



Toolkit Items

Tool Name: Definitions of FBOs and CBOs

Definition: This document offers background from various sources to assist in developing definitions of community organizations (secular and faith-based).

Also included is an excerpt from a report by the Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. This excerpt includes a typology of faith characteristics of social service and educational organizations.

Purpose: These documents can be used as a starting point when establishing state-specific definition of “faith-based” and “community-based organization.”

Developing Definitions for the Faith-Based and Community Initiative

Developing definitions for the faith-based and community initiative has proven elusive. From the White Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to the Office of Management and Budget, the challenge continues to be that one size does not fit all. What works in California does not work in Maine.

Preliminary efforts to develop definitions in the 2003 AmeriCorps Guidance also met with difficulty for the same reason. A resolution by the CNCS Board in their September 2002 meeting also made changes, the term “small” CBO was changed to “grassroots.” Organizations are encouraged to develop their own working definitions for “faith-based organizations” (FBOs) and “grassroots community-based organizations” (CBOs). The following information may prove helpful:

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)

The 2003 AmeriCorps Guidance provides the following definition for faith-based organizations.

- a religious congregation (church, mosque, synagogue, or temple)
- an organization, program, or project sponsored/hosted by a religious congregation (may be incorporated or not incorporated)
- a nonprofit organization founded by a religious congregation or religiously-motivated incorporators and board members that clearly states in its name, incorporation, or mission statement that it is a religiously motivated institution
- a collaboration of organizations that clearly and explicitly includes organizations from the previously described categories.

Discussion around a definition for FBOs has centered on keeping the definition somewhat inclusive, allowing fairly wide latitude in how FBOs are defined. Below are a couple of examples of definitions that have been developed elsewhere. The excerpt following these sample definitions is taken from *The Scope and Scale of Activities Carried Out by Faith-Based Organizations: A Review of the Literature*.

“At a minimum, FBOs must be connected with an organized faith community. These connections occur when an FBO is based on a particular religious ideology and draws staff, volunteers, or leadership from a particular religious group. Other characteristics that qualify an organization as “faith-based” are religiously oriented mission statements, the receipt of substantial support from a religious organization, or the initiation by a religious institution (Wuthnow, 2000).”

Ram A. Cnaan, in his book, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership*, defines six categories of religious service organizations: 1) local congregations (or houses of worship), 2) interfaith agencies and ecumenical coalitions, 3) citywide or region-wide sectarian agencies, 4) national projects and organizations under religious auspices, 5) para-denominational advocacy and relief organizations, and 6) religiously affiliated international organizations.

In addition, the typology developed by the Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is provided here as a means of defining the level of religious intensity of an organization. The typology ranges from “faith-saturated,” which refers to FBOs exhibiting a high level of religious activity, to “faith-secular partnerships,” which have no religious activity.

Grassroots Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Attempts to set parameters on the definition of CBOs have focused on trying to get at the neighborhood, grassroots types of organizations that emerge to address community needs. Size of CBOs was used early on as one way to get at this type of CBO. Two sets of numbers have been discussed or used. They are as follows:

Preliminary Definition by White House Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the 2002 Senior Corps survey of programs:

“Small” was defined as having 10 or fewer employees and an annual operating budget of \$500,000 or less.

CARE Act (legislation pending in Congress) Definition:

“Small” is defined as having four or fewer employees and an annual operating budget of \$250,000 or less.

In addition, CBOs are often defined by additional standards. In his landmark book on this issue, *The Triumphs of Joseph: How Today’s Community Healers Are Reviving Our Streets and Neighborhoods*, Robert L. Woodson cites several additional suggestions for “tests” of the small grassroots program standard. The following are direct quotes and edited paraphrases from the book’s “Joseph test” (page 92-93):

- Small neighborhood non-profit organizations are located in the same “zip code” as the people they serve. They have a firsthand knowledge of the problems they live with, and a personal stake in the success of their solutions. Small community-based organizations not only serve low-income communities -- they are indigenous to them.
- Programs are open to all applicants in the neighborhood. Help is offered on the basis of the need a person has and his or her desire to change.
- Their approach is flexible.
- Effective grassroots programs contain an essential element of reciprocity.
- Clear behavioral guidelines and discipline play an important part in their programs.
- Grassroots organizations provide not only authority and structure, but also the love that is necessary for an individual to undergo healing, growth, and development. An environment of care and mutual support is offered within a community of individuals who are trying to accomplish the same changes in their lives. In most cases, these groups “pre-dated” formal funding opportunities.
- They are typically available twenty-four hours a day.