



## Setting Standards and Promoting Professionalism Workshop

***“Raising the Bar” of community-based organizations to improve refugee services and ensure survival in today’s competitive non-profit environment***



Dr. Nguyen Van Hanh, Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, kicks off the workshop during his opening remarks.

On April 6 and 7, 2005, the IRC Resettlement department Technical Assistance Unit hosted an annual workshop, *Setting Standards and Promoting Professionalism*, to strengthen the work of refugee community leaders and staff members who operate social service organizations for refugees, known as ethnic community based organizations (ECBOs). Attended by over 50 ECBOs, the workshop provided solutions for an array of non-profit questions: Why should I set high standards of operations for my organization; How can effective negotiation and mediation skills enhance my organization’s effectiveness; How can better information management help me gain more resources?

Below, IRC Resettlement’s Technical Assistance Unit has summarized the lessons learned from sessions held during the two-day workshop.

IRC extends its thanks to the workshop’s co-host the Institute for Social and Economic Development Solutions and other workshop organizers – the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Ethiopian Community Development Council, and Southeast Asian Resource Action Center – for their important contributions in making the workshop a success.

Special thanks to Joanne McDonough of American Express and Julia Loughran of ThoughtLink, Inc., who both provided workshop sessions on Moderating Focus Groups and Information Management. Their generous contribution of time and resources are appreciated by IRC and by the ethnic community-based organizations who benefited from the training.



Workshop participant browses through resources for refugees.

## 1. STANDARDS OF OPERATIONS



Workshop participants brainstorm approaches on how community based organizations can raise their standards of operation.

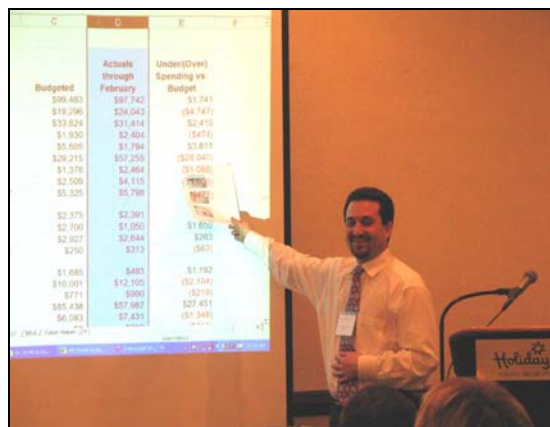
What are standards for ECBOs?

- ◆ Generally accepted principles on the best or most appropriate way for ECBOs to provide services. Standards are also specific written guidelines that organizations can use to evaluate and improve their operations.

Why are standards important for an ECBO?

- ◆ Help ensure refugees receive high-quality services;
- ◆ Support the growth and quality of ECBOs;
- ◆ Educate ECBOs on levels of organizational ethics, good practices, and capacity;
- ◆ Help keep organizations *ahead of the competition*.

## 2. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING



Christopher Caltabiano, IRC senior project officer trains young organizations on the basics of good financial management.

Why is it important to effectively manage financial information?

- ◆ Ensures that your organization is allocating resources effectively to achieve your program goals;
- ◆ Provides flexibility in making adjustments when spending is not occurring as you had anticipated;
- ◆ Justifies to current and future funders that you are responsible stewards of financial resources.

Why is it important to effectively manage volunteer and in-kind information?

- ◆ Fulfills federal and state grant requirements;
- ◆ Highlights community involvement to funders;
- ◆ Improves your organization's public relations in the community.

Why is it important to effectively manage beneficiary information?

- ◆ Creates a primary source of verification of activities completed;
- ◆ Ensures funders that you are serving the target population;
- ◆ Develops a measurable track record for an organization;
- ◆ Provides proof of agency's value to the community.

### **3. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT**

What are some essential computer resources for an ECBO?

Internet, email accounts, office management software, local area network, remote office networking, remote computer support, and software to complete the following tasks: virus protection, publishing, financial management, anti-spy, fundraising, firewall protection, and instant messaging.

What should you put on your organization's website?

Mission statement, information about program services provided, beneficiaries of services, success stories, job announcements or volunteer information, fundraising information, organizational calendar of events, and contact information.



Julia Loughran, founder of Thoughtlink, Inc., a for-profit technology and research company, facilitates an interactive workshop on information technology management.

### **4. EFFECTIVE MEDIATION**

Principles of Negotiation (based on *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury)

- ◆ Separate people from the problem;
- ◆ Focus on interests and not on demands;
- ◆ Invent options for mutual gains;
- ◆ Use objective criteria;
- ◆ Develop your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)



Workshop participants engage in a negotiation group exercise to reach a mutually beneficial agreement.

What is mediation?

A method of last resort for solving a dispute. Involves third-party intervention whereby two parties are brought together to discuss differences and agree to negotiate with a neutral, objective, reputable third person.

What are a mediator's roles and responsibilities?

- ◆ A mediator facilitates without expressing personal opinion.
- ◆ A mediator allows both parties to choose the outcome.
- ◆ A mediator works toward helping both parties rebuild a relationship.

What are some mediation tips for an ECBO?

- ◆ Reframe thinking from blame to opportunities.
- ◆ Ensure that both parties have been heard.
- ◆ Remind parties about the cost of not mediating.
- ◆ Get both sides to reiterate the other side's point of view without agreeing to it.
- ◆ Keep in mind that different cultures communicate differently and may resolve conflicts differently.

## 5. FOCUS GROUPS

Training in the conduct and moderation of focus groups was held to develop the capacity of grantee organizations by evaluating both their own needs and those of the communities they serve. The benefit of using the chosen format — a 'learning by doing' approach — was that the content of the sample groups would provide insight into common challenges across ethnic community-based organizations.



A group of mentor organizations converge together to share their program challenges with each other and identify ways of how IRC can support their work.

What are some effective focus group moderation skills?

- ◆ The ability of the moderator to be an objective and impartial discussion leader;
- ◆ How to avoid the impulse to inject one's own opinion;
- ◆ Active listening;
- ◆ How to conduct warm up exercises to make the group feel comfortable and at ease prior to beginning the focus group;
- ◆ Probing for more detail as needed;
- ◆ Managing conversation to stay on topic;
- ◆ Time management;
- ◆ Body language;
- ◆ And managing discussion so that all participants have equal contribution to the topic.

What should I do to prepare for a focus group?

- ◆ Recruit focus group facilitator and note takers;
- ◆ Prepare two documents: Focus Group Objectives Form and Discussion Guide. A Focus Group Objectives Form articulates the background, key decisions, and information objectives for the focus group. A Discussion Guide is a general conversation outline that the moderator uses when leading the focus group discussion.
- ◆ Review both the Focus Group Objective Form and Discussion Guide with facilitators and note takers.
- ◆ Obtain either a video camera (if possible) or tape recorder to record and review group discussion.
- ◆ Locate a comfortable space for your focus group.