Economic Capacity



UCC's Khmer Town Night Market provides a safe space for residents to connect with one another and enjoy food from local businesses.

Economic capacity is an organization's ability to mobilize, grow, and sustain financial and material resources in ways that advance equity, build community wealth, and support long-term impact. For community-focused organizations, economic capacity means not only securing funding but also doing so in ways that center shared ownership, economic justice, and sustainability.

These might include practices of stewardship, accountability, and financial leadership in non-traditional ways. These efforts might provide food, create jobs, build family wealth, and support new enterprises in ways that are distributive, circular, and rooted in care rather than consumption.

Economic capacity may include:

- Generating diverse, equitable funding and partnership streams that reflect community priorities and values (resource mobilization);
- Building and stewarding assets, such as land, capital, data, or infrastructure in ways that increase community control and benefit (asset expansion); and
- Designing long-term strategies that align finances with mission, center community voices, and ensure resilience across leadership, economic, and political changes (sustainability planning).

In short, economic capacity is about creating economic power with, not just resources for, the communities served.

How United Cambodian Community (UCC) Builds Economic Capacity

United Cambodian Community (UCC) provides culturally competent social services to the Cambodian community in Long Beach, CA. Located in Cambodia Town which has the largest Cambodian population in the United States, UCC's various business programs have built economic capacity by

bringing visibility, attracting local visitors who spend money in the neighborhood, and gaining the backing of the city, sponsors, and other funders. Their efforts include large-scale promotional activities such as Living Arts Long Beach and Cambodian Restaurant Week, as well as cultural holidays such as Sankranta with the Cambodian New Year Parade and Festival. Planned in partnership with other entities, UCC positioned itself as a leader taking on roles to foster networks, build relationships, organize youth groups, and raise funds through community grants.

Once rotating between different locations in neighborhood parks and plazas, the Khmer Town Night Market is now housed in a local bank's parking lot. The night market has been a safe space for families and community members to walk through Cambodia Town in the evening to celebrate, enjoy food, and connect with one another. The market draws in additional evening visitors to Long Beach Cambodia Town as many neighborhood businesses close at 6 pm, bringing in foot traffic for those that remain open. UCC fosters community placemaking by supporting existing small businesses as vendors and through marketing the market, as well as cultivating small entrepreneurial businesses as an incubator. UCC helps these new businesses build their social media presence, test their product with new customers, and decide whether to scale their business by opening a bricks-and- mortar location.

One business that UCC's business navigators have helped is Battambong BBQ, where Cambodian refugee Chad Phoung combines the flavors of traditional Cambodian cuisines with Southern-style Texas BBQ. Once a surgery center employee, business owner Phoung was a participant of UCC's SEED program and obtained capital assistance to purchase a new food trailer. His unique smoked meat is available at three pop-up locations, Kim Sun Kitchen, Ten Mile Brewing, and Khmer Town Night Market, and for private-event catering. Battambong BBQ has a nationwide following, with lines forming during setup and often selling out. Phoung's experience has made him a strong advocate for the Cambodian community and a big supporter of other small businesses and entrepreneurs in the City of Long Beach.



UCC helps new businesses at the Khmer Town Night Market build their social media presence, test their products, and decide whether to open a physical location.

NATIONAL CAPACD

About National CAPACD: The National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development's (National CAPACD's) Community Arts Framework is six interrelated dimensions of capacity-building—knowledge, creative, relational, political, affective, and economic. National CAPACD advances equity and creates vibrant, healthy neighborhoods by mobilizing and strengthening a powerful coalition of community-based organizations working in low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.