

Are you just another org or a "Community Change Agent"? 17 telling signs.

From [Laura Deaton, Third Sector Connector Co-Founder](#)



In addition to having the ability to deliver and expand programs, successful nonprofits and NGOs also have "adaptive capacity," which can take them from "Just Another Organization" to "Community Change Agent."

17 Hallmarks of Community Change Agents:

- (1) They are always **innovating** and **looking for opportunities** that will improve their communities.
- (2) They are on the "**leading edge**" of change and are sought out as **experts**.
- (3) They are **responsive** and modify existing programs as needed to meet changing needs.
- (4) They don't seek perfection but they do **seek excellence**, so the bar is always set high.
- (5) They **value team**, and they have an understanding that attracting, retaining, and supporting a strong team is essential to delivering high quality services.
- (6) Rather than building silos and rigidly adhering to job descriptions, they encourage ad-hoc teams, cross-training and **shared responsibility**.
- (7) They are **inquisitive** and have developed an **appetite for inquiry**.
- (8) They understand that **asking the right questions** helps the team make better, and more informed, decisions.
- (9) They **focus on quality**.
- (10) They work to actually produce **real and measurable outcomes** from their work. Raw counts of program participants or attendees are not enough.
- (11) They **value research** and data collection and convert it into knowledge that drives program innovation.

(12) They are **collaborative**, and understand that they are **interdependent** with other organizations. They actively seek out and work closely with other organizations to advance their **shared vision** for their communities.

(13) They **involve key community stakeholders** in their work. They are **externally focused**, and **truly engage** the community in decision-making processes.

(14) They actively seek out opportunities to **share and receive feedback** about their work with others. "Dialogue," "Discussion," and "Disagreement" are not dirty words.

(15) They foster a **learning culture** that actively seeks out **new ideas** and **thought leadership**.

(16) They encourage, value and provide **professional development, mentoring and coaching**.

(17) They are **networked and connected**. They **leverage human and technological resources** and connections to expand their reach in the community.

What would you add to this list?

Additional Resources:

[*Building Adaptive Capacity: The Quest for Improved Organizational Performance*](#) by Carl Sussman.

[*High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact*](#) by Christine W. Letts, William P. Ryan, and Allen Grossman.

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