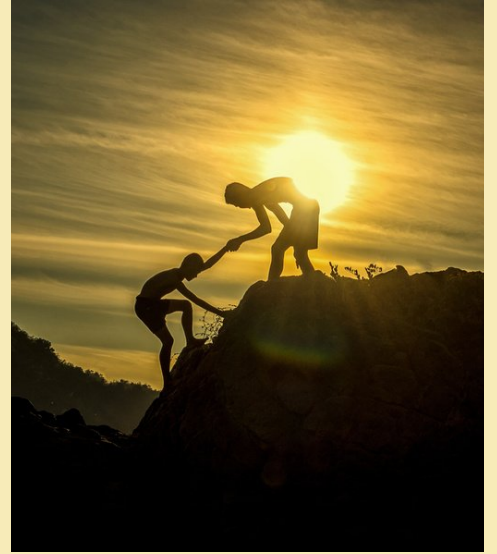


RECOVERY

*The official newsletter of the
Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence*



The Basics Of Modern Technical Assistance

**COLLECTIVE
IMPACT**

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**COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT**

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**ACTIONABLE
KNOWLEDGE**

3

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE THEN AND NOW

By Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher

Those who administer TA know from experience how effective it can be. They also know that real social change can only come from the gradual improvement of an entire system over time, not a single breakthrough by an individual organization.

That awareness drove the Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence to take a new approach. For starters, we are not one thing. Our entrepreneurial spirit encourages innovation wherever and whenever it's needed. We also know that a cookie-cutter approach doesn't work and that change takes time. It's not enough to say, "Here's the information, see you later" when lives, families, and communities hang in the balance.

Our work therefore goes beyond disseminating information to creating and sustaining grassroots initiatives driven by community needs. Why? Because that's what it takes to make a real difference in rural America.

We hope the more expansive definition of Technical Assistance on the following pages can contribute to the large-scale social change needed to assist millions of Americans on their journey of recovery.

ISOLATED IMPACTS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Nearly 1.4 million nonprofits are at work* developing independent solutions to major social problems. But isolated initiatives inevitably result in isolated impacts. A single laboratory may be able to develop a medical cure for all, but complex, inter-dependent social problems involving myriad cultural, governmental and commercial activities are beyond the scope of any single organization.

A New Approach

Some social problems are “technical” in the sense that they’re relatively easy to define and solve. To care for the sick, for example, we build hospitals. But other social problems, such as how to reform public education or treat, rather than punish, those with a Substance Use Disorder, can't be answered with a single technical solution. Instead, they require an “adaptive response” on the part of countless participants who learn over time to adapt and modify their behavior in alignment with a new understanding of both the problem and the solution.

Collective Impact

Collective impact, the only kind that can achieve population-wide benefits, begins with an acknowledgment that large-scale social change comes from coordinated cross-sector collaboration, not the isolated work of individual organizations.

The Role of the "Field Catalyst"

Coordination takes time, but time is precisely what many non-profits lack. What’s needed for an entire field or industry to move the needle is a “Field Catalyst” that can advocate, teach, propel, and coordinate the efforts of stakeholders toward sweeping social change.

Technical Assistance Redefined

This involves a subtle but significant expansion of what it means to provide Technical Assistance. Even as specific forms of TA are delivered (see list to the right), Field Catalysts work to:

- Focus and maintain attention on the ultimate goal
- Create and sustain a sense of urgency in public thought and discourse
- Frame issues in a way that presents opportunities while rewarding innovation
- Inspire energetic cross-sector collaboration

Through these and other efforts, the Field Catalyst builds a field-wide consensus that the collective impact that's needed is best accomplished when nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public all move in the same direction toward the same goal.



OUR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CATEGORIES

- Recovery Housing Development
- Blended Funding
- Criminal Justice Diversion
- Case Management
- Community and Stakeholder Development
- Opioid Response
- Peer-Driven Support
- Community-Based Care
- Medication-Assisted Treatment
- Mental Health Treatment
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- Outcome Documentation
- Payment Methodologies
- Workforce Training
- Social Enterprise
- TeleHealth
- Technology Development

* The Stanford Social Innovation Review

NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT COMMUNITY

Non-profit funders naturally look for practices that, proven in a single location, can be applied and scaled to others. But the causes and effects of social problems can vary widely across communities and cultures. That's why pre-packaged solutions inevitably fail without local customization and buy-in.

The Art of Mutually-Reinforced Activity

Rather than working “outside-in” by decree, the introduction of a promising new practice is better thought of as a “seeding” within a community that then grows the solution inside-out in accordance with local needs. This can take considerable time and patience as adaptations, revisions, and implementation strategies, as well as new ideas, are tested in real time by those most familiar with local challenges.

The Necessity of "Local Ownership"

Rather than requiring all participants to do the same thing, each stakeholder is encouraged to undertake those activities at which he or she excels. Through trial and error—and aided in some cases with community-based research—local stakeholders can bring together the unique expertise and resources that would be unknown to outsiders and that might actually be alienated if a top-down, outside-in approach was insisted upon.

Time for the "Field Catalyst"

Local stakeholders working in disadvantaged communities may not have the professional background to think of themselves as entrepreneurs or the tools needed to apply for outside funding. But a Field Catalyst with “boots on the ground” can help grow grassroots innovation and problem-solving within a community, allowing it to leverage local resources that were previously concealed or inaccessible. Effective Field Catalysts can do this, even as they provide highly specific Technical Assistance, by:

- Helping identify the hidden “social entrepreneurs” within marginalized communities
- Nurturing local leadership and grassroots support
- Promoting a shared identity that unites all stakeholders, from funders and non-profits to faith-based entities, businesses, and local government agencies
- Forging new connections and supply chains to support community-generated innovations
- Establishing an implementation process that encourages solutions customized to local needs
- Challenging feelings of hopelessness and helplessness with success stories showing that change is possible
- Mobilizing investors to take a chance on local leaders



The Need for Continuous Communication

Developing trust can be a challenge, particularly in remote rural areas where communities may already think of themselves as living in a world apart.

Participants may need to work together several years to appreciate the common motivation driving their efforts.

They will need to see that they're treated fairly, without favoritism, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence to achieve the best solution for all.

The monthly newsletter you're reading now embodies this commitment to the ongoing communication and trust that's needed for people to believe in the promise of real and lasting change.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE

Changing persistent social problems requires people with different perspectives and priorities to collaborate in new ways. To do so, they must agree on what matters—the goals they share and how to achieve them. Research and data can play a crucial role by documenting outcomes, identifying key patterns, ensuring accountability, and promoting learning.

Behind the Numbers

The people who live and work in affected communities know the stories "behind the numbers." Attendance data may show that children living in a particular rural zip code frequently miss school, but only community members can tell you why. Quantitative metrics may be critical to understanding progress over time, but when it comes to life-threatening social problems the voices of communities, partners, and clients must be given equal weight in deciding what to invest in and how to evaluate the results. To put it more poetically, research must be guided by the data of human experience.

Focusing On What Matters

Before building data systems for our partners, the Fletcher Group RCOE conducts in-depth studies to determine what metrics best serve them and how it can help achieve their goals. While many data systems are designed to aggregate, not differentiate, experiences, the surveys we develop disaggregate data to illuminate the experiences of population sub-groups, thereby highlighting, rather than concealing, the lived experience of the people for whom we work.

It's All About Learning

Those dedicated to social change often lack the knowledge and technology needed to analyze and generate new data. That's unfortunate because creating a culture of learning and strategic decision-making without it can be difficult.

That's why the Fletcher Group RCOE is dedicated to providing its partners with a wide range of technical support, including the software, hardware, training, and Technical Assistance needed to translate data knowledge into action. We believe that shared measurement, grounded in a culture of learning and focused on equitable processes and outcomes, may be our best hope of providing rural communities with the high-quality resources and services they need.



The Technology You've Been Missing

A top priority at the Fletcher Group RCOE is to make sure the partners we work with have the knowledge, time, and resources they need to succeed. The most recent evidence of that commitment is our new online "RH Portal." Accessible anytime from anywhere, the exciting new tools found there will enable RH operators, clients, researchers and policy makers to promote quality standards and best practices while bringing new efficiency to facility and service management.

Check It Out!

Whether you're an individual looking for a recovery residence, an RH manager needing best practice training and state-of-the-art record keeping, or a researcher seeking nationwide data, you'll find it all at the new "RH Portal." We encourage you to check it out now at recovery-housing.org