



Developing Equitable Training and Technical Assistance

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As training and technical assistance (TA) designers (that is, federal and philanthropic funders and developers of training and TA), you can take steps to improve the likelihood that your training and TA will engage potential recipients (that is, the organizations that receive training and TA) and their communities equitably. These steps involve reflecting on access, implementation, and development of your training and TA. Here are four questions you can ask yourself along with some strategies recommended by stakeholders with experience designing, providing, or receiving training and TA.

Questions to reflect on



Which organizations will hear about the training and TA opportunity? When training and TA will only be available to grantees, equitable outreach for and access to grants are critical to providing equitable training and TA. These outreach strategies can apply to advertising grants and training and TA opportunities.



What is the application process for the training and TA opportunity? Organizations or communities need awareness and resources to apply for training and TA. Including readiness and capacity for change as application criteria could exclude historically underrepresented groups or organizations from the start.

Strategies to consider

- ▶ **Analyze networks** to uncover which regions or communities have historically had less access to similar training and TA opportunities and ensure they receive communications about the opportunity.
- ▶ **Cast a wide net.** Ask your partners for recommendations and reach out to practitioner-focused associations in related fields that you might not have worked with before. For example, if you work in the housing field, consider connecting with associations of workforce or social service organizations.
- ▶ **Streamline application requirements** to reduce burden and offer alternate ways of applying that rely less on the written word. For example, allow interviews or video submissions to be respectful of people who have other communication preferences.
- ▶ **Offer application support** to potential recipients, especially those who have limited experience writing grants or less familiarity with training and TA. Make yourself available to answer questions about the application and the opportunity, and help applicants brainstorm how to present their ideas in the format you requested.
- ▶ **Use planning grants** to support organizations that might not yet meet your criteria and require deeper levels of support when engaging in and using training and TA.
- ▶ **Consider longer engagement periods** for organizations that require more time to set and make progress toward their goals.

Questions to reflect on



Which staff will participate in the training and TA opportunity? Training and TA often occur with a small, deeply engaged team that might not represent all staff—in terms of levels of experience, demographics, lived experiences, or other characteristics—at the recipient organization.



How will you ask for input on your training and TA approach? Asking recipients and their communities for input on the design of training and TA frames your work together as a partnership, which could help build trust and make your activities more engaging for them. If you only ask a few people to provide input, your training and TA might engage those who provide input but leave others behind.

Strategies to consider

- ▶ **Develop a communication plan** so that the core team receiving training and TA has mechanisms and processes to communicate what they have learned to their colleagues and solicit feedback. Obtaining buy-in from additional staff within the organization is crucial to successfully using training and TA because their behavior will also need to change.
- ▶ **Frame training and TA as professional development**, which might encourage organizations to include staff with less experience.
- ▶ **Use specific and broad methods** of asking for input within recipient organizations. For example, interview members of the core team one on one and conduct a web survey to capture input from a broader group of stakeholders.
- ▶ **Offer compensation** to organizations that provide input on the elements of the training and TA approach used with all recipients. Without compensation, you might only receive input from organizations with enough resources to volunteer their time, and the excluded organizations might have different training and TA needs from this group.
- ▶ **Seek to include all voices.** Consider whether the recipients who provided input: represent mixed levels of staff or departments within their organizations; represent different racial or ethnic backgrounds, lived experiences, abilities, and languages; come from different regions or localities; sought and incorporated feedback from individuals and families in their communities; or had previous experience receiving training and TA. Take steps to include all such voices in future calls for input.

Working with Recipients to Develop Training and Technical Assistance That Is Engaging Project

This project builds on an [earlier project](#) that sought to document existing knowledge and develop a [learning agenda](#) for training and TA. In this project, we set out to answer one research question from that previous project's learning agenda: 'How can TA designers and providers incorporate recipients' input into the design of training and TA to encourage engagement?' [Engaging Training and Technical Assistance Recipients: Lessons From The Field](#) explores the concept of engagement in the varied field of human services training and TA using examples from past and current federal and philanthropic efforts. Interviews with 12 designers, providers, and recipients revealed the questions about and strategies for developing equitable training and TA included here. These questions and strategies are based solely on information collected for this project.

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