



# CFA

COMMUNITIES FIRST ASSOCIATION

## **Communities First Association: Prospectus**

### **About Us**

#### **Who We Are**

Communities First Association (CFA) is a national, faith-based organization of highly relational, expert practitioners who are committed to community transformation through the multiplication of skillful leaders in asset based community development. A diverse group of professional community developers, Community Advancement Coaches of CFA are leaders in their cities, churches, school districts, and civic and non for profit organizations. They are committed to a coach-trainer model that infuses high standards of coaching, training, and facilitation of relevant, rigorous, and diverse curricular experiences that equip the next band of leaders to come alongside communities. CFA Community Advancement Coaches are passionate about first celebrating the gifts and talents that are already present in the community, and after careful listening and mapping with indigenous leaders, supporting and encouraging sustainable planning and implementation that leads to community transformation.

CFA also serves as a source for replenishment for a national network of coach trainers, charged with training the next band of leaders in community development. As such, CFA is an oasis for professional development, complete with experiences in best practices related to the core competencies of asset based community development.

## **What We Do**

### COACH AND TRAIN

CFA's Community Advancement Coaches implement a "train the trainer" model curriculum for lead practitioners in asset based community development across the country to better equip them to raise the levels of community development work with "on the ground" practitioners at the local level.

### CREATE AND LEARN

Community Advancement Coaches also write, revise, and review curricula and materials associated with asset based community development, in an effort to keep themselves abreast of best practices in the world of community development, and also to ensure the sharing of best practices with those with whom they coach, train, and collaborate.

### CONNECT AND COMMUNE

Networking to maintain the highly relational culture of the national organization is also a significant component of the work of CFA affiliates. The sharing of resources and information and the celebration of community transformations as they occur is essential to the mission and vision of Communities First Association.

### CELEBRATE AND SHARE

Our bi-annual gatherings create space for us to share in the roles and responsibilities of equipping new lead practitioners, catalyzing best practice creation and implementation, networking towards the disbursement of new innovations in the field, and celebrating the broadening and deepening of transformational asset based community development.

### **Services Provided:**

- \* Training, Facilitation, & Coaching best practices & development of ABCD
- \* Consulting on curricular alignment with and infusion of ABCD Standards
- \* Internship Expansion Opportunities in ABCD/Local Missions Opportunities
- \* Vetting/Accreditation/Certification in ABCD
- \* Church Plant Consulting for an ABCD infused Church Culture
- \* ABCD School Culture and Climate Consulting
- \* School Community Involvement Consulting and Planning Implementation
- \* Church Vitality Resource
- \* Seminary support in teaching and learning of ABCD

## What We Value

Communities First Association holds in high regard our **10 Essential Esteemed Core Values**: {**G.G.I.T. C.C.C.A.R.E** (“GET CARE”)}

### 1. Grace Oriented/Faith Inspired

*We understand that we are all imperfect people living in a flawed and imperfect world. While we make every effort to be good to ourselves and one another, we recognize that we all make mistakes. As such, we allow space for one another to stumble, and we practice forgiveness and understanding in the ways that we approach one another and our work together.*

*We are moved to action by our belief that total restoration is to be manifested on earth, and that we have been entrusted with the charge of working together towards that transformation through community development.*

### 1. Growing & Learning

*We are committed to lifelong learning and we make ourselves fully present to possibilities to learn and grow with and from one another. We espouse to be both teachers and learners, lending our gifts to each other and receiving learning from one another.*

### 1. Inclusive

*We are intentional in ensuring that everyone has a place at the table and every voice is heard. We value all of the ways in which individuals present their respective narrative, and we make space and time for the diverse ways in which voice is made present and known in our collective, paying close attention to the voices of those who have been historically marginalized.*

### 1. Transparency & Authenticity

*We are willing to sacrifice the comfort of safe space for the greater gift of creating an opportunity to share our true selves (integrity) and our true hearts (vulnerability). We are steadfast in our willingness to “meet and remain at the line of contention,” in an effort to understand one another better and grow more deeply as a collective.*

*We embrace reporting, reflection, and evaluation, as we make ourselves accountable to growth and best practices that result in skillful leadership development and community transformation.*

### 1. Celebratory

*We share a common excitement and jubilee with and for one another as community transformation occurs, and we celebrate through sharing narratives and resources and by honoring the communities with whom we serve, empowering them by leading from within or behind, making room for indigenous leaders to forge ahead and sustain the movement.*

## **1. Collaborative**

*We work together, beginning with the end in mind, to manifest our mission and vision and maintain our focus on measurable outcomes, all while maintaining a high commitment to our core values and enjoying the relationships that we share within and beyond CFA. We emphasize the communal and the cooperative, while paying close attention to the expressions of those who respectfully challenge the process. We value the balance between both the cooperative and the dissonant voices that comprise the collaborative.*

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## **1. Contemplative (Prayerful) Mind**

*We value the importance of recognizing that we are never not interpreting. As such, we commit ourselves to recognizing our thoughts and feelings, while not allowing them to rule the day. We suspend our thoughts and feelings long enough to consider the possibilities and understanding of others’ articulations and assertions.*

## **1. Abundance Focused (ABCD)**

*We celebrate the richness of individuals, collectives, and communities, and we believe that there are assets present in every person, in every collective, and in every community. Consequently, we devote ourselves to prioritizing the acts of listening and being fully present, intentionally seeking to identify and celebrate the abundance in a person, persons, or place **first**, while having awareness of the possibility that there may be needs as well.*

## **1. Relational**

*We appreciate having one another as colleagues, comrades, and confidants, recognizing that the work we do is very challenging and can sometimes feel isolating. We hold one another in high regard and we value the gift of having one another to lean on and to buoy up in what can sometimes prove to be the very challenging and somewhat misunderstood efforts to support communities as they do the work of transforming themselves.*

## **1. Equitable**

*We treat each other with respect, and we practice equity with intentionality as it pertains to developmental disabilities, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, race, and religion. It is a key priority of the organization to create equity amongst ourselves, such that all stakeholders and affiliates are valued and treated equally and fairly.*

## The History

Communities First Association, once known as the North American Ministry Team (NAMT), was the multiplication engine for Christian Community Development for World Renew (WR), a global ministry entity of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). In 2005, however, the NAMT began a new strategy of adding non-CRC entities to the replication of community development initiatives, citing the need to multiply the work beyond the denomination. From that evolved a new multiplying asset based community development (ABCD) engine, and in the summer of 2009, with the leadership of the founding Executive Director, Jay VanGroningen, Communities First Association became its own 501(c)3 organization with its heart set on multiplying the number of leaders practicing ABCD in communities across the country.

Between 2009 and 2014, CFA operated as an association, developing capacity amongst its 25-30 members. These members met the challenge of expanding and multiplying ABCD work in hundreds of neighborhoods during this time, keeping their commitment to the intentional, relational, and transformational work of training neighborhood and community leaders in mining the resources present in communities and empowering and equipping community members to mobilize for sustainable growth and development.

Today, having been a stand-alone organization for 5 years, CFA, is faced with the exciting prospect of becoming a mature and sustainable entity. Continuing its mission and vision of multiplying leaders nationally in asset based community development, while maintaining the highly relational culture of the organization that its stakeholders deeply value, is the focus of the organization today. With the new leadership of Reesheda N. Graham-Washington as the Executive Director, Communities First Association is embracing a non-for-profit organizational structure, and is committed to new levels of diversity amongst its affiliates. We are eager to continue living out the mission and vision of the organization with structures and processes that promote symmetry, synergy, and shalom!

# **Communities First Association: Mission, Vision, & Outcomes**

## **Mission**

CFA is a faith based, non for profit, intermediary organization of community developers that provides a supportive learning environment, resources, and tools to those who transform communities through the use and multiplication of asset based community development.

## **Vision**

CFA extends the reach of community development across the country by providing encouragement and support for leaders, serving as a place for retreat and refreshment, and developing holistic, multi-sector approaches that contribute to community transformation.

We envision an organization that:

- Encourages faith-based and public sector organizations to participate in community transformation
- Builds a supportive learning community
- Supports leaders growing leaders
- Develops credibility with faith-based and public sector entities
- Catalyzes strategic influence & voice for change.
- Heightens the prevalence of national community development
- Offers in-depth holistic, multi-sectored approaches to community development that promotes transformation at all levels of community life

## **Outcomes**

Communities First Association focuses on community transformation. We know a community is being transformed by evidence of:

- Increasing ownership for the community, by the community
- A growing sense of community and its identity as defined and articulated from within the community
- Shared vision among residents in the community
- Increased knowledge, skills, and resources working for shared benefit within the community
- Skillful Indigenous leadership of the community
- Appreciation for evaluation, reflection, and ongoing learning in a community
- Sharing of faith narratives in natural ways, and contributing to a sense of peace and joy

# **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD): Pedagogy, Theology, & Missiology**

## **Pedagogy of ABCD**

*“Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.”*

*-Paulo Freire*

The pedagogy by which ABCD is practiced is one that is very focused and intentional about listening to those who have historically been voiceless or relegated to the margins of our world, and causing opportunities for their leadership to emerge and develop. As such, ABCD employs specific teaching tools and strategies which emphasize listening, questioning, and leading from alongside and/or behind, rather than the more traditional ways in which trainers lead from the front/the head.

## **Pedagogical Tools**

*Community Listening*—Creating a true opportunity for the community to come together and dream about what is possible in their community, based on the gifts and talents that are already there, while also considering what else the community identifies as a requisite to increase their holistic wellness.

*Appreciative Inquiry*—A discussion based model that allows for exploration and analysis, rather than focusing on problems and rushing towards a solutions based orientation. Looks deeply first at what is, and then allows for exploration of what could be in such a way that compels stakeholders into a future that they desire and are willing to work towards collectively.

*Identifying Indigenous Leadership*—Raising up leaders from within the community who can continue to lead the community, thereby creating sustainability and empowerment to continue holistic development practices after the coach trainer has transitioned out of his/her temporal role.

*Coaching and/or Facilitating* —Identifying areas to hone in and develop leaders based on their differentiated learning gaps, coaching is instrumental to the ABCD training process. Additionally, having trained indigenous leaders, facilitating involves conversing with indigenous leaders and their community members to keep discussions on the track they have identified and to support their meeting the objectives in question.

*Community Mapping—A process by which communities layout the details of what*

*exists within their community and where people, systems, and infrastructures are located, in an effort to survey the assets of the community. The process often l*

*leads to community empowerment and capacity building*

*Strategic Planning—Having taken the time to listen to the community, identify indigenous leadership, and map out the resources available from within, a plan that focuses on the felt needs of the community is developed alongside the community through facilitation of discussion.*

*Conflict Resolution—The implementation of methods and concepts that facilitate peace through authentic, integral, and transformative active communications and holistic engagement (cognitive, verbal, emotional, etc).*

## **Pedagogical Context**

*Cultural Competency—Effective interactions and exchanges between oneself and people and/or environments, that express different beliefs, values, and experiences.*

*Race, Gender, and Class Equity—the measure of achievement, fairness, inclusion, and opportunity accessible to individuals and communities, not respective to race, gender, and/or class—the evaluation of whether or not a comprehensive standard applies to individuals and/or communities, not respective to race, gender, and/or class*

*Contextualization—the consideration of meaning making as a result of interpreting the environment in which an action, experience, narrative, and/or exchange occur(s) (red).*

## **Theology of ABCD**

*“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” -Micah 6:8*

### *Loving the Things that God Loves*

God is the creator of all people and all things, which make them all good! Because God made creation and made it in fullness, every person and every space is full of goodness! There is no lack; rather, abundance is hidden and less visible in some places, and while other places seem overrun with abundance, at the core, they experience lack in less noticeable, but no less significant ways.

The theology of ABCD is to unearth shalom (the visibility of wellness and abundance) in every facet of the Kingdom, so that holistic wellness is visibly abundant in every community. We take a holistic approach to this work, unearthing shalom spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, physically, academically, economically, and socially, through individual, corporate, systemic, and political entities.

God, the creator, made enough for us all. However, because of the sins of greed, selfishness, and an unwillingness to trust that God made enough, we live in a world frocked with poverty, homelessness, and hunger for some, though many who live in these conditions are very rich in spirit. Likewise, we also live in a world where some have great financial and monetary resource, but struggle with immorality and lack of fulfillment. The theology of ABCD is rooted in the mining of holistic wellness, so that both the poor in material and the poor in spirit might work together towards reciprocal transformation through redeeming together, “What is here?,” and celebrating that, and then asking, “What is needed?,” and working with one another in achieving holistic sustainability for all, together.

### *ABCD and The Church*

The church is to share, partner, and celebrate with those who strive for holistic community development irrespective of faith orientation and/or conviction. Additionally, the priority of strategy selection and implementation of ABCD must be to empower the indigenous as opposed to being led by the external party, prioritize the articulations and plans of the community, as opposed to prioritizing what makes the materially privileged comfortable or pleased with the outcomes, and create sustainability, rather than creating a burden and dependency over time.

It is important to understand that the church with significant monetary resources has a much to gain in its partnership with people, churches, and organizations that have fewer material resources because *reciprocal transformation* of heart, mind, and spirit occurs through holistic Asset Based Community Development. The financially resourced church should see itself as embarking upon an opportunity to be *dramatically transformed* in ways that only *coming alongside* brothers and sisters in the kingdom can produce, a blessing for the privileged, indeed.

## **Missiology of ABCD**

*“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” -Mark 16:15*

Informed by theology (see above for the theology of ABCD), anthropology (the study of humanity), and history (how we have attempted community development in the past, and the successes and challenges therein), the missiology of ABCD

is simply to fulfill the Great Commission as indicated in Mark 16:15. In this short verse, there are core components of how to approach the mission of ABCD:

*Inclusivity*—It is everyone’s responsibility, regardless of race, gender, class, religious affiliation, etc., to share goodness with everyone else, regardless of race, gender, class, religious affiliation, etc.

*Sharing*—Inherent in the way that no one has been left out of the call to go into the world, inherent in the way that the good news is to be for all of creation, the missiology of ABCD requires reciprocity in the sharing of goodness. It is important to underscore the reciprocal nature of the sharing that occurs in ABCD. Transformation is possible for all who participate, not JUST for those who have been historically underserved, voiceless, and/or marginalized, but also for those who have been historically privileged, voiced, and centric.

*Narrative*—We have all been called to “preach the good news.” Story telling is an imperative of the missiology of ABCD. Attentively and actively listening to the narratives of those we come alongside, with an authenticity of heart and spirit to learn from them and to build relationship with them, while also graciously waiting for an invitation to share a part of ourselves through narrative, is a cornerstone to the missiology of ABCD.

*Neighborhood/Community*—We were called to GO. This means that we must leave our own personal, comfortable, familiar “places” (geographical, mental, religious, social, cultural, familial, etc.) to connect to the world. There is an implicit sense of community in us being called to go into the world. There are people there—some who are like us—some who are not. The missiology of ABCD mandates connectivity between the individual and the larger world context and all that comprises it.

*Creativity/Transformation*—Transformation is the most significant outcome of approaching the mission of ABCD. Simply put, if no one or nothing is different, in fact, better, as a result of our efforts in Asset Based Community Development, then we should reconsider doing the work at all. The purpose of the inclusivity, sharing, and narrative is always with the aim of all of us becoming better versions of ourselves for embarking upon the work of community development.

## CFA: Mobilization & Multiplication Strategic Overview

Individuals (Community Advancement Coaches)	Organizational Partners (Those with whom CFA Contracts)
Leaders in ABCD organizations and movements	Sees the value in infusing ABCD into the culture of the organization
Vet and certify other leaders in ABCD	Desires access to resources, consulting, and training in ABCD as a component of Professional Development/Training
Value a network of ABCD'ers with whom to share and glean best practices	Values a network of ABCD'ers with whom to share and glean best practices
Available to sub-contract with CFA to multiply ABCD efforts throughout the nation	Potential for contracts with CFA to multiply trainers and their development nationally

### We will increase the practice of ABCD in our nation's neighborhoods through:

- City Cohort Vetting Opportunities (regionalization, multiplication, mobilization, network and network innovation)
- Coaching/Consulting/Facilitation in ABCD throughout the country across sectors and industries
- Grant writing, receiving, and dissemination for Innovations in ABCD
- Raising the awareness and standard of ABCD efforts and discourse
- Partnering with other community development organizations around ABCD
- Diversifying the composition of Community Advancement Coaches in CFA
- Devising a Think Tank/Hub for futuristic innovations in Community Development
- Glocal Contextual Study, Research, and Analysis: What can we learn from ABCD and CCD practices around the world—how do we share those learnings with small, grassroots organizations with no budget for international travel?
- Becoming a Clearinghouse for ABCD customization for both profit and non-for profit, faith-based and public sector organizations

### Services Provided:

- \* Training, Facilitation, and Coaching in best practices and professional development of ABCD
- \* Consulting on curricular alignment with and infusion of ABCD Standards
- \* Internship Expansion Opportunities in ABCD/Local Missions Opportunities
- \* Vetting/Accreditation
- \* Church Plant Consulting
- \* School Culture and Climate Consulting
- \* School Community Involvement Consulting and Planning Implementation
- \* Church Vitality Resource
- \* Seminary support in teaching and learning of ABCD

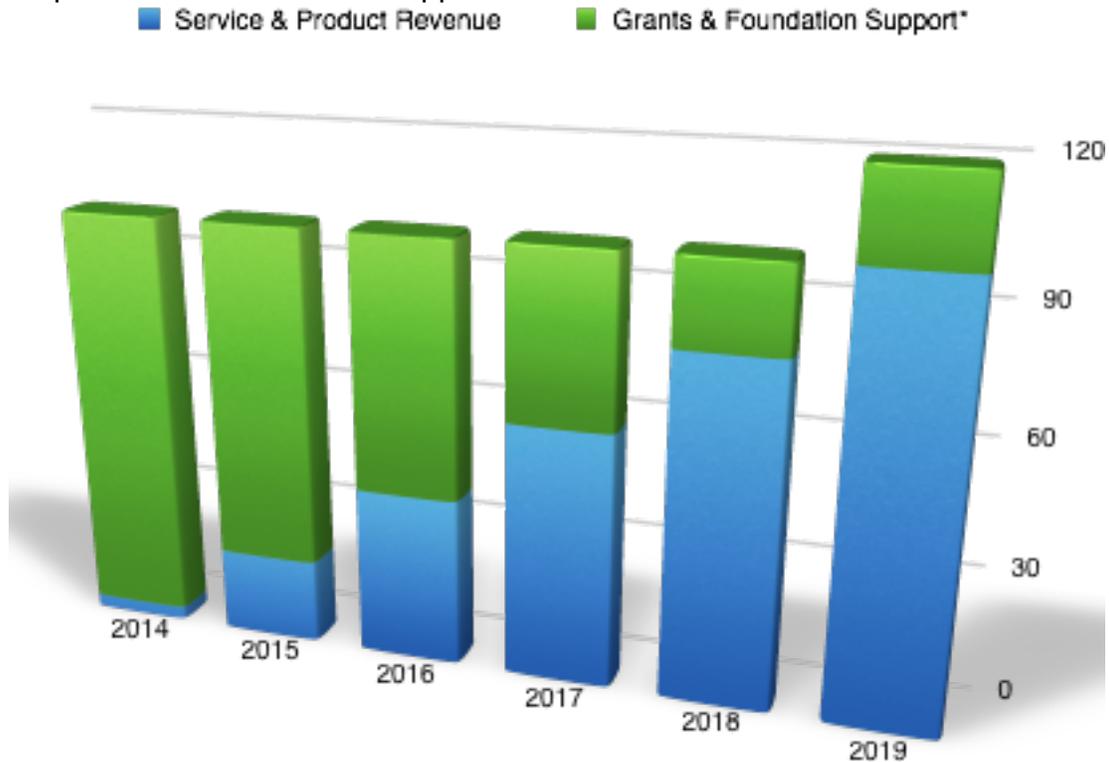
# Financing and Sustaining the Mission and Vision

## Financial Objectives

To be a completely self-sustaining operations budget within the next six years.

To maintain an operational/programming budget of \$500,000 due to service provision and product distribution

To maintain a grant giving/innovations budget of \$100,000 due to grant acquisition and foundation support



\* As CFA moves to 100% of its operational budget coming from contractual services provided/product distribution (curriculum, etc.), it will maintain grant funding and foundation resources to allocate towards innovation/incubation support of best practices in community development.

For further details regarding CFA's financial status, please refer to the 2013 Financial Report on our website at [www.communitiesfirstassociation.org](http://www.communitiesfirstassociation.org)

# **Communities First Association Stakeholders**

## The Board of Directors

Rachel VerWys, President  
Patty Prasada-Rao, Vice President  
John McKnight, Board Member  
Melissa Barnes, Board Member  
Earl James, Board Member  
Shelby Parchman, Board Member

## The Leadership Team

Reesheda N. Washington, Executive Director  
Jayme Dominicak, Director of Strategic Implementation

## The Community Advancement Coaches

Bernadette Arthur, Oshawa, Canada  
Jeff Bisgrove, Phoenix, AZ  
Monika Grasley, North Central California  
Terri Larson, Southern California  
Wendy McCaig, Richmond, VA  
Gary Roberts, St. Paul, MN  
Camryn Smith, Raleigh-Durham, N.C.  
Ernest Smith, Raleigh-Durham, N.C.  
Kimi Zimmerman, Muskegon, MI  
John Eigege, Houston, TX  
Christine Brooks-Nolf, Southern California

## The Sojourners

Diane Miller, Chicago, IL  
Melinda Veatch, Fort Worth, TX