BUILDING BRIDGES

TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATION'S CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Second Edition

Developed by La Frontera Center, Inc.

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Second Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Minority populations in the United States are increasing at a much faster rate than the majority (Anglo) population. Not surprisingly, the demand for health care services among these groups has risen proportionally. As a result of this trend, health care providers are becoming more and more aware of the need to provide services that are sensitive to the cultural norms, and delivered in the primary language of, minority clients. Recognizing the need for cultural competence, however, is just the first step in an ongoing, goal-oriented process. Organizations must be committed to identifying weaknesses and strengths, embracing inclusive values and philosophies, developing and implementing a cultural competence action plan, and continuously monitoring the organization to ensure that established policies and procedures are effective and being followed.

This cultural competence self-assessment manual was developed by staff at La Frontera Center, Inc. La Frontera was established in 1968 to provide a comprehensive array of behavioral health services to underserved populations in Pima County, Arizona. Since then the center has been committed to the provision of high-quality behavioral health services to culturally diverse populations.

To strengthen its cultural competence as a service provider and an employer, La Frontera obtained a grant from the U.S. Office of Minority Health. One of the objectives of the grant was to create a self-assessment manual for health care providers. The manual is intended to present a framework for individuals, groups, or organizations to assess their level of cultural competence. The term *cultural* is used in a broad, inclusive sense. It includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, primary language, spiritual life, age, and physical abilities, among others. Culture is also a multifaceted concept. It incorporates cultural objects such as music, art, and clothing; ways of living such as kinship patterns, communication styles, and family roles; and beliefs or values such as religion, attitudes toward time, and views of the natural world. Both the broad conceptualization of culture and varied aspects of culture are reflected in the assessment manual.

The assessment instrument has been developed using six stages of cultural competence, which range from Stage 1 (cultural oppression) to Stage 6 (cultural advocacy). These are applied to four broad categories within an organization: (1) organizational environment, (2) public relations/working with the community, (3) human resources, and (4) service delivery. Each of the four broad categories is divided into five subcategories with examples of behaviors, situations, or procedures that are representative of each stage of cultural competence. The examples provided in each subcategory and stage are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they provide a framework for assessing culturally competent behavior in an organization. Examples may be added to or deleted from each category depending on their relevance to a specific organization.

The results of the assessment may be used to raise awareness, focus personal development, plan a training program, or make changes in how an organization does business. Perhaps most important, the information obtained can be used to determine goals for establishing or improving cultural competence, and the objectives necessary to meet those goals. The process for growth and change using this assessment instrument is described elsewhere in the manual (see Action Planning Process).

Above all, one must remember that no one is ever finished learning and growing in cultural competence. All cultures are varied within themselves as well as in relation to one another. All cultures are also dynamic, changing and developing over time. No one can master all there is to know. Culturally competent individuals are open to the cultural experiences of others and to new information about cultures. They are also able to move comfortably between some cultures of which they have in-depth experience. Even the most experienced individual will find strengths and limitations in understanding his/her own and other cultures. We hope this manual will be a first step in helping organizations and individuals to meet the goals of continued growth in the workplace.

USING THE ASSESSMENT

Prior to participating in the assessment, all those persons asked to respond must understand the intent behind the instrument's use. Staff should be reminded that cultural competence is a learning and growing process requiring regular review and organizational "action planning" that support continued development. The stages illustrated in this assessment are not meant to grade organizations on their level of cultural competence but to help staff identify the next, most logical step for development planning. Stages should be reviewed and participants should be reminded that the statements under each category were developed to help the reader put specific meaning to each subcategory as it applies to the various stages.

The effective administrator of this assessment will walk participants through the first few subcategories within Section I-Organizational Environment. The instructions given will be, "Do you see this organization's cultural competence as it applies to visual representation as being at Stage 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6? Please use the illustrative statements as a guide for your assessment. If you see this organization as overtly sexist in artwork, calendars, etc., please circle the illustrative statement under Stage 1 in the row labeled Visual representation. If this description does not match your perception, continue to the right until you identify a close match. Complete this section in the same manner until all subcategories have been given a rating."

Once this section is completed, participants should score the section. For every statement circled in the Stage 1 column, participants will add 1 point. For every statement circled in Stage 2, participants will add 2 points, Stage 3 equals 3 points, and so on. Please note that because only one rating is given to each subcategory, the lowest score possible is 5 and the highest score possible is 30.

The score for each section should be entered on the score sheet at the back of this manual. This process will continue until all four broad categories have been assessed and scored. Completed scoring forms should be submitted to the organization's cultural competence committee to be tabulated and analyzed, and an overall cultural competence assessment score determined. The committee will then use the scores to determine the current stage of development and to create an action plan for moving the organization toward the next developmental stage.

1 ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

A key component of cultural competence in the workplace is organizational environment. Organizational environment has a direct impact on both employees and consumers of services. Many concrete and subtle features of the workplace contribute to organizational environment. An example is the message conveyed by works of art and photographs

	STAGE 1 Cultural oppression: Discriminates against other cultures and groups, sees other cultures as inferior	STAGE 2 Cultural incapacity: Adopts paternalistic posture toward so-called inferior people	STAGE 3 Cultural indifference: Seeks to assimilate differences, ignore strengths
Visual representation	Displays overtly sexist artwork, calendars, cards, etc.	Depicts older adults as service recipients, never as caregivers	Selects artwork that does not reflect ethnic diversity of community
General feeling of inclusive nature	Does not provide TTY phones for hearing impaired; lacks access for persons with physical disabilities	Requires diverse populations to identify themselves as in need of "special assistance"	Targets oral and written communication at one population only
Vision and mission	Adopts mission/vision statements that promote discrimination or utilize prejudicial language	Frames diverse populations as inferior in vision/mission statements	Ignores importance of cultural diversity in vision/mission statements
Location/ accessibility	Refuses to serve low-income or ethnic minority populations	Meets minimum accessibility requirements only because of federal compliance mandates	Disregards diverse religious/cultural holidays and practices when scheduling days/hours of operation
Language ability	Permits use only of predominant language in work setting; does not hire bilingual staff to meet needs of population served	Regards some languages or dialects as inadequate or incorrect (e.g., Black English)	Lacks awareness of language needs of population served

displayed. Does the artwork convey authentic images of diverse people and their activities? Another example is accessibility to public transportation. Aspects of organizational environment addressed in the assessment include visual representation, general feeling of inclusive nature, vision and mission, location/accessibility of the facility, and language ability. For each item listed in the left column, circle the statement in that row that best describes the existing organizational environment.

STAGE 4 Cultural precompetence: Realizes weakness and makes effort to improve	STAGE 5 Cultural competence: Interacts effectively with members of diverse cultures and groups, recognizes need for continuing education	STAGE 6 Cultural advocacy: Actively promotes cultural competence throughout the community
Exhibits limited visual representation of diverse populations as active and valued community members	Displays visual representations (throughout the organization) that illustrate diverse populations engaged in meaningful activity	Provides consultation to other community organizations regarding authentic representation of diverse populations, traditions, etc.
Reviews policies and procedures for evidence of bias and revises accordingly	Provides regular staff training in cultural competence on a variety of topics	Shares inclusion policy statement with clients and community-at-large
Develops vision/mission statements that reflect cultural competence	Assesses agency operations for adherence to culturally competent vision/mission statements	Stresses culturally competent vision/mission statements in recruitment, orientation, and community presentations
Exhibits emerging awareness of accessibility issues as barriers; makes commitment to evaluate problems and design for inclusion	Takes steps to increase accessibility (hours, days, accommodations, etc.); demonstrates flexibility in meeting changing population needs	Shares information in local and regional workshops or public service publications
Offers limited language training (e.g., sign language, Spanish) to meet needs of populations served	Values multilingual ability among staff (e.g., pay differential for language skills); provides services in languages that meet the needs of population served	Advertises as bilingual/bicultural organization in recruitment and community relations materials

2 PUBLIC RELATIONS/ WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

A nonprofit organization is composed of staff, a board of directors, and often volunteers. The unpaid board of directors and other volunteers get involved with an organization from a desire to contribute and participate in the vision and mission set forth. The volunteer or a family member may have received services. The staff, board, and volunteers are the most powerful public relations an organization can provide. Their message about the

	STAGE 1 Cultural oppression: Discriminates against other cultures and groups, sees other cultures as inferior	STAGE 2 Cultural incapacity: Adopts paternalistic posture toward so-called inferior people	STAGE 3 Cultural indifference: Seeks to assimilate differences, ignore strengths
Publications	Disseminates information that perpetuates stereotypes (e.g., women as depressed, substance abusers as black males)	Creates service brochures that illustrate only persons of color receiving help with Food Stamps, immigration, etc.	Uses advertising that ignores different needs—"We treat everyone the Smith Company way"
Board of directors and other volunteers	Restricts participation to certain "acceptable" groups	Includes token representation of persons of color on board and in other volunteer groups	Places volunteers haphazardly without regard for individual strengths
Community collaboration	Refuses to collaborate with other organizations due to bias (e.g., Urban League, HIV service organization)	Disregards contribution of other agencies in coalition, views own agency as better than others	Perceives all community groups as having the same needs
Special events	Contracts special events with performers who have demonstrated prejudice, disrespect, etc.	Depicts special events as doing "for" a population unable to do for themselves	Plans and implements special events assuming a shared value (e.g., Christmas party)
Political advocacy	Promotes status quo and laws that invalidate the rights of clients	Speaks on behalf of clients, does not support their efforts to speak for themselves	Fails to advocate on issues that affect the organization's various constituents

culture of the organization speaks louder than any billboard, brochure, or public service announcement. The clients/consumers also carry messages related to quality of care and organizational competence, among other topics. The degree to which staff, board, and volunteers act in partnership with the community will predict the level of community support. Is the organization viewed by the community as the benevolent service provider to the underserved, or is it viewed as part of an active voice in the community working with its constituents for personal as well as social change? The Public Relations/Working with the Community section includes the areas of publications, board of directors and other volunteers, community collaboration, special events, and political advocacy. For each item listed in the left column, circle the statement in that row that best describes the organization's existing attitudes and activities.

STAGE 4 Cultural precompetence: Realizes weakness and makes effort to improve	STAGE 5 Cultural competence: Interacts effectively with members of diverse cultures and groups, recognizes need for continuing education	STAGE 6 Cultural advocacy: Actively promotes cultural competence throughout the community
Makes commitment to review all materials for overt and hidden bias	Ensures that all written and visual material is respectful, is provided in languages spoken in the community, and emphasizes the value of differences	Takes proactive stance on the advancement of cultural competence within the community; shares materials with other organizations
Realizes decline in or lack of representation of persons of color and seeks to diversify board and volunteers	Recruits diverse board members and volunteers on a regular basis; educates participants on principles of cultural competence	Assists other organizations in educating board members and other volunteers on importance of cultural competence
Recognizes lack of connection with diverse community groups and coalitions and seeks to cultivate relationships	Partners with a variety of groups to address community needs	Works with community leaders to bring attention to identified needs and develop possible solutions
Assesses special events for ability to be inclusive (e.g., Are interpreters available for the hearing impaired?)	Creates a special events calendar that respects and values a variety of special interest groups	Participates and partners in community events that promote knowledge of diverse groups and cultures
Recognizes the value of political advocacy and develops action plan	Creates opportunities to participate in the political process (e.g., voter registration, bus rides to the legislature)	Promotes a culturally competent public policy agenda

3 HUMAN RESOURCES

Another key component of cultural competence in the workplace is reflected in human resources activities. This component has a clear impact on staff. It also has an impact on consumers of services through the capacity of an organization to deliver services that are culturally sensitive to the populations served. The human resources component

	STAGE 1 Cultural oppression: Discriminates against other cultures and groups, sees other cultures as inferior	STAGE 2 Cultural incapacity: Adopts paternalistic posture toward so-called inferior people	STAGE 3 Cultural indifference: Seeks to assimilate differences, ignore strengths
Workforce diversity	Utilizes recruitment strategies that exclude certain populations	Sees diversity as meeting quotas	Does not recognize or compensate for bilingual skills; does not address cultural competence during interview process
Staff training and level of cultural competence	Opposes cross-cultural awareness, knowledge, behavior, skills in staffing pattern, service provision, program design, etc.; devalues training	Does not accept multiple perspectives as valid; there is one "right" or "best" way; does not offer or support training	Makes no effort to recruit, retain, or train staff in cultural competence; ignores diverse perspectives on issues
Compensation and benefits	Utilizes discriminatory compensation and benefit strategies (e.g., lower pay based on gender or ethnicity)	Lowers performance expectations for certain ethnic groups when evaluating employees for raises or merit pay	Implements benefit strategies that ignore alternative family structures
Personnel policies and procedures	Adopts culturally incompetent policies and procedures (e.g., "English only" policies)	Adopts paternalistic policies regarding employees with disabilities (e.g., lower attendance standard)	Adopts policies and procedures that minimize and discount differences (e.g., does not offer flexible hours for working parents)
Staff development and retention strategies	Disciplines non-English speakers; redirects people of color to low-paying jobs	Provides token advancement and/or training	Minimizes value of differing cultural perspectives in team activities

includes the full range of procedures associated with employing, training, retaining, and compensating staff. It also includes the value system that underlies procedures, opportunities, and decision-making with respect to employees. Aspects of human resources addressed in the assessment include workforce diversity, staff training and level of cultural competence, compensation and benefits, personnel policies and procedures, and staff development and retention strategies. For each item listed in the left column, circle the statement in that row that best describes the organization's human resources activities.

STAGE 4 Cultural precompetence: Realizes weakness and makes effort to improve	STAGE 5 Cultural competence: Interacts effectively with members of diverse cultures and groups, recognizes need for continuing education	STAGE 6 Cultural advocacy: Actively promotes cultural competence throughout the community
Routinely assesses ethnic diversity of staff to determine if it appropriately reflects diversity of community	Encourages staff to value differences by providing ongoing diversity training	Provides consultation to other organizations on workforce diversity and recruitment
Supports basic cultural competence training for staff—provides free training and allows staff to attend during working hours	Provides ongoing cultural competence training and employs diverse staff to meet needs of populations served; demonstrates ability to work with differing points of view	Offers cultural competence training and/or materials to other community organizations
Solicits input from employees on fairness of benefits and compensation	Implements culturally competent benefit package and evaluates periodically for effectiveness	Promotes culturally competent compensation plans to other agencies (e.g., partner benefits, paternity leave)
Recognizes need for policies and procedures to be culturally competent and makes plans to review them	Regularly assesses policies and procedures for cultural competence and revises as needed	Shares policies and procedures with other agencies
Encourages diverse staff to attend leadership training	Implements culturally competent strategies (e.g., salary differential for bilingual staff) and evaluates for effectiveness	Shares successful strategies with other agencies

4 SERVICE DELIVERY

Many successful service delivery models have been used in human service agencies over time. When working with diverse populations, the same model is often relevant for the appropriate care of each client. What is needed is not necessarily a new model for diverse populations but rather unique applications of successful approaches. The focus then is not on the nature of the activity but rather on the method of implementation. Service delivery must demonstrate a commitment to providing high-quality care to all persons served. This commitment includes actively seeking input from representative populations

	STAGE 1 Cultural oppression: Discriminates against other cultures and groups, sees other cultures as inferior	STAGE 2 Cultural incapacity: Adopts paternalistic posture toward so-called inferior people	STAGE 3 Cultural indifference: Seeks to assimilate differences, ignore strengths
Written materials	Provides written materials (e.g., forms, client handbook, educational materials) in predominant language only	Downplays need to hire translators and translate written materials	Does not address cultural and ethnic diversity in written materials
Family focus	Prohibits family involvement throughout period of service	Adopts narrow/traditional view of family (i.e., does not recognize alternative family structures)	Assumes all clients have a nuclear/traditional family
Service methodology	Displays prejudice in service delivery (e.g., avoids serving HIV-positive clients)	Uses only Anglo-oriented approaches; too rigid to consider alternative methodologies for different cultural groups	Does not recognize need to educate staff regarding service provision to diverse clientele
Client input	Views client input as having little or no value	Lacks mechanism (e.g., quarterly survey) for obtaining client input	Does not address cultural factors in client surveys or focus groups; does not consider cultural variables when analyzing data
Quality improvement	Provides differential treatment based on cultural factors (e.g., sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation, etc.)	Does not train staff on how to improve quality of service to members of diverse populations	Does not recognize special needs in program design and service delivery (one size fits all)

on how services are viewed and delivered. Paperwork, processes, and programs must be designed, delivered, and evaluated with an eye toward cultural competence and an awareness of the local community. Cultural competence needs to take into account knowledge acquisition regarding diverse populations, and attitude awareness; including the professional's attitude about self, the professional's attitude about diverse populations, diverse populations' attitude about helping professionals, society's attitude about the diverse population, and diverse population members' attitudes about themselves. The assessment of service delivery includes the areas of written materials, family focus, service methodology, client input, and quality improvement. For each item listed in the left column, circle the statement in that row that best describes the existing organizational environment.

STAGE 4 Cultural precompetence: Realizes weakness and makes effort to improve	STAGE 5 Cultural competence: Interacts effectively with members of diverse cultures and groups, recognizes need for continuing education	STAGE 6 Cultural advocacy: Actively promotes cultural competence throughout the community
Recognizes need to design written materials that are sensitive to the cultural background of individuals served	Regularly screens written materials for culturally inappropriate language and revises as necessary	Shares culturally competent written materials with other human service agencies
Recognizes a lack of family involvement in services provided and implements a culturally appropriate plan for inclusion	Includes family members in service planning/ delivery as appropriate	Actively educates community on importance of family involvement to success of services delivered
Recognizes that service plan has cultural limitations and explores alternative methodologies for chosen model	Includes cultural competence workshops for staff in training plan	Displays cultural sensitivity in approach to services and provides education to other organizations
Aware of need to examine cultural variables in survey responses	Regularly analyzes cultural variables in data and modifies services in response to findings	Shares survey instruments and how to use them with other organizations
Examines outcome data by demographic groups and looks for quality improvement opportunities	Tailors services to specific population groups based on outcome data	Shares findings on how culturally competent services affect outcomes and quality of care

ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

After the staff members have completed the assessment and scores have been averaged, an overall picture of staff perceptions regarding cultural competence in the four areas assessed will emerge. A composite of the organization's general developmental stage of cultural competence will also be evident. At this point it's time to start developing strategies for the creation of a culturally competent corporate infrastructure. The first step is to write an action plan that reflects the organization's current level of competence and indicates the direction in which the organization must move to become truly culturally competent. The document should be viewed as a long-term plan, recognizing the fact that the process is an ongoing one.

The organization's goal of cultural competence will be driven by objectives and strategies that fall under the four major categories and subcategories evaluated in the assessment instrument. One or more committees should be created to identify category objectives, deliverables, person(s) responsible, and target dates for completion. For example, assume that organization XYZ scored an average of 6 to 10 points in the area of organizational environment. This would place XYZ's cultural competence for organizational environment somewhere in Stage 2. Over the course of several meetings, committee members assigned to the action planning process would respond to the following questions:

- What currently exists in the organization's manner of visual representation that indicates it is at Stage 2 of cultural competence development?

- What currently exists in the organization's general feeling of inclusive nature that indicates it is at Stage 2 of cultural competence development?

- What currently exists with the organization's accessibility to clients that indicates it is at Stage 2 of cultural competence development?

This line of self-questioning should occur for each of the subcategories, and all responses should be considered when developing the list of objectives for the work plan. The second set of questions posed to the committee should generate a list of what the committee members would like these areas to look like if the organization were at Stage 4, 5, or 6. The responses to this set of questions will help determine the deliverables by which the organization will evaluate its progress toward cultural competence.

Somewhere between "where it is" and "where it wants to be" is the process of getting there. What will this organization do to get to the self-identified measures of success? Who will be responsible for guiding the individual steps? What are the target dates for completion? The answers to these questions become the committee's, and hence the organization's, action plan for developing cultural competence. The areas that need improvement and the tasks to be undertaken to accomplish the objectives can be graphically depicted, as indicated in the chart that follows.

The analysis and planning process will occur for each of the four primary evaluation categories. Ideally, a different committee will work on developing an action plan for each of the individual areas. This strategy supports the belief that cultural competence is an evolutionary

SAMPLE PLAN

Action Plan for Improving Cultural Competence in the Workplace

Objective	Deliverable	Responsible Party	Target Date	Status*
Diversify artwork in facilities	Obtain and distribute culturally diverse artwork	Administrative assistant	12/01/03	
Increase level of staff's cultural competence	Provide quarterly training on cultural competence	Training administrator	03/01/03	
Provide materials in language of the population being served	Translate agency brochure into Spanish	Community relations coordinator	06/30/03	
Increase opportunities for family involvement	Develop plan to provide services for family members	Service line directors	10/15/03	
Educate the Board on cultural competence activities	Provide year-end report to Board on status of work plan	Chair of Cultural Competence Committee	12/31/03	

*Update status on a monthly or quarterly basis.

process requiring the participation of all the organization's staff. After the committees have finished mapping their action plans, the objectives and deliverables identified can be compiled in the organization's cultural competence plan. The document might also include statements of the organization's mission, vision, and values as they relate to cultural competence. The finished plan will guide the organization's continued development for the coming year. At the close of the year all staff again evaluate the organization's cultural competence using the assessment instrument, and the entire process is repeated. The existing corporate plan can be revised as necessary to reflect changing needs, goals, and objectives.

As stated earlier, cultural competence and anti-bias awareness, attitudes, and actions are constantly changing. The truly competent organization is (1) committed to supporting employees' growth and development in this area; (2) willing to commit resources and staff time to the development of cultural competence; and (3) unwilling to let the development of cultural competence be forgotten in a busy work environment.

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SCORE SHEET

CATEGORY	POINT SCORE	DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE
Organizational Environment		
Public Relations/ Working with the Community		
Human Resources		
Service Delivery		
Overall Score (Total)		

AREA	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Organizational Environment	1–5 points	6–10 points	11–15 points	16-20 points	21-25 points	26-30 points
Public Relations/ Working with the Community	1–5 points	6–10 points	11–15 points	16–20 points	21–25 points	26-30 points
Human Resources	1–5 points	6–10 points	11–15 points	16-20 points	21-25 points	26-30 points
Service Delivery	1–5 points	6–10 points	11–15 points	16-20 points	21-25 points	26-30 points
Overall Score (Total)	1–22 points	23–42 points	43-62 points	63-82 points	83-102 points	103-120 points

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