Introduction

Many tribal system of care communities have used a relational world view model of strategic planning to examine fundamental areas essential to achieving successful and sustainable system of care communities. The relational world view sees life, and change, in terms of harmonious relationships. That is, maintaining balance among the many interrelating factors in one’s personal, organizational, or community life achieves healthy change.

This series of prompt questions are now being shared with all of the system of care communities across the United States, including the U.S. territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. The questions are primarily used in community planning sessions that, of course, include children, youth and families, as well as other key stakeholders. Some communities choose to use the prompt questions in smaller organizational planning sessions. They are yours to use as you wish, and in a manner that best fits your community.

System of care reform and development work is multi-layered and complex. Many people who work hard to change the child serving systems for the betterment of children and families can become, at times, overwhelmed and exhausted. Some people have found that the prompt questions, and the model they are based on, are extremely helpful to help them visualize the complexity of system of care change. Any anxiety or frustration about the local progress toward a new system of care can be lessened when local efforts are viewed through a relational lens.

The model that these prompt questions are derived from is strength based and can be understood by visualizing a circle comprised of four connecting sections (see illustration below). The four parts of the circle represent continuous moving factors whose ebb and flow pattern of movement may be at times in balance, and at times, not. The relational model can be used to understand the change process of an individual, or the change process of an organization. People become empowered when they learn how the ebb and flow can be positively manipulated for better outcome.

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1 The original set of prompt questions were developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) and have now been modified, courtesy of NICWA, as a sustainability discussion tool for any system of care community across the country.
The Relational World View Model

The model is visualized by four quadrants set within a circle as illustrated below. The four quadrants represent four major forces or sets of factors that together must come into balance. Applied to an individual’s change process they are context (or life circumstances), mind, body and spirit. Applied to an organizational change process they are environment, infrastructure, resources and mission. The organizational change quadrants are outlined as follows:

1. The **environment** section (context) includes the social context (problems and needs, assets and strengths, attitudes, values), the political context, (power relationships, leadership, influence, partnerships) and the economic context (economy, poverty, institutions).

2. The **infrastructure** section (mind) includes your governing documents and processes, policies and procedures, work plans, memorandum of agreements, documentation and record keeping, and much more.

3. The **resources** section (body) includes staffing and personnel, funding, facilities, and leadership.

4. The **mission** section (spirit) area includes mission, vision, philosophy, values, practice principles, ethics, organizational identity, team spirit and integrity. Influences include both positive and negative learned teachings and practices, as well as positive and negative metaphysical or innate forces.
The four quadrants are in constant flux and change as illustrated in the following example. An organization is not the same at startup as it will be after a year or two of operation. Staffing may be different, available funding may be different, and the environment is constantly shifting. Behavior, feelings, and thoughts will also change. The system is constantly balancing and re-balancing itself as organizations change policies, procedures, budgets, personnel and goals. Individuals, families, organizations, and even communities experience this natural process. If the organization is able to stay in balance, it is said to be thriving. Even if some aspects of the organization are weak, strengths in other aspects can balance the system and create a synergy associated with organizational health. Sometimes the balance is temporarily lost. Managers and leaders have the capacity to keep their organizations in balance for the most part. Technical assistance can help identify ways to keep the organization healthy as it moves through system of care change.
Discussion Prompt Questions

As community groups walk through the 50 prompt questions listed below, keep in mind these big picture issues:

- “What are the holistic and complex interrelationships that contribute to the organization being able to thrive during changes to become a new system of care?”

- “What are the holistic and complex interrelationships that disturb the balance in the organization during changes to become a new system of care?”

- “What factors can come into harmony and allow the organization not only to achieve its goals, but to survive and perform with excellence as a new system of care?”

Environmental

Social Assessment:

1. Has the project formally assessed its own values and beliefs about the mental health needs of children?

2. Does the project work from a strengths-based model? Has the community identified their strengths and ways these strengths can help address the needs of families?

3. Does the project have a strong partnership with parents, youth, spiritual helpers, or other community resources and have they given input into how to work toward solutions? Does the process for seeking input respect their cultural beliefs and values?

Political Assessment:

4. Is the project aware of how the different leadership and power styles in the community impact the project? Is the project aware of its own power, influence, and style?

5. Is the project aware of how its own internal decision making process, and how other external decision making processes, impact the success of the project?
Sustainability Discussion Prompt Questions

Economic & Geographic Assessment:

6. How does the community’s economic situation further the overall goals of strengthening youth and families?

7. Has your project adequately budgeted for any unique geographic demands (such as weather, geographic distance between sites, etc.)?

Mission, Vision, and Authority

8. Does the project have a clear strengths-based, mission and/or vision statement? Do people within the organization, as well as those outside of the organization know the mission?

9. Based on the organizational values, does the project have a written code of ethics for employees?

10. Does the project have a critical mass of staff who understand the organizational vision and who move forward in a consistent spirit of cooperation and support?

11. Does the project have a clear mandate or authority to operate? Does that mandate or authority rest in the culture and the families that the project serves?

12. Do the authority figures in the organization (administrators, staff, board, or consultants) conduct their authority in a manner that consistently reflects the strengths-based values and principles of the organization?

13. Do staff and families feel supported within and a partner of the organization? Does the project value all staff and families as equal parts of the circle?

Community and Collaborative Support

14. How does the project build an informed community that understands and advocates for culturally responsive programs and the principles of system of care? How effective do you think the project is in “sharing the vision” with other community members and other child-serving groups (resulting in shared vision, shared strengths, and shared problem-solving)?

15. How is the project addressing the challenge of developing authentic parent and youth involvement and support? What tasks are they involved in? What kind of decision-making role do they have?
Sustainability Discussion Prompt Questions

16. Has the project been able to form new alliances with child serving providers (outside of your usual contacts) to help change systems for the betterment of children?

Resource Development

17. How does the project develop new generations of people who understand cultural foundations and system of care work? Are they willing to help carry the banner of system reform and strengths-based work?

18. How can the project prevent leadership and staff burnout?

19. Do family members feel they have a decision-making “voice” within the organization?

20. Do the written materials about the project reflect the strengths-based model and help people understand what they can do to help? Are the written materials able to easily reflect the progress the project is making?

21. Does the project’s decision-making process for allocating its resources match the goals and principles of the project?

22. Are the existing funding sources adequate? Are there specific budget shortfall areas that you have experienced or are anticipating experiencing?

23. Does the project have a plan for use of volunteers and other potential revenue sources that could be used to meet the match requirements?

24. Has the project been able to fully identify and explore all external funding resources that could be tapped for support? If not, what are the specific barriers?

Organizational and Administrative Infrastructure

Policies and Procedures:

25. Are policies and operating procedures in place for the areas of: a) program, b) fiscal, c) personnel, and d) communications?

26. Do the policies and procedures support cultural strengths and system of care principles?

27. Are there specific areas in which policies and/or procedures need to be developed?
Sustainability
Discussion Prompt Questions

Management Structure:

28. Has the whole governing body received an orientation to the system of care principles? Are the organization’s bylaws or founding principles in sync with cultural strengths and system of care values?

29. Does the organizational chart reflect a clear decision-making and management process? Does the organizational chart reflect cultural strengths and system of care principles (e.g., system change advocates, minority mental health consultation, elder consultation, parent and family roles, etc.)?

Staffing & Personnel Management:

30. Do the project’s staff recruitment efforts focus on skills needed for systems-of-care principles and reform work, in addition to cultural, mental health and case management skills?

31. Has all staff received an orientation to the system of care principles, including any new turnover staff?

32. Do job descriptions reflect the project’s values and principles, both in title and duties?

33. Do staff development plans and the performance review process reflect strengths-based principles? Has the project developed creative ways to proactively circumvent potential problems of morale and job dissatisfaction?

Fiscal Management:

34. Has the fiscal staff received a thorough orientation to the funding sources’ rules and expectations related to budget development, budget management and budget revision? Does the fiscal staff occasionally attend national system of care community meetings to ensure that they understand the breadth of the system of care work?

35. Does the fiscal staff understand the allowable costs, match expectations, and acceptable match resources for the grant?

36. Is there a process for monitoring contract deliverables with key project staff? Do the deliverables easily feed into required reports? Does the fiscal staff adhere to standard accounting principles and ensure adequate fiscal controls?
Leadership Development

Formal Leadership:

37. Does the project have active involvement from a broad spectrum of the board of directors?

38. Do the governing board (or advisory board) members have enough information about systems of care to provide leadership and serve as system of care advocates?

39. Is the project establishing relationships with key agency or department heads (e.g., tribal, county, state, private, etc.)?

Informal Leadership:

40. Is the project recruiting, training and empowering advocates (e.g., elders, parents, or youth)? Does the project have identified champions in the community who effectively advocate for the project?

41. Is the project aware of available resources for support and training in the area of parent empowerment and ways to increase the parent and youth "voice"?

Action

Goals, Objectives and Work Plans:

42. Does all staff (including any new staff) clearly understand the project’s goals and objectives and their areas of responsibility for goal progress? Do staff meet periodically to review progress toward goals and to celebrate accomplishments?

43. Is there a feedback loop in place, where goals and objectives are updated based on evaluation data and family input?

44. Are the technical skills needed to complete the work plan available? Are timelines and action steps on schedule and realistic?

Service Design:

45. Has the project revisited the proposed service design and updated it as necessary? Does the service design reflect cultural strengths and system of care principles?
Sustainability
Discussion Prompt Questions

46. Has the clinical, supervisory and management capacity to meet the needs of the grant been reviewed? Do supervisors and management consistently model culturally and linguistically competent practices?

47. Does staff have a clear understanding of case file recording standards and ways to document interventions (including cultural) for financial reimbursement?

48. Does the service design reflect family-focused, child-centered, individualized care and strength-focused community building? Do youth and families continue to participate in the service design development?

Evaluation

49. How does the project ensure that the privacy of child and family evaluation data is respected while being collected or reviewed? What process does the project use to look at evaluation data for quality improvement? Does all staff participate in discussions on ways to use summaries of evaluation data as a way to guide quality improvements?

50. Does the project track and evaluate its process of development? Does the project have a consumer satisfaction survey, or other ways to seek feedback from constituents?