



national **CAPACD**

//national coalition for asian pacific american community development

Supporting Community Development Organizations Serving the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community

A Policy Brief

The Diversity of the Asian and Pacific American Community Presents Unique Challenges for Community and Economic Development

The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is a considerably heterogeneous community that encompasses different ethnic groups, cultures and languages. From fourth and fifth generation Chinese Americans in New York City to recently arrived Cambodian Americans in Long Beach, California the AAPI community has varied immigration patterns and geographic dispersion. To fully address the community and economic development needs of the AAPI community, community development organizations (CDOs) need to conduct their work in a linguistic and culturally appropriate manner with a specific understanding of the history and experiences of the communities they serve. However, the majority of existing CDOs and other components of the housing and community development system (i.e. financial intermediaries, advocacy organizations and housing providers) often lack the knowledge of the AAPI community's diversity, and therefore are not prepared to address the AAPI community's unique needs. There has been a parallel growth of community-based organizations (CBOs) serving the AAPI community that are expanding into community development work. Joined together with a core group of well-established AAPI CDOs across the country, these CBOs are building a infrastructure of support for AAPI community development (collectively, "AAPI organizations").

As the following demonstrates, the diversity of the community challenges AAPI organizations to allocate scarce resources to deliver linguistic and culturally appropriate services.

Diversity. The AAPI community, comprised of two-thirds immigrants and refugees, represents 50 ethnic groups and 100 language groups. Additionally, AAPIs include nearly a million Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders who are not immigrants, but whose lands were acquired by the United States. Given the diverse needs of their constituency, AAPI organizations must hire and train staff to provide services in several different languages and with cultural competence. Even when resources are allocated, most existing program models, educational messages and strategies are not culturally appropriate and need to be modified, translated and/or completely redesigned in order for them to be effective for specific AAPI communities. Additionally, AAPI organizations often have to collect their own data on the communities they serve, because disaggregated data is lacking from government agencies.

Different Immigration Patterns. While certain groups within the AAPI community have lived in the United States for several generations or are native to this land, many are recent arrivals. These varied immigration patterns have created very different challenges and have required the development of tailored strategies to meet the specific needs of the various groups. For example, Southeast Asian refugees entered the U.S. with little or no capital, and have multiple needs including trauma-related health and mental health needs. Though mental health is not typically seen as a community development issue, this immigration experience requires refugee-serving CBOs to develop comprehensive service models.

Geographic Dispersion. Nationally, AAPIs comprise only 4% of the population. While some AAPIs live in ethnic enclaves, several live in scattered areas, making them unlikely to be the dominant racial group in any neighborhood. Since community development funding is generally geographically based, the programs that AAPI organizations develop end up serving non-AAPI residents as well. Meanwhile, AAPI organizations are also establishing outreach programs or satellite offices to meet the needs of AAPIs who live outside of their service area. As a result, AAPI organizations must divide scarce resources across several jurisdictions. Additionally, U.S. immigration policy historically resettled refugees to geographic locations where few AAPIs were previously. This placed large numbers of AAPIs in areas with little to no capacity to serve the needs of these linguistically and culturally isolated communities.

AAPI Organizations in the Community Development System

AAPI organizations play a critical role in meeting the community and economic development needs of an underserved and diverse community. Yet they lack the broader, system-wide support necessary to carry out their work. Because federal, state and local governments do not collect or analyze data on AAPIs, particularly disaggregated data on ethnic groups, AAPI organizations have little to no data to make needs assessments to justify sufficient allocation of funding. Existing community development resources, systems and programs are often a mismatch for the priority needs of AAPI communities, and a mismatch for the existing infrastructure of the majority of CBOs that have the trust, as well as the appropriate linguistic and cultural competence, with a particular AAPI community. Thus, AAPI organizations must innovate to conform to serve the diverse needs of the AAPI community, most often with limited resources and support from the existing community and economic development system.

There are a growing number of AAPI organizations that are small, committed, and have emerged to work with rapidly growing segments of the AAPI population. There is a handful of CBOs that serve the South Asian community, despite the fact that it is the second largest AAPI population. Very few Pacific Islander serving CBOs exist and Pacific Islander communities are often overlooked even by CBOs that are set up to serve an “API” community. There are over two hundred mutual assistance associations that were developed specifically to resettle Southeast Asian communities, however they have not been systematically linked to the community development system. These newer organizations lack the political capital, size, and track record of well-established and larger CBOs to advocate for resources within the system. The challenge is to build a housing and community development system that ensures the inclusion of AAPI CBOs and ultimately supports the development of strong, vibrant AAPI communities and families as an integral part of our country’s neighborhoods.

Recommendations

National Coalition for Asian and Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD) believes that AAPI organizations warrants full support and access to resources of the federal government. National CAPACD urges Congress and federal policymakers to undertake the following actions to support the work of community development organizations for the AAPI community:

1. Make community economic development programs a priority in the federal budget.

National CAPACD urges federal and national policy makers to ensure that federal resources for all CDOs have reliable and multi-year budget support to address community and economic development needs. Over the past 20 years, these programs have suffered budget cuts and reductions. The programs affect job creation and support, housing and community development, capital access and equity programs and infrastructure and community building. National CAPACD believes that adequate resources for all community and economic development work must exist in order for adequate resources to be available for the AAPI community.

2. Support federally designated funding for AAPI community and economic development.

The AAPI community is the only minority community that does not receive designated federal funding for community and economic development on a national level. National CAPACD was recently established as the only national AAPI organization working on community and economic development.

- ◆ *Congress should sponsor legislation that provides funding support AAPI community and economic development policy and program development and research at the national level.*
- ◆ *The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should include criteria in the Notice of Funding Availability for local, regional and national entities that create incentives to carry out community and economic development in low-income AAPI communities.*
- ◆ *The Department of Treasury should provide support to a national organization to provide technical assistance to local and regional organizations that serve AAPI communities in the certification process to become Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI).*

3. Review current federal programs to ensure adequate and equitable support for AAPI organizations or community development projects serving AAPIs.

- ◆ *Federal agencies should commission and support research on the needs of community and economic development in the AAPI community, including increasing data collection and analysis on AAPI populations and subpopulations pursuant to Executive Order 13216 – Increasing Opportunity and Improving Quality of Life of AAPIs signed by President Bush on June 6, 2001.*

- ◆ *HUD should conduct annual assessments to ensure that AAPI organizations or projects serving AAPIs are being adequately and equitably funded.* According to an Urban Institute report, HUD funding to the AAPI community has been unevenly distributed. The White House Initiative on AAPIs conducted an inventory in 2000 of 34 federal agencies that should be used as a baseline to track progress of AAPI participation in HUD and other agencies' community development related programs.
- ◆ *Federal agencies should proactively provide technical assistance and incentives to state and local government agencies receiving federal pass-through funds to ensure access to services to the AAPI community.* The agencies should be required to collect data on AAPI populations and subpopulations, conduct community needs assessments and ensure that identified needs are reflected in required plans, such as HUD's Consolidated Plan, so that funds are effectively allocated to address the needs.
- ◆ *The federal agencies should affirmatively foster partnerships and contract with regional and national collaborative programs that build capacity of local AAPI organizations and a national infrastructure of AAPI organizations that fosters mutual exchange of strategies and promising practices.* Federal agencies should create mechanisms that allow for consultation with and input from AAPI organizations as new programs are being developed or new administrators are appointed. For example, federal agencies can sign Memoranda of Understanding, enter into contracts and award cooperative agreements to dedicate resources that will facilitate access for AAPI communities. Federal agencies can also create incentives for nationally funded entities such as LISC and the Enterprise Foundation to address AAPI community needs in partnership with networks of AAPI CDOs.
- ◆ *Federal agencies should include cultural and linguistic appropriateness in grant review criteria.* The additional costs that AAPI organizations must bear, such as greater administrative costs to hire and train bilingual staff to provide linguistic and culturally competent services; working in high cost-of-living areas and central urban cores. Federal agencies recruit individuals with experience in AAPI communities to serve in leadership positions within federal agencies and on external grant review panels.
- ◆ *Federal agencies should ensure that AAPI organizations have access to technical assistance resources to build capacity of individual organizations as well as the infrastructure among AAPI organizations.* Federal agencies should ensure that funding is directed not only to well-established AAPI CDOs that have a long-standing track record of successful project development, but also to AAPI organizations who are newer to the field of community development.

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