

## CapacityLEAP: Evaluating Capacity Building Demonstration Projects with People of Color Based Agencies in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties

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**Project Description:** CAPS staff served as external evaluators on a demonstration project funded by the Office of Minority Health to improve and support HIV prevention and care agencies based in people of color communities. Capacity-building technical assistance was provided by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH).

**Significance:** The overall grant had two components: CapacityLEAP and READYGrant. CapacityLEAP provided in-depth capacity building technical assistance to seven minority-based HIV prevention and care agencies. The model included a three-year commitment to the agencies; a Lead Consultant who provided capacity building technical assistance and coordinated the provision of specialized TA provided by content consultants; and direct funds for the participating agencies to purchase capacity in the form of computers, fiscal services, staff time, or other needs. The READYGrant component, delivered by the San Francisco DPH, focused on assisting minority-based agencies to successfully compete for public and private funds and diversify their fiscal portfolio. READYGrant publicized funding opportunities, worked with agencies to strategize for fundraising, and synthesized epidemiology and other science for the basis of competitive grants.

**Interesting Findings:** The seven agencies that participated in CapacityLEAP ranged widely in their experience of capacity building and ability to incorporate capacity building assistance. Common areas of focus included computer infrastructure and planning, board development, fiscal system upgrades, and strategic planning/ thinking processes. Lead Consultants provided well-received technical assistance and brought other specialists in to assist in executive transitions, human resource policies, and program management. READYGrant issued 57 funding alerts and fact sheets on HIV epidemiology in multiple populations. Individual READYGrant technical assistance resulted in over \$5.6 million in new funding for minority-based agencies.

Key to the success of the initiative were the trusting relationships built over time between the capacity building providers and the agency staff. Hands-on, tailored, interactive technical assistance made for good capacity building. The long-term commitment, specific content expertise, and sensitivity to the organizational and community culture allowed for consultation that helped agencies successfully build ongoing capacity. CapacityLEAP's purchasing dollars made the consultant's recommendations possible to implement. Transitions were especially difficult, and renegotiation was required to re-establish a working relationship. How each agency engaged with the capacity building process relied most heavily on the executive director's leadership and ability to lead changes in the organization.