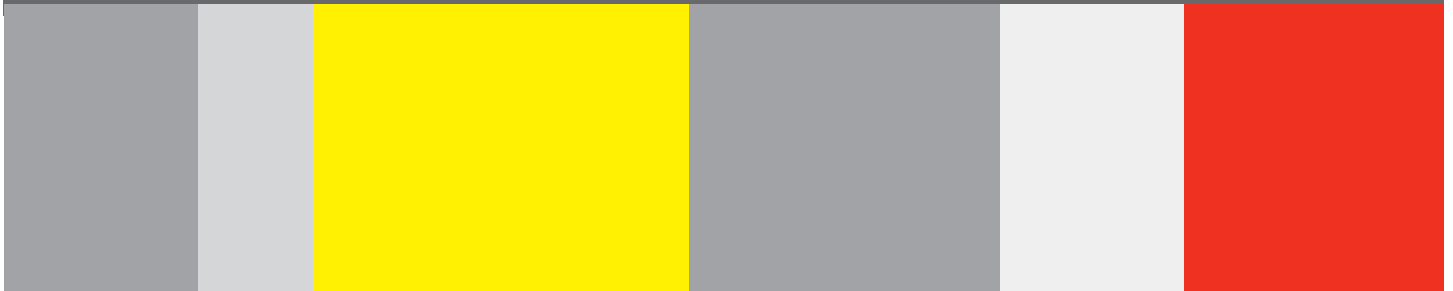




## **Taking Initiative In Our Neighborhoods**

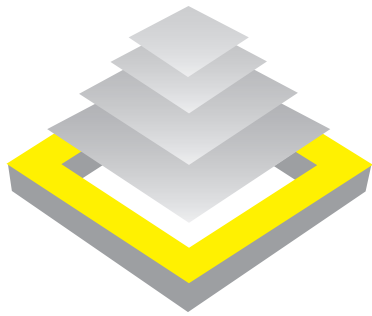
From Peer Mentorship to Network Building:  
Ten Years of Building Capacity in AAPI Communities



Josh Ishimatsu

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (CAPACD)

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national **CAPACD**

national coalition for  
asian pacific american  
community  
development

## **National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development**

1628 16th Street, NW – 4th Floor

Washington, DC 20009

Tel: 202-223-2442

Fax: 202-223-4144

Email: [info@nationalcapacd.org](mailto:info@nationalcapacd.org)

Website: [www.nationalcapacd.org](http://www.nationalcapacd.org)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper outlines the successes of the ACTION TA Program and the vision of the program moving forward. This program has built upon the existing strengths in AAPI communities to develop a vibrant, nationally networked, community-based infrastructure that supports a more just and inclusive nation. We hope that this paper is a useful resource for foundations, corporations, government agencies, and others who seek to effectively reach diverse low income AAPI families and individuals, and invest in the communities in which they live.

Since 2005, with the generous support from the Citi Foundation, ACTION TA has served over 25 community-based organizations (CBOs) in 11 different states. We have provided TA and capacity building in a wide variety of programmatic areas including affordable housing development, community planning, community outreach and education, housing counseling and economic development.

Since our founding in 1999, National CAPACD has grown from a small handful of organizations—15 founding members, mostly Community Development Corporations (CDCs)—to a large and diverse, national network of over 100 members, including a mix of different types of community-based organizations (CBOs). The ACTION TA Program was National CAPACD's first direct services program and, as such, the growth of the program has been integral to National CAPACD's growth as a network and as an organization. That is, as National CAPACD has outreached to new communities, being able to offer TA as a member service has been a key part of attracting new members and has helped our members to become stronger organizations, better able to serve their communities and advance the mission of National CAPACD.

Similar to the growth of the program, the evolution of ACTION TA has reflected the evolution and maturation of National CAPACD as an organization. ACTION TA started as a one-on-one, peer-to-peer, more open ended mentor/mentee relationships within a specified geographic area with a primary emphasis on traditional CDC programming (e.g., affordable housing development) but with subject matter largely driven by the philosophy of replicating a CDC in every AAPI neighborhood. Now, while still relying upon the expertise and knowledge of the most successful organizations within our membership, the program is more explicitly and consciously about programmatic network building—i.e., to better coordinate the programmatic efforts of our members on a larger scale and to raise resources and build capacity of our members to serve their communities in a way that is more strategic and efficient and that is not necessarily tied only to traditional CDC activities. The prime example of ACTION TA in this vein was the way in which ACTION TA was used to seed and incubate the cluster of activities/organizations which became National CAPACD's successful Housing Counseling Network, culminating with HUD's certification of National CAPACD as the first national Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) housing counseling intermediary.

Moving forward, National CAPACD intends to use the newly re-launched ACTION Network Building program to support our members through National CAPACD's growing intermediary function around such program areas as asset building, small business assistance and economic development, community development research and policy advocacy, etc.



## INTRODUCTION

Since first funded by Citi Foundation in 2005, the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development's (National CAPACD) AAPI Communities Taking Initiative in Our Neighborhoods Technical Assistance (ACTION TA) Program has worked with over 25 nonprofit community-based organizations to build new community development programming that has assisted thousands of low-income people and hundreds of small businesses.

National CAPACD, formed in 1999, represents over 100 members in over 17 states. Our members are mostly nonprofit, community-based organizations engaged in community development work in neighborhoods and metropolitan regions that have significant Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations.

The ACTION TA Program has used the experience of National CAPACD's most established and successful member organizations to build the capacity of our members who work in geographic areas with newly emerging communities, with historically underserved communities or are more grassroots in nature. This program has helped us implement a vision of community development based upon our values of building broad and inclusive communities where local community members are empowered to make decisions and participate in shaping their own communities.

This paper outlines the successes of the ACTION TA Program and gives the vision of the Program moving forward so that the Program can continue to help provide opportunities for low-income people and that National CAPACD and our members can continue to build the community-based infrastructure to support a more just and inclusive nation.

The structure of this document is as follows:

1. Program Overview, including a summary of the program's successful track record,
2. Two Case studies showing examples of program successes in more detail,
3. Network Building: the future of the program.

National CAPACD is deeply grateful to the Citi Foundation for its ongoing support of the ACTION TA Program, including support for the creation of this document.

# Citi Foundation





## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

With support from the Citi Foundation since 2005, the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD) has provided technical support and capacity building to member organizations working in underserved communities and serving emerging populations under our AAPI Communities Taking Initiative in Our Neighborhoods Technical Assistance (ACTION TA) Program. This document describes the successes of the ACTION TA Program and outlines the direction of the program moving forward.

### History of ACTION TA/History of National CAPACD

National CAPACD was founded in 1999 by a group of 15 community-based organizations (CBOs), working in AAPI communities across the country. While most of the original 15 CBOs provided a range of services, they all could legitimately be called Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in that they had some component of real estate development activities as well as some place-based approaches. All of the original organizations were established, accomplished and well respected organizations in their own communities.

In the beginning, National CAPACD was largely about advocacy for its founding members. It raised the profile of the work of these local organizations, provided a collective voice in the Federal Policy arena, convened national meetings to build a network between these organizations.

National CAPACD's first formal direct services program (i.e., not advocacy or convening) was the ACTION TA programming. From the earliest days of ACTION TA—before it even had a name or funding—the intent of the program was to duplicate the successes of the founding members, to help emerging communities to establish their own CDCs, to spread the gospel of AAPI CDC work.

The initial TA engagements funded through ACTION TA were one-on-one, mentor/mentee relationships that put priority on linking groups within the same metro region, under the assumption that local organizations would best know local markets, local conditions, local funding sources, local cultural/linguistic needs, etc. This set of assumptions was largely drawn from the founding members' (the groups that would be serving as the mentors) experience doing place-based work like affordable housing development.

As National CAPACD grew—expanding from 15 original members to over 100—there were more organizations that had needs and ambitions that were different from those represented by the 15 founding organizations. There were new CBO members from communities and regions where there was no potential mentor organization within the same metro region. There were more members requesting TA for subject matter areas (e.g., housing counseling) that were not within the wheelhouse of the majority of the original 15. There were new and unexpected problems facing our communities (e.g., the foreclosure crisis).

Reflecting National CAPACD's growing membership and changing external conditions, ACTION TA evolved to create clusters of TA relationships across geographic areas (instead of one-on-one relationships within a single metro area) around new programmatic areas (e.g. housing counseling and asset building) that, while related and complimentary, were different than the core set of activities and issues uniting the original 15 members.

Now, in the midst of our sluggish economic recovery, federal, state and local resources have been cut and, within the community development community, people in the know are talking about mergers and consolidations, not about expanding the ranks of CDCs (as was the purpose of ACTION TA when it first started). At the same time, National CAPACD has been successful in expanding its programmatic reach—building a housing counseling network, starting



networks for civic engagement and asset building. In this context, we are set to embark on the next evolutionary stage of the ACTION Program. Moving forward, we plan to leverage the ACTION Program to reinforce our network building activities. In this way, the arc of ACTION TA is very much like the history of CAPACD—it started focused on CDCs, then grew to have a more diverse coverage and will now do more to define itself around national-level network building and aggregation of programming.

## Historic Program Purpose/Vision

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### Organizational Mission

ACTION TA, in all of its incarnations, has been in direct fulfillment of National CAPACD's mission “to be a powerful voice for the unique community development needs of AAPI communities and to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations to create neighborhoods of hope and opportunity” (emphasis added). ACTION TA, one of the organization's first formal programs, fulfills the capacity building goals of National CAPACD's mission by using our most accomplished member organizations to mentor newer organizations working in emerging or underserved communities.

### Community Empowerment

As reflected in the name of the program (AAPI Communities Taking Initiative in Our Neighborhoods) a founding principle and purpose of the ACTION TA Program is that local communities should describe their needs and should be the lead in enacting the strategies and programs for meeting these needs. Communities themselves should be building the institutions that promote opportunity and provide the safety net for less fortunate community members. Community ownership of these institutions helps ensure greater community participation in programs as well as longer term sustainability and support for the programs and organizations. In emerging communities, as discussed above, coverage by existing nonprofits is patchy and community-based organizations (CBOs) need more resources and technical capacity. ACTION TA provides resources and builds capacity for these CBOs to take action within their own communities.

### Linking Emerging and Established Communities

Many of National CAPACD's members, particularly those located on the Pacific Coast and in the Northeast, work in historic AAPI communities that have roots back to the 1800s and an established nonprofit community development infrastructure that dates back many decades. These established organizations have a wealth of knowledge and experience in serving their communities that can be shared with emerging organizations. Under this premise, ACTION TA taps into the expertise and creativity of our more longstanding member organizations to help build the capacity of other CBOs in new geographies or working with emerging communities.

### Broad Definition of Community Development

While ACTION TA generally requires that TA recipients serve low-income persons and have a geographic component to their work – i.e., a place-based approach – we have had a broad definition of what community development strategies have been supported. We have supported:

- Economic development through small business assistance and support of small business districts;
- Rental affordable housing development;
- Homeownership and foreclosure counseling;
- Needs assessments for program planning;
- Planning and development of cultural amenities;
- Community outreach and planning activities.



This wide and comprehensive approach to community development is in part informed by the values of community self-determination expressed above. Communities all have a variety of needs and assets. Local communities should be able to define which needs are priority and from which strengths they wish to build. Further, this comprehensive approach to community development also reflects the successful experience of our founding and most-established member organizations. None of National CAPACD's original founding 15 members are Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in the traditional, narrowly defined sense of being a real estate development organization first. All of our members engage in some mix of real estate development, community organizing, economic development, social services, health services, etc. – a mix in which real estate development is only one tool in the toolbox. And, as National CAPACD has expanded across the country from our original member organizations' metro regions (largely on the Pacific Coast and in the Northeast), our membership has diversified in terms of organization type as well as in terms of geography and ethnicity.

### **Overview of Priority Communities/Organizations**

The ACTION TA Program prioritizes TA and program resources for member organizations who work in communities that are:

1. Emerging Ethnic Communities: Communities that are experiencing rapid growth and have generally been underserved/underrepresented within community development (e.g., Southeast Asian, Pacific Islanders, South Asian);
2. Underserved Geographies: Emerging communities in regions that historically have not had large AAPI populations (e.g., South, Midwest, Southwest);
3. Grassroots Organizations: Smaller organizations that have closer connections to their community-base.

## **Program Framework**

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### **“Initiator” Organizations**

Because of the values of community self-empowerment as described above, ACTION TA has been structured such that TA recipient organizations must initiate the TA process by describing their needs and aspirations through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Thus, within the terminology of our program, ACTION TA recipients are called “Initiator” organizations. We solicit Initiator organizations through our website, our National Convention, through our email and social media networks. Based upon program priorities and vision as described above, National CAPACD selects potential Initiator organizations to participate in the program.

### **“Resource” Organizations**

Each Initiator organization is paired with another, more experienced and established National CAPACD member organization that has subject matter expertise within the program areas identified by the Initiator organization. Under the theory that Initiator organizations would learn best from another community-based organization that built itself up from similar beginnings and from working with similar populations (whether immigrant, linguistically and culturally isolated, indigenous, etc.), National CAPACD groups organizations based upon geography or community traits in addition to subject matter. Within the terminology of our program, ACTION TA provider/mentor organizations are called “Resource” organizations.

Resource organizations present the best practices within the field to the TA recipient organizations. These best practices are based both upon the direct experience of the Resource organization and also upon the best practices of other National CAPACD member organizations and the field as a whole. In addition to best practices and advice and





consultation on subject matter/programmatic topics, mentorship ends up covering a wide array of subjects including organizational and administrative development, strategic planning, leadership development, etc.

### One-on-One TA to TA Clusters

At the start of the ACTION TA program, TA was structured as one-on-one mentorships, ideally with some sort of geographic proximity between Initiator and Resource organizations that would allow for face-to-face TA and deeper



2007 ACTION TA Participants at a convening at the Korean Resource Center in Los Angeles.

relationship-building. Having such intensive, one-on-one TA also made for more holistic capacity building (TA typically ended up being about much more than the subject matter) that was highly responsive to the specific needs of the Initiator organization. However, it did not allow us to reach as many organizations per program year and made it more difficult to serve geographically isolated communities within our framework. In 2010, we began grouping Initiator/TA recipient organizations into “Clusters” of 2-4 organizations working with a single Resource/TA provider. This allowed us to serve more Initiator organizations per year with the same amount of program funding and also enabled us to better focus TA within the Clusters around thematic issue areas.

### Other Support through ACTION TA

In addition to pairing each TA recipient organization with a mentor organization, National CAPACD also provides the following to all TA recipients:

- **Financial Support:** ACTION TA provides sub-grants as seed funding for participating organizations' programmatic work that may not have full access to traditional community development funding sources. ACTION TA grants support capacity building in projects and programs addressing critical, underserved needs. This support raises the visibility of groups' efforts, providing our CBO members with the credibility needed to access and leverage local funding;
- **Seminars and Webinars:** Each year, National CAPACD staff organize a series of workshop sessions and webinars targeting the ACTION TA recipients around the program year's subject matter;
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Through group TA sessions, seminars and convenings, National CAPACD purposefully builds in opportunities for similarly situated Initiator organizations to meet and discuss programming and other relevant subject matter. This peer-to-peer learning is important for shared problem solving and mutual support;
- **Networking Opportunities and Information Sharing:** CBOs across the entire National CAPACD



ACTION TA recipients gather at National CAPACD Housing and Community Development Policy Forum, May 2012.



network are able to meet and share information. Also, National CAPACD facilitates and creates opportunities for staff to directly engage and communicate with federal public agency staff, elected officials and other national organizations. This helps national policy makers better understand the unique and complex needs of our AAPI communities and also gives our emerging CBO members greater voice and profile in the national community development dialogue;

- **Other Consultants:** As needed, National CAPACD may support Initiator organizations to work with other consultants or experts who are not part of National CAPACD's membership;
- **Scholarships:** Through our relationships with other Intermediaries and TA Providers we have provided ACTION TA participants with scholarships and helped with other learning opportunities provided by national community development trainers;
- **Leadership Development:** ACTION TA provides participants with resources and special training/leadership development opportunities at our national convention and other national convenings.



## PROGRAM RESULTS

### Track Record

As documented below, ACTION TA has had a strong track record of success. But the number of organizations served and the lists of programmatic outcomes do not tell the whole story. The legacy of ACTION TA is the small ways in which organizations have become more sustainable, more focused, better run, and the ways in which organizations will be better able to serve their communities for the long term—to be assets to their communities. This is not to say that ACTION TA was determinative to any organization's survival. Instead, ACTION TA represents a chance for organizations to get support in developing new and better programming, improving and expanding existing services, building better administrative infrastructure. And also, ACTION TA is a vehicle for organizations to be supported, to be connected to a larger network of like-minded organizations and individuals. This support, this connectedness, while not instrumental in the immediate life or death of an organization, makes long term commitment to the work all the more sustainable.

### Groups Served

Since 2005, ACTION TA has served 25 National CAPACD member organizations in 11 different states plus Washington DC. The organizations that have received TA are:

- Asian American Homeownership Counseling (Washington DC),
- Asian Economic Development Association (St. Paul, MN),
- Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center (DC Metro Area),
- Asian Pacific Environmental Network (SF Bay Area, CA),
- Asian Services In Action (Cleveland, OH),
- Bindlestiff (San Francisco, CA),
- Chhaya Community Development Corporation (New York, NY),
- Chinatown Gateway Coalition (Boston, MA),
- Chinese American Service League (Chicago, IL),
- Chinese Community Center (Houston, TX),
- Faith Action for Community Equity (Honolulu, HI),
- Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (Fresno, CA),
- Guam Communications Network (Long Beach, CA),
- Hawaiian Community Assets (Wailuku, Hawaii),
- Hmong American Partnership (Twin Cities, MN),
- Kahua, Inc. (Hawaii (Maui, Kauai, Oahu)),
- Korean Resource Center (Los Angeles, CA),
- Lao Family Community of Stockton (Stockton, CA)
- Little Saigon Foundation (San Diego, CA),
- Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC (New Orleans, LA),
- MinKwon Center (Queens, NY),
- Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (Philadelphia, PA),
- State Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations (Waimanalo, Hawaii),
- Thai Community Development Center (Los Angeles, CA),
- Veteran's Equity Center (San Francisco, CA),
- Vietnamese American Initiative for Development (Dorchester, MA).

**Past and present ACTION TA Resource organizations include:**

- Asian Americans for Equality (New York, NY),
- Asian Community Development Corporation (Boston, MA),
- Chhaya Community Development Corporation (New York, NY),
- Chinatown Community Development Center (San Francisco, CA),
- Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (Honolulu, HI),
- Little Tokyo Service Center (Los Angeles, CA),
- Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (Philadelphia, PA),
- South of Market Community Action Network (San Francisco, CA).

100% of ACTION TA recipients have been from the targeted types of organizations as identified in the purpose section above (groups that may fulfill more than one category were identified as a single category only):

- 55% of TA recipients primarily serve emerging/underserved ethnic communities,
- 25% of TA recipients have been from emerging geographic areas,
- 20% of TA recipients from grassroots organizations.

**Outcomes**

In the course of a TA engagement, each TA recipient organization must come up with a TA Plan that includes some form of tangible accomplishment (e.g., creation of a Community Plan document) at the end of the TA period. Examples of these accomplishments under each TA engagement include the following:

**Housing Counseling/Asset Building  
(45% of Groups Assisted)**

- New housing counseling programs developed or strengthened (please see Case Study #2) in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Houston, Washington DC;
- New financial literacy and education programming in Queens;
- New foreclosure prevention and counseling programming in the Central Valley (Stockton and Fresno).

**Community Planning/Program Planning (25% of Groups Assisted)**

- Needs Assessment completed for the Pacific Islander community in the Los Angeles region and for emerging AAPI communities in the greater DC area;
- Transit/housing community planning in Fresno, the San Francisco Bay Area, Honolulu;
- Community planning and outreach in Boston Chinatown and in the South of Market neighborhood of San Francisco.



Bindlestiff, a cultural/community space developed with assistance from ACTION TA.



### Real Estate Development (15% of Groups Assisted)

- Acquisition/predevelopment for two senior affordable rental housing sites in Los Angeles;
- Feasibility assessment of senior affordable housing development opportunities in New Orleans;
- Development of a cultural performance space in San Francisco;
- Affordable home-ownership developed in Hawaii.

### Economic Development/Small Businesses (15% of Groups Assisted)

- New economic development programming in New Orleans;
- Ethnic small business district promotion and community planning in Minneapolis-St. Paul (please see Case Study #1) and San Diego.

Over 95% of all deliverables outlined in the TA Plans have been accomplished by TA recipient organizations. In addition to these specific deliverables, ACTION TA, through the mentorship and financial and technical support described above, has led to:

- Increased capacity of our member organizations' Board and staff to engage in community development activities,
- Improved systems for administering programs and activities,
- Deepened understanding and knowledge of programs and resources from federal agencies, foundations, financial institutions and other national intermediaries,
- New resources for staffing and services,
- New service programs,
- Increased awareness on the national policy level of the unique and complex needs of our AAPI communities.

These new programs, plans and resources have enabled ACTION TA Program recipients to serve thousands of low-income individuals and hundreds of small businesses that they would not otherwise have been able to reach.

### Other Benefits

In addition to the direct benefits for program participants and the low-income communities that they serve, ACTION TA has had the following additional benefits to National CAPACD and our broader network of members:

- **Membership Outreach/Growth of National CAPACD Membership:** Participation in ACTION TA has been presented to potential new members as a benefit to becoming a National CAPACD member organization. This has helped us market to new members and is especially important in outreach to groups working in underserved geographic areas and working with emerging and underserved communities. And, as one of the first formal programs operated by National CAPACD, ACTION TA has been integral in growing our membership and our growth as an organization;
- **Network Building:** Not only has ACTION TA helped to grow membership, but it also has improved relationships between members. In creating mentorship relationships and peer-to-peer relationships, we strengthen our network by giving diverse members shared goals, resources to interact, etc. These bonds – this social capital – help with future outreach, communication and advocacy across our network;
- **Laboratory for New Ideas and New Tactics:** As described above, a stronger network allows National CAPACD staff to hear earlier about emerging issues and practices from the field. Through this level of communication and contact,



ACTION TA has helped organizations to implement new programs and approaches. As such, there are benefits for the entire network of member organizations (and the entire community development field, beyond our own members) as new tactics are innovated and then spread across the network. The growth of our Housing Counseling Network (see Case Study #2) is an example of how this interaction and experimentation has incubated new programming.





## CASE STUDIES

This paper includes two case studies: 1) Community planning for an ethnic small business district in St. Paul; and 2) the building of National CAPACD's housing counseling network.

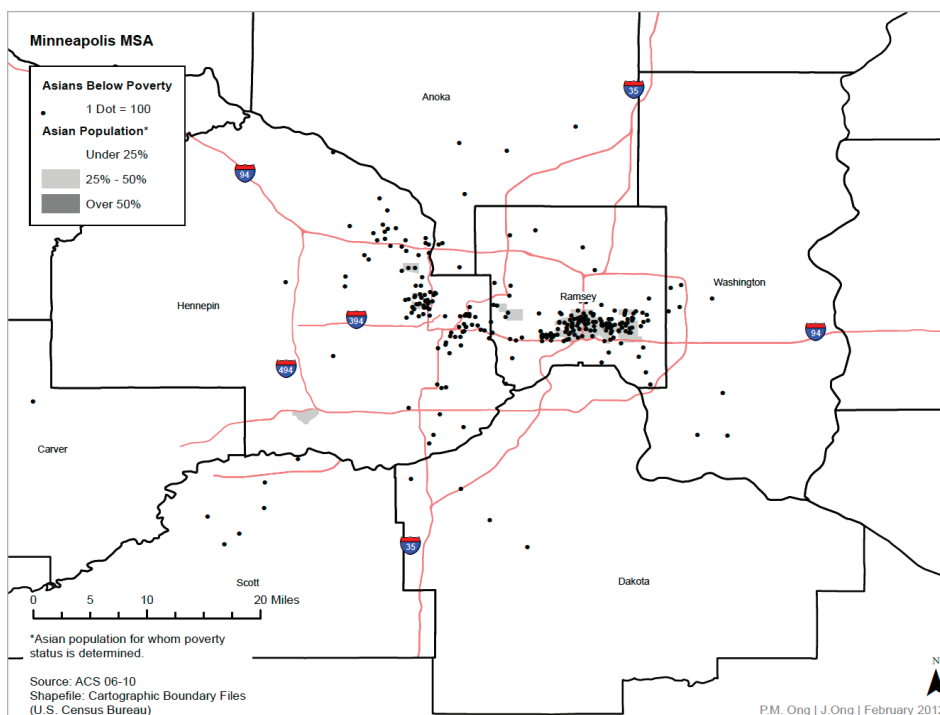
The case studies were selected to illustrate the breadth and depth of the program in terms of subject matter, geography, ethnicity, etc. As further discussed in the "ACTION Moving Forward" section at the end of the paper, the case studies were also selected to help illustrate the ways in which the ACTION program is redefining itself and continuing to build upon past successes.

### CASE STUDY No. 1

#### MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL

##### The Numbers: History and Current Context

Since the 1960s, the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area's AAPI population has increased dramatically. According to a 1970 US Census Publication entitled "General Demographic Trends for Metropolitan Areas, 1960 to 1970, "Other Races" (everybody not Black or White) living in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan areas increased from 6,702 to 17,760 – or from 0.5% of the Metro area population in 1960 to 1.0% of the Metro area population in 1970. In 1980, the US Census identified 19,348 Asians (now enough people to justify a separate category) living in the Twin Cities metro area, or 0.9% of the total population. By 2010, the Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA had over 218,000 persons of AAPI decent, or 7% of the population.



Besides its rapid increase in population, Minneapolis-St. Paul's AAPI population is notable because of its high poverty rate—18.1% according to the US Census 2010 1-year American Community Survey (ACS). The MSA AAPI poverty rate is higher than the overall poverty rate for the metro area and is one of the highest AAPI poverty rates for any metro area in the country. At a population of over 16,000, Hmong Americans represent more than half of the total AAPIs in poverty in the Twin Cities MSA. Nationally, the Hmong community has a poverty rate of 27.0%, compared to a national general poverty rate of 13.8%.

Map generated by UCLA Asian American Studies Center as part of a study commissioned by National CAPACD.



## Neighborhood Center/Regional Draw

Because of refugee settlement patterns, the Twin Cities metro region is one of the national centers for the Hmong American community. While AAPIs and Hmong live throughout the region (please see map showing geographic distribution of AAs and Asians below Poverty in the Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA), the Little Mekong business district is a regional draw for South East Asians living in the MSA. The Little Mekong district is a stretch of University Avenue in St. Paul, between the historic Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods. Within this small neighborhood, there are over 100 Asian American-owned small businesses as well as cultural, religious and other community-based organizations. Southeast Asians from across the region come to this neighborhood to shop, eat, worship, socialize, etc. For a generally low-income immigrant and refugee community, Little Mekong represents pathways to economic opportunity (small businesses), social support, cultural preservation—the district is important to the community's health and economic well-being.



View of Asian American Small Businesses along University Avenue.

## Neighborhood Impacted by Regional Infrastructure Development

In 2006, the Metropolitan Council, a regional planning organization and public services authority, approved the Central Corridor, a new light rail line between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul to run along University Ave. While generally heralded as a triumph for sustainable planning and community development, the original plans for the Central Corridor contained inadequate measures for mitigating impacts on minority, low-income communities of color along the route – particularly absent was outreach to the Hmong American community and mitigation for specific impacts to the Little Mekong businesses.



## AEDA

### TA Recipient Profile

Since 2006, AEDA has been working with Asian micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Twin Cities metro region, particularly focusing on the Little Mekong district of Saint Paul and on North Minneapolis. AEDA's mission is "to cultivate vibrant, diverse communities by creating economic opportunities" and its vision statement is "we envision thriving, sustainable multicultural neighborhoods with strong community leadership and economic justice." AEDA initiates planning, marketing and branding for the Little Mekong business and culture district, provides access to training and information to local ethnic immigrant micro-entrepreneurs and small business owners, engages and organizes small businesses, CBOs, low-income residents and other community stakeholders around issues of sustainable community planning and development.



### Staff Profile

When National CAPACD first started working with AEDA, Va-Megn Thoj, the organization's co-founder and Executive Director, was the organization's sole employee. Va-Megn was a film maker, a small business owner, community organizer and mayoral aide prior to helping start AEDA. Now, AEDA has hired a second full-time employee, a Director of Community Building and Organizing. In addition, AEDA now employs a part-time community outreach coordinator, a part-time program assistant and two part-time researchers from the University of Minnesota. The increased staff capacity will likely contribute to the ongoing impact of AEDA in supporting the small business community in St. Paul.





### **Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corp.**

#### **TA Provider Profile**

Little Tokyo, a small neighborhood nestled between the Los Angeles Civic Center and the Los Angeles River, was the historic gateway community for Japanese American immigrants into Southern California. During the 1970s and 1980s, a City of LA Civic Center expansion and a Japanese corporate buying spree threatened Little Tokyo. Almost 1,000 units of affordable housing and small business storefronts were demolished for new hotels, office towers and surface parking lots. At the time, the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) was a small, grassroots, newly formed, social service agency. With its clients becoming homeless with the demolition of much of the neighborhood's older housing stock, LTSC was forced to change its mode of work in order to address deeper, more structural changes. Adding to its social services, LTSC became involved in community organizing, historic preservation and affordable housing development. LTSC now is a full-fledged community development corporation with over 100 employees working in social services, real estate development, community organizing and small business assistance.

#### **TA Experience**

Through its TA Programs, LTSC has helped over 10 CBOs complete their first real estate development project with over 500 units of affordable housing and approximately 100,000 square feet of nonprofit commercial space produced. LTSC has also helped numerous nonprofit CBO start-ups in the Los Angeles area including incubating over a dozen other CBOs (e.g., s include: Khmer Girls in Action, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, the API Small Business Program, Thai Community Development Center). LTSC has been an ACTION TA Provider since the beginning of the program.

## **ACTION Technical Assistance**

### **Initiator Organizations**

In 2009, National CAPACD, through our ACTION TA Program, began working with the Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA), a nonprofit, community-based organization located in Little Mekong. In our 2010-2011 Program Year, we also provided TA to Hmong American Partnership (HAP), another Twin Cities metro area based organization, to expand work with AEDA and in Little Mekong. Please see inset for a profile of AEDA.

### **Resource Organizations**

National CAPACD has supported AEDA to work with Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC – please see inset for a profile of LTSC), a member organization who has done extensive work preserving and promoting the small business district in the historic neighborhood of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. Additionally, National CAPACD supported AEDA to work with a consultant who had previously been involved in the creation of a mitigation fund for small businesses in a South East Asian American community in Seattle that had been impacted by a new light rail line. National CAPACD staff also provided direct TA to AEDA.

### **TA Provided**

AEDA received assistance and mentoring in small business district preservation, business assistance and outreach, community planning, understanding the real estate development process, understanding and impacting regional planning processes and organizational administration and development. TA was in the form of small group peer-to-peer learning sessions, seminars and workshops at our National Convention, one-on-one consulting sessions (with an outside consultant, a National CAPACD member organization and with National CAPACD staff), site visits to other National CAPACD members, meetings with DC policy makers, including representatives of the US Department of Transportation.

### **Outcomes**

Since receiving support from National CAPACD, AEDA achieved the following outcomes:

- Improved community and land use planning capacity including production of community planning documents (for an example of an AEDA planning document please see: [http://nationalcapacd.org/sites/default/files/u7/AEDA\\_UnivAveMap.pdf](http://nationalcapacd.org/sites/default/files/u7/AEDA_UnivAveMap.pdf));
- Improved outreach to and engagement of local Asian small businesses and leadership development and creation of the Little Mekong business and cultural district (see AEDA's promotional website for Little Mekong at [www.littlemekong.com](http://www.littlemekong.com));



- Improved service/assistance to over 100 small businesses per year;
- Increased participation in and influence on the regional planning and development process for the Central Corridor and planned future light-rail system;
- Successfully advocated for more than \$2 Million for business marketing and technical assistance.

AEDA, working with other allies, won improved mitigations for businesses and low-income residents along the Central Corridor line, including a \$4 Million light rail impact mitigation fund for small businesses. In a complex campaign with many different coalition partners, it is difficult to assess what more could have been won or what would have happened but not for National CAPACD's modest support of AEDA. However, it is clear that AEDA is a stronger organization and is better positioned to grow into the future.

### The Future

National CAPACD chose to support AEDA, a small, grassroots organization because AEDA was strategically positioned to benefit a community that was historically underrepresented and would have been disproportionately impacted by regional infrastructure development. Since working with National CAPACD, AEDA has significantly increased its reach and staff size and has adapted some of its approaches to its work based upon the best practices of some of our most successful member organizations. Hopefully this provides a sustainable base upon which AEDA will continue to grow and serve its community in a variety of capacities well into the future, providing a voice and an outlet where there was a gap before.

## CASE STUDY No. 2

### NATIONAL CAPACD HOUSING COUNSELING NETWORK

#### History: Housing Counseling and ACTION TA

Housing Counseling has been an integral part of ACTION TA since the beginning of the program. In the first year that the Citi Foundation funded ACTION TA, National CAPACD supported a consultant, Douglas Ling (formerly the Executive Director of Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), a National CAPACD member organization) to work with the Chinese American Service League (CASL) in Chicago and Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) to help CASL and PCDC develop homeownership and first-time homebuyers counseling programs. Doug Ling brought in founding National CAPACD member organization, Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE—please see inset for a further description of AAFE) to help with the TA. Chhaya



#### Chhaya Community Development Corporation

##### TA Provider/Recipient Profile

Chhaya CDC was founded in 2000 to advocate for New York City's South Asian community, one of the city's fastest growing immigrant populations. The organization's mission is to create more stable and sustainable communities by increasing civic participation and addressing the housing and community development needs of New York's South Asians, new immigrants and their neighbors. Based in Queens, New York - Chhaya CDC is a community-based organization that organizes, informs and assists South Asians, new immigrants, and other New York City residents in the areas of housing rights and civic participation.

Chhaya's work encompasses tenant rights, financial management, homeownership, foreclosure prevention, promoting energy efficiency, civic engagement, and advocating for affordable housing opportunities; as well as research and advocacy around community needs. All programs are offered in Bangla, English, Hindi, Nepali, and Urdu. Chhaya assists over 1,000 individuals each year of homebuyer assistance and training, tenant rights, advocacy, and referral; services; and over 100,000 through our education on housing and immigrant rights. Coupled with the organization's policy and advocacy initiatives, this work positively impacts Chhaya's clients by offering them the information they need to stabilize their housing and improve their lives.

##### Coming Full Circle

In 2007, Chhaya was an ACTION TA Initiator organization, receiving TA from the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP) to develop a culturally relevant housing and financial education curriculum. In 2012, Chhaya was an ACTION TA provider, helping other CBOs to become HUD-certified housing counseling agencies.



Community Development Corporation (please see inset for a further description of Chhaya CDC) also received TA from the program to develop a culturally relevant housing counseling and financial education curriculum for the South Asian Community. In subsequent years, Chhaya CDC and PCDC, previous recipients of TA, became Resource organizations for the ACTION TA program and mentored additional community based organizations to develop their housing counseling capacity.

### **The Foreclosure Crisis and the Birth of the Housing Counseling Network**

In 2008 and on into 2009, National CAPACD and our member organizations began hearing through clients and community members of rising foreclosures in the AAPI community. Data began to bear these trends out. A study published by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco showed that AAPIs were 60% more likely to experience foreclosure than non-Hispanic whites, even controlling for income and credit scores. US Census American Community Survey data showed that, in 2008, AAPI homeownership rates fell faster than any other ethnic group. Yet, there had not



ACTION TA Session in Stockton, CA between Lao Family Community Empowerment (Initiator organization) and the Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc. (Resource organization) about Foreclosure Intervention Outreach.

been any systematic effort to outreach to our communities via ethnic media or in formal communications in AAPI languages to encourage homeowners to contact their lenders nor had there been any strategies to systematically disseminate information to AAPI serving community-based organizations about how to assist or advise clients facing foreclosure. Additionally, the federally-sponsored National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling (NPMC) program did not include any CBOs that had the language and cultural expertise to reach diverse AAPI communities because these groups lacked an established track record of foreclosure counseling.

Using relationships and programs established through ACTION TA, National CAPACD convened our members



A Foreclosure Prevention Assistance Fair organized by Center for Pan-Asian Community Services in Atlanta, GA, 2011.

involved in housing counseling and launched a new Housing Counseling Network. With the member organizations that started housing counseling programs under ACTION TA as the initial core, the Housing Counseling Network has expanded to include 15 member organizations. With support from Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, NeighborWorks America, numerous financial institutions and national allies such as the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), our members have developed capacity to hold foreclosure fairs, conduct pre- and post-purchase homeownership counseling, foreclosure intervention counseling, as well as rental and tenant counseling and counseling for households that are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. As a housing counseling intermediary, National CAPACD provides Grants & Pass-Through Funding to support housing counseling services, marketing and outreach activities, capacity building and training; Training & Staff Development that builds the knowledge and skills of professionals in the network; Technical Assistance focused on HUD

**Asian Americans for Equality****TA Provider Profile**

Asian Americans For Equality (AAFE) grew out of the hopes and aspirations of Asian immigrants who came to America with dreams of making a better life for themselves and their families. AAFE was founded in 1974 when construction began on Confucius Plaza, a federally-funded high-rise development in the heart of New York Chinatown. Although City policies required guaranteed employment opportunities for minority workers, the builder refused to hire Chinese applicants. Outraged by this blatant discrimination, a coalition of Chinatown residents, students, and professionals came together to demand the right of access for Asian Americans to some of those construction jobs. The protest leaders formed a volunteer organization that they called Asian Americans for Equal Employment (AAFE, later to become AAFE) to coordinate demonstrations, marches, and picketing around the Confucius Plaza site. From their early days as a grassroots movement in New York Chinatown, AAFE has spent the last thirty-six years actively helping people to realize their dreams. The organization's vision of a just and equitable society for new immigrant populations, particularly Asian Americans and immigrants, grew into a mission to create equal opportunities for all people. Today, the organization works for community development and empowerment on many fronts: producing affordable housing, offering social and legal services, providing tenant and minority advocacy, encouraging civic participation, helping individuals build assets, and initiating economic development.

**Homeownership Counseling and Finance**

In 1999, AAFE created a subsidiary organization, AAFE Community Development Fund (AAFE CDF), to promote and advance homeownership for minority, immigrant, low- and moderate-income and underserved populations of New York City. AAFE CDF has secured over \$295 million in mortgage financing for over 1,950 clients, while providing counseling to some 8,000 prospective homeowners.

compliance, program design and development, outreach and marketing, use of technology and client management system, and fundraising; and Peer-to-Peer Convenings to facilitate the sharing of best practices and strategies between network groups.

**ACTION TA and On-Going Support and Expansion of the Housing Counseling Network**

Since the launch of the Housing Counseling Network in 2009, ACTION TA continues to be mobilized in support of the Network. In order to build the capacity of groups to administer housing counseling programs and comply with funding regulations, etc., several Housing Counseling Network organizations have been ACTION TA recipients. In addition, potential future members have received TA to become HUD-certified counseling agencies and to perform foreclosure intervention outreach.

**Outcomes**

With ACTION TA, National CAPACD has built a network member of organizations that have the capacity to serve AAPIs whose primary languages include Korean, Chinese–Cantonese, Chinese–Mandarin, Chinese–Toishanese, Tagalog, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, Hmong, Bangla, Urdu, and Hindi. The groups are located and work in 10 states and 8 metro areas, specifically New York City, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, San Diego, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, Miami, and Honolulu. Our Housing Counseling Network collectively serves over 7,000 people per year.

**The Future**

The housing network continues to grow. In addition, National CAPACD staff are currently engaged in a needs assessment and feasibility analysis to expand services within in the network to include a broader array of asset building services including general financial literacy for low-income families, IDA programs, more small business and micro-enterprise assistance, etc. As the network expands and adds more services, ACTION TA will assist in the dissemination of new programming and innovative practices within specific program subareas.





## **ACTION MOVING FORWARD**

In a time of increasingly constrained resources for serving people in need, community-based organizations will have to continue to do more with less. ACTION TA, to be more relevant in the new era of less, needs to be more consciously and strategically about leveraging limited resources and building national scale to better serve local organizations. Learning from past program successes, we will make the following adjustments to the Program moving forward:

1. Increased Strategic Focus based upon Data and National Policy Issues (the lessons learned from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Case Study);
2. Network Building as a Central Strategic Approach (the lessons learned from the Housing Counseling Network).

This slight realignment of the program will allow us to be more purposeful and deliberate in locating our TA in the context of coordinated work that is already being done across our National network of members – thus strengthening and enhancing our members' quality performance and moving them towards more concrete and measurable outcomes of the good work that is already being done. This will also help leverage TA with additional programmatic resources and activities.

### **The “New” ACTION Network Building Program**

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#### **The Next Evolutionary Step**

As discussed above and in the program overview, the ACTION TA Program has evolved over time from a highly individualized and localized program focused more on community development (though community development broadly defined) to a less explicitly community development-focused (i.e., more housing counseling and asset building) program with clusters of organizations brought together across geography. In the next evolutionary step of the program, we would focus the entire program around a single annual theme, in support of building and strengthening innovative programmatic networks across our national membership base.

#### **Re-Branding the ACTION Program**

In the context of increased strategic focus and a new emphasis on network building, we are going to re-name the ACTION TA Program as the ACTION Network Building Program. This small change to the name reflects the shift in emphasis in the program away from TA (though TA will still be a part of the program) and towards as a more purposeful and coordinated approach in support of broader National CAPACD goals and programs. It retains enough of the old name to signal that we are not jettisoning or overhauling the program – we are proud of what we have accomplished to date. It is simply that the times demand a more strategic focus.

#### **Strategic Focus**

##### **More Cohesive and Coordinated Focus**

By design, ACTION TA has covered a wide array of subject matter/programmatic areas. In our own program design, we had placed a strong value on community-based organizations being able to identify the areas in which they wanted help, under the premise that it was best for communities to take the initiative in identifying and solving their own problems. This remains an important value. However, in the context of shrinking resources, it is more important for ACTION TA to be



focused and cohesive – to have more hands pushing in the same direction in order to better move the needle. That is, while community self-determination still matters, National CAPACD (with input and guidance from its members) needs to take more leadership and more proactively coordinate and focus the ACTION Program.

In the past three ACTION TA Program years, we have focused the program by adding subject matter themes – Initiator organizations still identified the specific programs and goals for which they wanted assistance but each specific program/project was within a pre-selected broader theme (e.g., sustainable communities, economic development or asset building). Moving forward, we intend to further tighten the focus of the ACTION Program along the lines discussed below.

#### Lessons from the St. Paul Case Study: Data and Research, Strategic Vision, Timely Opportunities

The AEDA/St. Paul case study shows a near optimal set of characteristics for ACTION TA to intervene: data strongly indicated a need (a growing, underserved minority population), an urgent threat (massive regional infrastructure project) and potential for a win-win positive outcome (minority community better integrated into a more sustainable planning process means a better overall project and a more integrated and healthy metro region). This case study illustrates the approach that National CAPACD should better follow with ACTION TA. We should engage in TA based upon data and research applied to a strategic vision (i.e., a theory of change and set of goals based upon our core values). We should also marshal our resources for critical points at which our limited resources can leverage greater victories.

#### Coordination with Other National CAPACD Initiatives

As we apply the lessons from the St. Paul Case Study as described above, the ACTION Network Building Program should be better integrated and coordinated with other National CAPACD programmatic and public policy initiatives. Some overlap is natural in that all National CAPACD activities are derived from the same core set of values/vision/mission. However, we can be more conscious and deliberate in how we use the ACTION Program to support other National CAPACD activities. As a direct example, in the coming two years, we plan to use ACTION Network Building in support of launching an Asset Building Network (see further discussion below).

#### Maintain Flexibility

As the ACTION Program becomes more coordinated and planned, it is important that it retains some flexibility, some nimbleness to be able to respond to changing circumstances and unexpected crises. Our response to Hurricane Katrina is an example. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, National CAPACD was able to use ACTION TA to support a New Orleans CBO, Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC, to develop new programming to help recover from the disaster and to sustain a community into the future. As we pre-plan more of our program, we should still hold some resources in reserve for un-planned programmatic activities.

### Network Building

#### Lessons from Housing Counseling Network Case Study: A New Role for TA

The success of the Housing Counseling Network opens a whole new set of possibilities for both the ACTION Program and National CAPACD. Using a network of local organizations to create a national program takes advantage of the national size and profile to fundraise and to have administrative economies of scale while still respecting the autonomy of local communities and the ability of local community-based organizations to best design and implement programs to serve their own communities—it is the best of both worlds.



As shown by the Housing Counseling case study, ACTION TA can be used to help seed national networks. National CAPACD can invest strategically in the best programs of our member organizations and build national scale programs – aggregating local efforts and creating economies of scale and opening programs to the possibility of national level funding. Here, ACTION TA is something like venture capital. And once the network is built, TA can support the smooth running of the network. TA in this context becomes less about viewing organizations through a prism of deficit and more about (1) sharing best practices within the network, disseminating strategies and tactics, spreading innovation, and about (2) standardizing administration and evaluation (including building a common base of metrics) in order to further refine and make future programming more effective

### Asset Building Network

Starting in the coming year and over the course of the next couple years, as discussed in the Housing Counseling Network Case Study above, National CAPACD will launch and establish a new Asset Building Network. This Asset Building Network will mirror the structure of our Housing Counseling Network and will likely have strong overlap with the Housing Counseling Network, though it will likely also include a number of members that are not currently part of the Housing Counseling Network. Through the Asset Building Network, we will support member organizations to implement Asset Building programs that include some mix of individual and family financial counseling, IDA programs, small business and micro-enterprise assistance, job development and training, etc. To launch this new network, we will use the ACTION Program to help seed and shore up the administrative and programmatic infrastructure of the nascent network.

### The Future of Network Building

Once the Asset Building Network launch is successful, National CAPACD will evaluate other programming that could be supported through a national network structure. The ACTION Program will be the initial seed capital and sweat equity into these potential new networks. After this initial investment, ACTION then would be about strengthening and enhancing quality performance, moving towards more concrete and measurable outcomes of the work being done across the network. Organizations still identified the specific programs and goals for which they wanted assistance but each specific program/project was within a pre-selected broader theme (e.g., sustainable communities, economic development or asset building). Moving forward, we intend to further tighten the focus of the ACTION Program along the lines discussed in this paper.