

A capacity building project requires staff and board resources (depending on the situation). This tool will help you to make an informed decision about the availability of resources to see the project through.

Organizational Preparation: Deciding Whether or Not to Work with a Consultant

There are several factors to consider before you begin the consultant search. It is important to ask the following questions:

- Do we have a clear idea of what this project or task entails?
- Is this a good time for our organization to take on this type of project or task? Or will there be a better time in our fiscal year that allows for more resources?
- Do we need to hire a consultant or is this a project or task that someone within the organization can handle?
- If we do hire a consultant, what role do we think the consultant should/would take on in the project?
- Do we have the resources (time, money, staff capacity and/or energy) to work with a consultant on this project? Can we continue to do our programmatic work while working with the consultant?
- What has been our experience working with consultants in the past? In what way do our past experiences influence our perception of working with a consultant now?
- Who will take the lead in engaging and working with the consultant?
- Who will we bring to the table beyond key staff members?

Once you have decided to explore the possibility of hiring a consultant to work on your project/task, you must find the right consultant. You can begin to look for a consultant in the following ways:

- Referrals (ask other organizations, foundations you have worked with or are working with, board members, and others within your network)
- Online consultant networks or professional organizations, especially those that align with the focus and values of your organization
- Your local Yellow Pages
- Local colleges or universities (students in Organizational Development, Change Management or other programs specific to your project/task may be a low-cost option but you may not get the same level of experience as with a working consultant)

Use this tool when searching for the right consultant/community builder for your capacity building needs. Consider answering the questions with a group of staff, board members, or other advisory group.

Organizational Checklist: Identifying Criteria for Consultants

The following checklist may be useful as you decide which consultant will be a good fit for your organization.

CONSULTANT CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Criteria	Must Have	Would Like to Have	No Strong Opinion	Must Not Have	Notes
Has the appropriate knowledge base, skills or expertise					
Understands how nonprofits operate					
Understands organizational power dynamics, political dynamics and personal dynamics					
Utilizes a particular approach such as: Asset-Based or Culturally-Based Approach					
Is familiar with the community you work in/with					
Is comfortable working with diverse communities and people					
Is able to foster healthy relationships					
Is unbiased and nonjudgmental					
Can work independently with little supervision					
Can maintain boundaries and take on different roles as needed: i.e. coach, mentor, consultant					
Is open to receiving feedback and can provide feedback that is honest and constructive					
Has certain qualities such as: good listener, organized, or timely					
Has good writing skills					
Can produce results					
Meets specific preferences such as: age, gender, education level, or years of experience					

This tool provides you with sample interview questions to ask a potential consultant/community builder.

Organizational Preparation: Assessment Questions to Ask Consultants

Possible Interview Questions

1. Provide some background information:
 - RFQ Process – how many applications, how many under review, process and timeline for selection of consultants, when work would begin
 - How the Project Vision has changed
 - Long Term Commitment beyond current funding stream
 - Structure of the Team
2. When you read the RFQ, what made you want to apply?
3. What is your current/former experience that relates to this work? What is specifically relevant about your work in communities of color? In urban and rural areas? OD work versus research or creating tools or training?
4. Please share an example of an organization that you worked with in which you built their capacity:
 - What was the issue?
 - What was the result?
 - What qualities of yours helped contribute to the result?
5. Please share an example in which you worked with an organization and you were unsuccessful in building their capacity:
 - What happened?
 - What was the result?
6. How do you measure whether or not you are effectively helping an organization?
7. Of the groups you read about in the RFQ, which ones do you think you might work with best or be most helpful with? Why? Which ones not?
8. How would your background and experience benefit this project? How would it be a challenge or barrier in this project?
9. What are some factors that impact the ability of communities of color or organizations led by people of color to access diverse philanthropic resources?
10. What are you hoping to gain or learn from participating in this project?
11. What type of work environments do you work best in? Why?
12. How do you sustain yourself in this work?
13. What is on your plate for the next year?
14. What type of consulting team structure do you prefer? What is your work process?