

## Why CBO

### **Why Community Based Organizations:**

In the world of community service, words matter. Using the right words will attract the right partners, volunteers and funders to you, and using the wrong words will keep them away. We strongly encourage the use of the term “community based organization” or “CBO”, as the best term to describe your efforts.

The term Community Based Organization is the appropriate language that describes organizations which are birthed in communities to address local needs. It is universal social service and philanthropic language that described locally owned and operated non profits that serve to heal and serve their own communities by responsive and asset based approaches that create long term local solutions using both local resources and resourced gathered from outside. The term includes the following ideas:

- Non-profit
- Responsive and focused on the local community
- Eligibility for funding that will focus on local needs
- Lead by locals and credible on local issues
- The ones that “own” the local scene, they are “asset based” by nature and have the best staying power because they are rooted in the fabric of community
- Represents the local community, because it is made up of community members
- Best public language to communicate the scriptural purpose described in

### **The Alternatives:**

Non Profit Organization- This refers only to the tax-benefit structure of the organization, and is not enough information to tell an outsider what kind of non profit you are or your purpose.

Community Service Organization— This term applies to fraternal or business organizations that take member gathered from an institution and mobilize them into service. It is unusual for these groups to gather outside funding except from their own constituents. While it might seem to fit with a Faith based service effort, additional baggage for this term is the fact that is the official predecessor of the UFW and was a very controversial political organization tied to Caesar Chavez and the Industrial Areas Foundation. Using this term implies that either you are a community organization like a fraternal or civic group and that your mission is to mobilize your members into service for the good of the community, or that you are part of a radical political heritage. In *neither* case will you be eligible for outside funding.

Charity- While technically correct it conjures antiquated images of traditional charities that are primarily about gather public donations and working on a social problem.

Integrated Auxiliary- This is legal term that describes the status of a corporation that is closely connected and under the direct authority of a church. Only churches can have integrated auxiliaries, and this term will not help you with outside donors or volunteers. When you use this term you are intentionally creating a close connection with the church that expresses its position as a subsidiary.

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Faith Based Organization- This term was coined as a description of the new emphasis on engaging traditionally religious organizations in community efforts. It has no formal definition, and can be positive when dealing with sophisticated religious funders. It is a term that is viewed with hostility by many existing social agencies and the majority of congress because it is associated with the Bush administration.

### **More than one “Public”**

When you communicate about your service efforts you have more than one public. Your website, and brochures communicate to the funding, partner and volunteer public, but are not and should not be the primary communication tool for your church members. They need special training to help them understand their calling to the community. They are not really joining the CBO, they are signing up for the mission of Jesus in the world, to be sent ones. The drawing card for them is from discipleship to outward service as an expression of faith. The CBO language is really for those who are being drawn from outside the missional community inward. It creates a safe place for partnership with non-believing people and organizations. When we call believers to service, it should be with an understanding of the Mission of God and their opportunity to win people through relational service.

### Explaining CBO to Disciples

We won't need to explain CBO to community leaders, they already know what it means. If a corporate leader is not familiar with the term, when they take a look at Google or some other search, they will figure it out quickly. But since we do need to explain this to team members that we are gathering it is helpful to think about how we should explain its purpose and role. We should explain to them:

1. Christians have been called to a lifestyle of being sent.
2. Effective ministry among the unsaved is relational—they first experience a relationship with God as they experience a relationship with God's people. This is the duty of a real disciple of Jesus- to be like him.
3. We have created an organization that facilitates relationships, it's a non-profit called a CBO. It provides safe venues for believers to work alongside and to serve non-believers.
4. To us, this is MISSION. To the Community, this is a Community Based Organization providing resources and services.
5. Our focus as believers is not to focus on the structure, but to move ourselves into meaningful times of service in which we can connect with those around us.

### Explaining is a Good Thing

The need to explain CBO to those we gather and move toward discipleship is a good thing. Many of them aren't really disciples yet, because they are not missional. They have more than just one learning curve to get through—many will need to be re-discipled so that they line up with the purpose of God on the earth. Self-centered Christianity is not what we are trying to build a new church upon. So the CBO explanation should be one of the many conversations about the real purpose of believer's lives—if they aren't teachable, perhaps you don't want them on the team anyway? Moving people to this point of

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missional living is really about the structure anyway. They should be recruited to the “action” of living out their faith. You aren’t recruiting them to an organization, but rather to acts of service, and the actions of close fellowship. So you can explain the CBO in the context of getting them involved with the work you are doing together, if you even need to explain at all. Invite them to the needs assessment, invite them to the service activity--discussions about the structural element is part of the advanced course.

### Good Branding Trumps Structural Language

The best case for any of our service efforts is that the branding allows us to define the organization, not the other way around. The whole idea of a community based organization is a reference to its structure and purpose. With good branding we can take this to a higher level. We want people to associate our service activity with images that not only are structurally appropriate (CBO), but also images that draw them toward participation.

When your branding is right, the CBO term becomes a part of your sub-text or byline, not the Title. You should have a name that captures the energy and compassion of your work and then gives the qualifier of CBO. So this could be: “XYZ is, a community based organization working to create education and opportunity for the youth of Cleveland.” The emphasis is placed on the branded name, and the action items to which you attend. CBO is simply a qualifier that describes the FORM of your effort, not the effort itself.

You will attract people to the image you create more than the form that you use to support it. The structure is important, but should take a secondary place in the branding. You are “working to transform culture,” not just starting an organization. When we communicate this to our believing missional disciples, we explain to them that XYZ Church is committed to the work of building trusting relationships with community members through strategic service, and that we facilitate this through our CBO. To them, the CBO is an expression of the mission, a place where mission intersects with community. To the community, the CBO is a place where community needs intersect with resources, some of which come from a local church.