal capacity to manage research grants**
   - There is no capacity to administer a research grant
   - Limited capacity to administer a research grant.
   - CBO has experience managing small research grant

- CBO has managed several research grants.

14. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **capacity to build and maintain partnerships for research**
- There are no connections or relationships with university partners. The CBO does not have a history of project collaboration.
- There are some informal relationships with university partners but no collaborative projects have been negotiated or implemented. Attended networking event.
- Formal relationships have been negotiated with university partners & collaborative projects have been developed & implemented.
- There are well-established & sustained relationships with university partners &collaborative projects have been successfully completed.

15. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **capacity for community leadership in CBPR**
- CBO does not undertake any activity to serve as a leader for advancing CBPR with other CBOs
- CBO has informally provided assistance or is planning to present on information on CBPR to 1 or 2 other CBOs
- CBO has made efforts to pass on info to other CBOs or has held events promoting CBPR
- CBO has held formal events to provide CBPR information or training to other CBOs. Presented at local and/or national conferences

16. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **capacity to provide leadership on CBPR to universities**
- CBO does not undertake any activity to serve as a leader for advancing CBPR with universities
- CBO has informally provided or is planning to provide assistance/consultation to universities
- CBO has made efforts to pass on info to universities or has held events about their experiences at Universities.
- CBO has formally served in influential leadership roles to universities. Presented at sessions for university partners

17. Choose the answer that MOST closely matches your organization's **overall CBPR capacity**
- CBPR is unknown to organization
- Beginning stages
- Intermediate stages
- Pro status

18. Number of years your organization has been in operation:

19. What populations does your organization serve? (e.g. age group, gender, race/ethnicity)

20. What geographic area does your organization serve? (e.g. statewide, city wide, city region (N, S, W), neighborhoods)

21. What is your type of organization?
- Coalition
- Direct client service
- Advocacy/policy
- Faith-based
- Other

22. What is number of staff at your organization?

23. What is the number of clients your organization serves?

24. What is the number one thing you or your organization struggles with related to research?
Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a framework developed for organizational or business strategic planning that can is used to identify internal and external factors that can help inform decision-making. Simply put, by understanding the four aspects (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats) of an organization's situation, it is possible to leverage and capitalize on the positive (strengths and opportunities) and correct or deter the negative (weaknesses and threats). This can be used by CBOs generally, for example in strategic planning. In this instance, we are using it to focus on capacity building around community-engaged research (CEnR) at your organization. You may find it helpful to use the form below to do a situational analysis of your organization's capacity around CEnR. Keep in mind the following:
1. You may want to complete this as a team exercise (not just one staff person or ED)
2. Strengths and weaknesses are *internal* to your organization.
3. Opportunities and threats are *external* to your organization.
4. Distinguish between where you are now and where you could be in the future.
5. Be as specific as possible.
6. Keep it short and simple.
7. A SWOT is subjective.

Focus: Capacity building around CEnR at your organization

Strengths	Weaknesses
What do you do well (related to conducting or building capacity for CEnR)? What do others see as your strengths? What resources do you have to draw on?	What could you improve (related to conducting or building capacity for CEnR)? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?
Example Responses • Diverse client population of interest to many researchers • Strength and depth of relationships with community and other organizations • Trust between organization and community • Strong data collection about clients	*Example Responses* • Shallow depth of working CEnR knowledge (focused in 1 staff member) • Competition for limited resources in terms of time and labor • Not much research experience. Some evaluation of programs but coordinated

Opportunities	Threats
What good opportunities are open to you (related to conducting or building capacity for CEnR)? What trends can you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?	What trends could harm you (related to conducting or building capacity for CEnR)? What is your "competition" doing? What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?
Example Responses • Opportunities to collaborate with others • Strong interest in developing community-specific data collection/assessment by partner organizations	*Example Responses* • All funding sources are tight (research, program, philanthropic) • Continued mistrust of research/health institutions by refugee communities