

**CHANGE**

**STARTS**

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**A Report on the Center for Community Change and Its Continuing  
Journey to Individual and Organizational Transformation**





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# FOREWORD

# REFLECTING ON THE WORK OF CHANGE

By the CCC of the Future Design Team

**The work described in this report began as an experiment.**

**The Center for Community Change wanted to test whether an organization in the social-change sector—a sector that is notorious for asking too much of its people for too little in return—could push back and help identify a better, more productive path to success.**

We wanted to see if some of the same principles, strategies and tactics that have worked to transform organizations in other spheres could have an impact on a social-justice organization like CCC.

We wanted to see what happens when a nonprofit organization puts dedicated time and resources into investing in its people and itself.

We wanted to do a lot — and over time the experiment became something else. It became a core part of who we are as an organization, how we want to do our work, and what we want to be.

Has this work been a success? It may be too early to tell for certain, but we are seeing important signs that

staff are working together in new and more collaborative ways, that they are feeling freer to innovate and explore new approaches to old problems, and that they are working with a shared sense of purpose and a common understanding of what the Center for Community Change is about, and what we aim to achieve in the world.

We have probably failed as many times and in as many ways as we have succeeded. And there are important issues we set out to tackle that continue to stand in the way of our organization being all it can be. But we are learning, and we are always impressed by how the CCC staff has stepped up to the work of individual and organizational change.

And we always remember: This is work. Transforming an organization takes time and effort and focus. It requires all of us to reflect at regular intervals on how it is going, where we are succeeding, where we are not, and what we need to do differently to try and get better results.

This report on our CCC of the Future initiative is an effort to capture the work of organizational change through the eyes of the CCC staff. It is not a rigorous evaluation, nor is it an analysis of the mechanics of how change works. Rather, it is an attempt to document the journey CCC is on—where we came from, where we're trying to go, and how the people in our organization are responding.

## Lessons About What Works

As we have reflected on the contents of this report and where we are in this ongoing journey, we have identified several important lessons about how we have gotten to where we are today.

The following are a few practices and ideas that have worked for us:

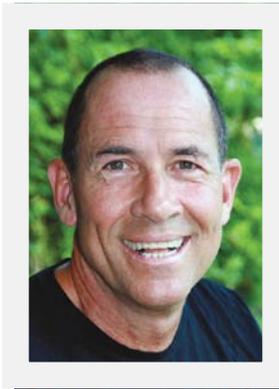
- **Creating time and space for the work of change.** From the beginning, we wanted to create new experiences for the CCC staff to think differently about their work, how they relate to others, and what they want to achieve. This has meant setting aside time and space for this work in off-site retreats and individual and team coaching sessions.
- **Cultivating leadership buy-in and support.** CCC of the Future would not have gone far without the active support and engagement of the organization's top leadership, chiefly Executive Director Deepak Bhargava and Managing Director Mary Lassen. This kind of work needs champions at all levels. As members of the design team for CCC of the Future and as active participants in the work, CCC's senior leaders have helped ensure it remains a priority.
- **Welcoming skeptics.** This hasn't been all kumbaya moments. We have faced our share of disagreements and skepticism along the way. But the skeptics have made the work better by challenging assumptions, trying to connect the work back to the CCC mission and results, and constructively suggesting alternative ideas.
- **Creating a place where the change effort lives.** CCC appointed a Director of Organizational Learning to oversee the work of individual and organizational change, and the CCC of the Future design team became a forum where we continue to chart the way forward. An effort like this needs focused time and attention so it is not pushed aside by other priorities and so it can be sustained.

- **Creating opportunities for people to experiment and exercise new skills.** A major focus of CCC of the Future is helping staff develop key skills that support their effectiveness and their capacity to work with others and to innovate. But it's not all about training. We have tried to create opportunities for staff to put new skills to work — including new leadership bodies and “exploration groups” that are identifying how we can take CCC's work to a new level.
- **Allowing change to take hold at different levels and in different places.** CCC's emphasis from the beginning has been organization-wide change, but there are pockets of accelerated change within the organization—and we welcome that. These are places where teams and team leaders have embraced the work with unique enthusiasm and dedication, which in turn has helped inspire others.
- **Integrating culture change with organizational strategy and management.** As a campaign-focused organization, it was natural for CCC to pay attention to day-to-day management and strategic work in one realm, while looking at organizational culture in a different realm. While we sensed that we needed to fuse culture change, strategy and execution, doing so has been a recurring challenge—especially as the organization was running fast to meet campaign and operational demands.

We often find ourselves using gardening metaphors when we describe CCC of the Future. We have been planting the seeds for transformation, watering and nourishing the soil, and harvesting lessons and good outcomes from the work.

After all of this gardening, we are pleased to see some green shoots that suggest the possibility of lasting change. But we will be the first to say that not all of the seeds we've planted have taken root—and there is still a great deal of gardening yet to do.

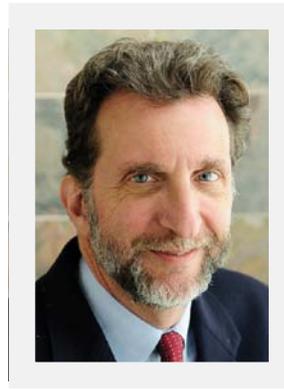
## CCC of the Future Design Team



Jose Acevedo



Deepak Bhargava



Seth Borgos



Pamela Chiang



Mary Lassen



Julia Paik



Deepak Pateriya

## About the CCC of the Future Design Team

**Pamela Chiang**, who had been a field organizer with CCC, took responsibility for the design, facilitation and implementation of CCC's leadership and organizational change work starting in 2008. At that time, she and Executive Director **Deepak Bhargava** worked with Senior Field Organizer Gary Sandusky to design and facilitate an internal pilot leadership program along with selected guest trainers. As time went on, the design team for CCC of the Future evolved to include: consultant **Jose Acevedo**; Director of Research and Program Development **Seth Borgos**; Chiang, who was named CCC's Director of Organizational Learning in 2010 and has now become an independent consultant; Managing Director **Mary Lassen**; **Julia Paik**, Senior Manager in the Office of the Executive Director; and Chief of Staff **Deepak Pateriya**.

# INTRODUCTION

# AND OVERVIEW

Movement building is a field in which people and organizations are perpetually in “campaign mode”—always fighting against the latest challenge or mobilizing for the next win. There is not a lot of time for reflecting or attending to core individual or organizational needs. People get stretched. Organizations continue doing their work as they always have—on the fly—even when old habits, systems and structures can cause problems and keep a lid on what movements truly have in their power to achieve.

Over the last several years, the Center for Community Change has tried to say that this, too, must change. Even as CCC continued and broadened its work to build the capacity and power of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, it also embarked on a wide-ranging effort to become a better, stronger, more impactful organization.

The focus of CCC’s internal change effort is strengthening the capacity and the leadership of its staff while creating a more aligned organization with systems and norms that can lead to greater impact over time. One early document about the change effort described one of its goals as “cultivating an ethos of breakthrough and innovation.”

## Individual and Organizational Change

From the beginning, CCC adopted a dual focus for this work, striving for transformation at both the personal and the organizational levels. CCC’s first step to inspire and enable individual change was a pilot leadership development initiative launched in 2008. The program, which

enrolled a diverse group of 14 staff members, combined leadership training from the Rockwood Leadership Institute, the nation’s largest provider of transformational leadership development for the social change sector, with a CCC-designed suite of activities that included retreats, coaching, mentoring and peer support.

**“This is about getting better results for the organization and the movements we’re involved in.**

**If we can collaborate effectively, work through our differences and deepen trust, there is no limit to what**

**we can achieve in this world.” – Pamela Chiang**

Over time, CCC worked to extend the leadership practices at the core of the pilot program to more staff. Some staff have participated in subsequent Rockwood trainings, while CCC has invested considerable time, energy and resources in integrating leadership development content into staff retreats, regular staff meetings, and coaching for individual staff members and teams.

Recognizing that individual change has to be met by organizational change, CCC also has taken steps to unite staff behind a shared vision and a common set of goals and values—so that everyone will “hold the whole” of the organization in their work. In addition, CCC has set out to create systems and an operating culture where staff can step up to new leadership roles and be more creative in implementing new ideas for boosting CCC’s effectiveness and impact. Last but not least, CCC has worked to embed learning in the work of the organi-

zation so staff have opportunities to reflect on what they are doing and how to do it better.

The work of organizational change continues, but the research and interviews conducted for this report suggest this work is starting to pay off both for the staff and for CCC as a whole. Staff at all levels talk about how this work has boosted their self-awareness and enhanced their skills. They say they are able to forge more collegial, more productive relationships with other staff. They tell stories about how they and their colleagues are more creative and more innovative in their work—and how they are getting better results. And, they say they are proud to work for an organization that is investing in its people in this way.

“It was a breath of fresh air to come to CCC where there was so much forethought about how the dynamics of teams work, and about creating systems of

accountability that are reasonable and fair,” said Michael Saldarriaga, who joined the organization’s communications team in March 2012. “The attitude is, ‘You own this work. You’re expected to get it done. And if you need help, feel free to speak up.’”

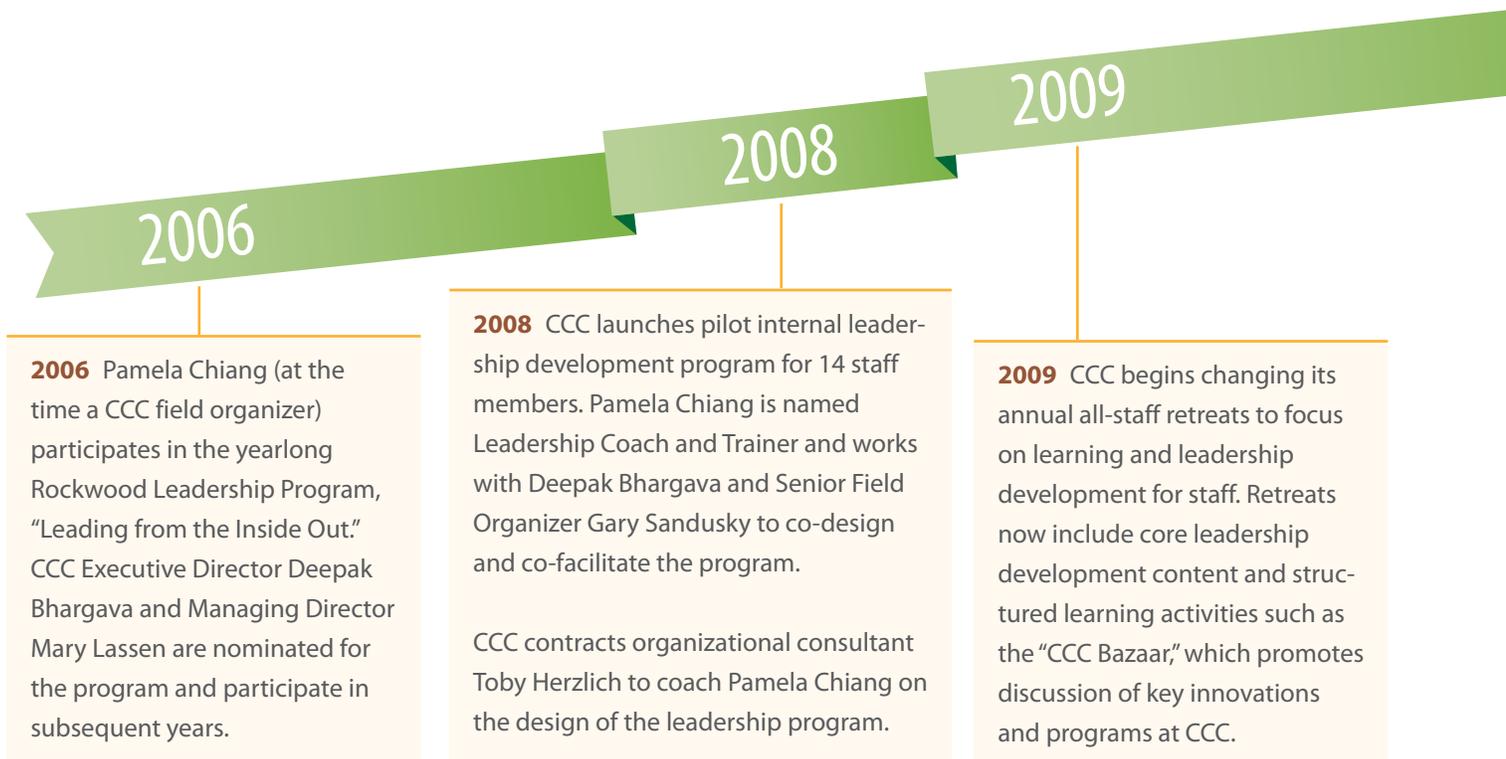
### **About This Report**

This report tells the story of the still-unfolding organizational change initiative, CCC of the Future, based on a review of internal documents and extensive interviews with CCC staff in late 2013 and the first half of 2014. The report’s aim is to document the early years of the initiative and the impact to date on CCC and its staff, while identifying areas for continuing attention as the work of organizational change continues. A secondary goal is to show the possibilities that emerge for people, movements and society when social-justice organizations are able to dedicate considerable time, energy and resources to both internal and external change.

## CCC OF THE FUTURE TIMELINE

“Achieving exponentially greater impact required us to change as an organization. As we considered what needed to happen to address the huge and daunting issues of inequality and injustice in this country, there was a realization that launching more campaigns wouldn’t be enough. We needed to reinvent the organization—and we needed to reinvent ourselves.”

– Deepak Bhargava



**2010** CCC creates a Director of Organizational Learning position with Pamela Chiang assuming responsibility for design, facilitation and implementation of the organizational change work.

CCC creates a Design Team to guide the CCC of the Future work, including Deepak Bhargava, Mary Lassen, Pamela Chiang and Jose Acevedo, an organizational consultant and coach who begins working closely with Chiang and CCC on the CCC of the Future effort. The design team expands and changes over the years to

include Seth Borgos and another consultant, Gillian Caldwell, as well as other senior staff leaders.

Acclaimed transformational leadership coach and organizational consultant Robert Gass provides coaching and consultation to members of the Design Team on how to lead successful change.

CCC convenes three retreats for staff to engage them in personal leadership skills, relationship building, and imagining and articulating CCC's vision, values and goals.

**2013** CCC creates two new leadership bodies to involve a broader cross-section of staff in strategy-setting and decision-making: the Executive Team and the Management Team.

**2014** The work continues ...

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

**2011** Staff complete work on CCC's core organizational values and a 2020 "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal" articulating CCC's intention to ensure that low-income people have "enough to thrive."

CCC launches new organizational learning initiatives, including exploration groups on "Gender Equity," "How to Build Movements

with Scale and Soul," and "New Ways of Being."

CCC initiates a multi-year effort to support focused team development for the Communications Team. This expands to include the Institutional Advancement and Operations Teams in subsequent years. The support includes retreats and individual and team coaching.

**2012** Three senior staff members participate in Rockwood's Cross Movement Yearlong Fellows Program; another three senior staff members enroll in the program in the following two years.

CCC continues experimenting with additional learning activities, including all-staff learning calls and conversations to discuss lessons from new organizing experiments.

# CCC AT A GLANCE

**Established:** 1968

**Mission:** Build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change their communities and public policies for the better.

**Staff:** 75

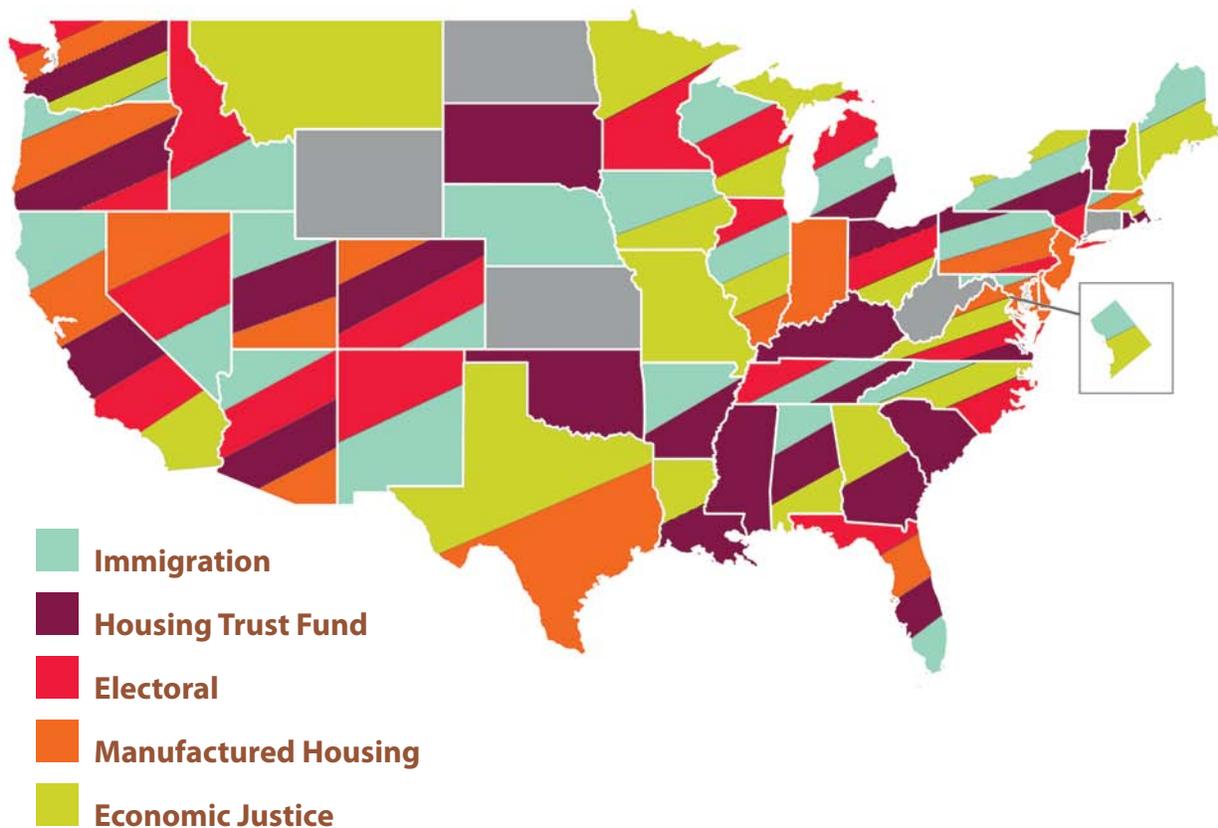
**Annual Budget:** \$17.9 million in Fiscal Year 2014

**Program Areas:** Immigration; Housing Trust Fund; Electoral; Manufactured Housing; Economic Justice.

**Locations and staff:** With its headquarters in Washington, D.C., CCC works with grassroots organizations in communities across the country to build and sustain coalitions that lead change at all levels. In addition to the D.C. staff, CCC has organizers and other staff in locations nationwide. Staff are divided into seven teams: Organizing Team; Electoral Team; Executive Office; Public Policy Team; Communications Team; Institutional Advancement Team; and Finance & Operations Team.

**Sister Organization:** The Center for Community Change Action is a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization.

## CCC's Grassroots Partners Work in These States



# TRANSFORMING

# PEOPLE

**From the very beginning, the designers of the CCC of the Future initiative recognized that its success relied as much on personal change as it did on organizational change. “As an organization, we view our staff as agents of change in the world and we want them to be able to lead their work and personal lives with presence, power and vision,” CCC stated in a 2009 report on the change effort.**

CCC’s emphasis on personal transformation was based on the recognition that people who are engaged in the work of social change often are under enormous pressure, working long hours and fighting entrenched problems that can at times seem impossible to solve. Traditionally, it is a field that has rewarded heroic individual leadership, even at the cost of one’s relationships and quality of life. Burnout in the field is notorious, as are turf battles and infighting among both individuals and organizations. Reconnecting people to their purpose (the reasons why they are doing the work), while helping them figure out how to work more effectively and more efficiently with others toward shared goals, were key priorities as CCC started down the path to change.

“All leaders need to learn the skills necessary to run effective organizations – such as financial management, supervision and board development.

Leadership is no different, and can be learned,” said Akaya Windwood, president and CEO of the Rockwood Leadership Institute, in an interview for this report. She added, “Investing in personal leadership development creates organizations and movements that are vibrant, healthy and thriving—and that can change the world.”

CCC’s first step toward investing more purposefully in its people came with the launch of a pilot internal leadership development program in 2008. The program enrolled 14 staff members in a 15-month course of retreats, coaching, mentoring, peer support and other activities. Topics ranged from the nuts-and-bolts of organizing and campaigns to structural racism, strategic thinking, purposeful and powerful writing, and effective leadership.

CCC partnered with the Rockwood Leadership Institute and a group of handpicked consultants to design

**“Investing in personal leadership development creates organizations and movements that are vibrant, healthy and thriving—and that can change the world.”**

**– Akaya Windwood, President and CEO, Rockwood Leadership Institute**

“We needed to equip people with the tools and the experiences that would help them manage through a process where there was likely to be a lot of change, and where they would be called to do work that was different and challenging.”

– Mary Lassen



*Stefan Perazich, operations project manager, and Tony Nam, project finance manager, at a CCC staff leadership training in 2012.*

and implement the training. At the time, it was the first-ever internal staff development program in CCC’s 40-year history. Participants took part in Rockwood’s four-day “Art of Leadership” program, followed by a series of CCC-designed off-site retreats that drove home the value of collaboration, emotional intelligence and other core leadership practices.

### Early Training a “Real Catalyst”

Don Elmer, an organizer who joined the CCC staff in 1987 and currently is the second-longest-serving staff member, said there was a palpable change in the people who participated in the pilot leadership development program.

“That training was a real catalyst for folks. You began to see people chal-

lenging the culture here and working with more openness and shared purpose,” Elmer said.

Talk to Elmer and others who have been at CCC for more than a few years, and it’s clear that the organizational culture of the 1990s and early 2000s left a lot to be desired. “It was pretty cutthroat,” said Elmer. Different staff members used many of the same words to describe those years—they talked about “silos,” “fiefdoms” and “friction.”

“There was a fair amount of dysfunction and a lot of bad behavior,” said Mary Dailey, CCC’s lead organizer for retirement security who started with the organization in 2005 and participated in the pilot leadership program.

Rudy Lopez, who joined the staff in 2008 and has served as national

field director for politics and in other roles, said competition among staff members to secure more resources for their programs or to boost their personal standing was undercutting the organization’s effectiveness. “Competition isn’t a bad thing, but the way it was manifesting itself was a real problem,” he said.

### “Everyone is a Leader”

The pilot leadership development program, with its emphasis on collaborative leadership and emotional intelligence, helped create a cadre of staff members who could see the path to a more cohesive way of working. In addition, CCC had recently gone through a process of more explicitly embracing community organizing and issues of progressive political change as the focus of its work. The coincidental timing of the



Left to right: Alice Ito, distinguished fellow; Ben Hanna, national political field director; Wendoly Marte, field organizer; Gary Sandusky, senior field organizer at the 2013 All Staff Retreat.

“We want everyone to have the mindset that they are leaders in this organization and that they have something important to contribute to our work through their creativity and their skills and their passion for what we are doing,”

– Deepak Bhargava

pilot leadership program with CCC’s evolving role as a leader in national politics and the progressive movement prompted some of the staff to start asking a new question:

**How could CCC use the practices and principles from the pilot program as an anchor for ramping up the organization’s overall effectiveness and impact?**



CCC’s leadership had seen how the internal pilot leadership program had a deep impact on many participants. They knew that one of the challenges CCC faced was to get people working together toward a shared vision and with a common understanding of what it means to lead. In addition, given the organization’s determination to advance progressive political

change, CCC’s leadership wanted answers to the question of what it truly takes to do good and groundbreaking work in the high-pressure, high-stakes environment of grassroots organizing and movement building.

“We needed to equip people with the tools and the experiences that would help them manage through a process where there was likely to be a lot of change, and where they would be called to do work that was different and challenging,” Lassen said.

Based on these goals, CCC began investing more purposefully in all of its people. From off-site leadership training to ongoing development opportunities for staff and teams, the organization set out to strengthen the capacity of its staff to work more effectively—and more collaboratively—for change. Through these

activities, CCC sought to ingrain in its people an understanding that learning is a central part of leadership, and that leadership comes from all levels of the organization, no matter where one sits on the organizational chart.

“We want everyone to have the mindset that they are leaders in this organization and that they have something important to contribute to our work through their creativity and their skills and their passion for what we are doing,” said Bhargava.

*The following section of the report explores key elements of the CCC approach to transforming people, including: providing focused leadership development for staff; emphasizing collaborative skills and personal change; and fostering an organizational culture that values learning and partnership.*

# FOCUSED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CCC's embrace of focused leadership development began with the pilot leadership program for 14 staff members in 2008. CCC then sought to ramp up its leadership investments so that the behaviors and practices the pilot program sought to instill—such as reflection, self-awareness, emotional intelligence and clear intentions tied to results — would become more integral to how CCC does business.

CCC described its aspirations for this work in a report on some of its early trainings: “We want to lead and inspire a new wave of transformational leadership that is capable of generating breakthroughs in the complex social problems endemic in our society.”

**“We want to lead and inspire a new wave of transformational leadership that is capable of generating breakthroughs in the complex social problems endemic in our society.”**

**– CCC Report, 2009**

## A Pipeline to Rockwood

Since 2008, more staff members have participated in Rockwood Leadership Institute trainings, and CCC has incorporated its own tailored personal leadership and team development content into retreats, regular staff meetings, and individualized coaching and training for staff.

The roster of CCC staff who have taken part in formal Rockwood training includes the members of the design team for the CCC of the Future initiative. Chiang became the first CCC staff member to take part in Rockwood's “Leading from the Inside Out” program in 2006 – a year-long fellowship of top leaders from social change institutions across the country. Bhargava was subsequently nominated and accepted as a Rockwood yearlong fellow for 2007; and Lassen was nominated for the program within a year of joining the CCC staff. Lassen participated in the 2009 fellowship.

“The fact that we all had gone through that training meant we were speaking the same language and approaching the work with a shared understanding of the connection between individual and organizational change,” said Chiang.

To deepen understanding and appreciation of leadership theory and practices among senior staff members, CCC recently has encouraged additional staff to participate in formal develop-

ment programs. In 2012-13 and 2013-14, six staff members participated in Rockwood's Cross Movement Yearlong Fellows program, which convenes multiple senior leaders from diverse national organizations for a year of intensive leadership training. The year-long program includes three six-day leadership retreats, expert and peer coaching, and personalized assignments throughout the year, among other activities.

“Rockwood was a game-changing experience,” said Director of Finance & Operations Ryan Young, who took part in the yearlong program in 2012-13. “To have that time and space to start to think more expansively about my team and how to strengthen our collective impact on the organization was a gift. It changed the way I engage with my team and forced me to become a better leader.”

Communications Director Jeff Parcher, a 2013-14 participant in Rockwood's yearlong program, said the Rockwood training, combined with other leadership development opportunities provided by CCC, has transformed his approach to leadership. “I came to CCC as a director and now I am more of a coach, leading a team of people to accomplish shared goals,” Parcher said.

As selected staff have participated in the Rockwood training and come back with a fresh take on how to collaborate and lead effectively, an important question for CCC is

## ABOUT THE ROCKWOOD LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

# Rockwood

### LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Rockwood Leadership Institute has been a valuable resource as CCC embarked on its journey of individual and organizational change. Since 2000, nearly 5,000 nonprofit, philanthropic and social change leaders from across the globe have gone through Rockwood's leadership development trainings.

Rockwood's signature program, *The Art of Leadership*, is a five-day inten-

sive retreat that teaches leaders how to lead from their purpose, create a clear vision, build stronger partnerships, be resilient under stress, increase their impact, and maintain balance over a lifetime of activism.

It specializes in bringing leaders together across sectors and movements (for example, through an Art of Leadership program for women working on racial justice and human rights issues) and leadership trainings for organizational teams.

Rockwood also offers multi-session fellowship programs to catalyze

partnership and collaboration in sectors and geographic regions. Rockwood has created fellowships for California leaders of color, leaders in the Upper Midwest, leaders working on human rights and national security reform, arts and culture leaders, and other groups. Rockwood also offers yearlong trainings for senior leaders such as *Leading from the Inside Out*, an invitation-only program designed to create a dramatic shift in participants' capacity to both lead their organizations and networks effectively and to collaborate across issue areas and movements.

whether staff members who do not participate in intensive trainings of the sort Rockwood provides can derive some of the same benefits. Over the last few years, CCC has put in a determined effort to try and make this happen.

### New Focus for All-Staff Retreats

Starting in 2009, the organization transformed how it ran its annual all-staff retreats, which traditionally had focused primarily on campaign updates and strategy development. The 2009 retreat included numerous structured opportunities for staff to enrich their relationships across program areas and positions in the organization while learning new leadership skills. The idea, Chiang explained, was to get people to "pause from campaign mode so

they could get to know each other as whole people." Instead of coming in with a predetermined agenda, CCC used open-space technology to stimulate conversations around topics the group wanted to focus on.

Staff development content is now a defining feature of the yearly CCC retreats, which in recent years have been led by Chiang and Acevedo. Held within a two-hour drive of CCC's headquarters in Washington, D.C., the retreats now include in-depth content on everything from giving and receiving effective feedback to "closing the loop" in requests and commitments with other staff.

In advance of the 2012 staff retreat, for example, staff members completed online surveys that gathered information about how they use their personal power and carry out



*Deepak Bhargava, CCC executive director, posting a topic for an Open Space conversation at the 2009 All Staff Retreat.*

their work. Based on their responses, they were assigned one of four interpersonal leadership styles: persuading, counseling, directing and analyzing. During the retreat, they participated in a team-based exercise in which they reflected on their workplace behaviors and those of their colleagues, and practiced how to strengthen communications and working relationships based on colleagues' contrasting leadership and communications styles.

Mayron Payes, a California-based senior organizer who works with the CCC-led Fair Immigration Reform Movement, said the retreats provide an opportunity to connect with colleagues he doesn't see much while gaining new skills that help him in his work. "CCC has been very intentional about helping all of us improve our level of communication so we know how to ask for things, how not to make assumptions, and how to get the factual information we need. It has been incredible, and definitely has made me a more effective person to communicate what I need," Payes said.

## Individualized Development

CCC also has made development opportunities available to staff outside of the annual retreats. Chiang and Acevedo have provided individualized training and coaching to selected staff members and entire staff teams (*see p. 29, "Investing in Staff Teams" for more*). In addition, leadership development for individuals and teams is a regular feature of CCC field staff meetings, all-staff calls and other activities.



*Small group dialogue discussing CCC's vision at a 2010 retreat. Left to right: Mayron Payes, senior organizer; Gabe Gonzalez, national campaign director; Maribel Molina-Villa, campaign support coordinator.*

**"CCC has been very intentional about helping all of us improve our level of communication so we know how to ask for things, how not to make assumptions, and how to get the factual information we need." – Mayron Payes**

Julia Paik, who has been with CCC for 12 years and currently serves as senior manager in the office of the executive director, said the combination of skill-building and personal coaching she has received as part of CCC of the Future has helped her grow as a person and has made her more effective at work.

"It has helped me dig deeper into how I respond to things and how I show up at work," she said. As

someone who previously suffered from what she called "an extreme phobia" of public speaking, Paik said she now is regularly getting up in front of staff groups at retreats and other gatherings. She also said she has developed new skills and work habits that allow her to be more efficient. "I have learned a lot about managing load and scheduling and connecting with other staff to get things done," she said.

## COLLABORATIVE SKILLS AND PERSONAL CHANGE

When CCC enrolled the initial group of staff members in the pilot internal leadership development program, some participants were skeptical because of its focus on the social and interpersonal skills that are core to leadership. Chiang recalled that the skeptics wanted a program that would bolster their intellectual understanding of what it takes to organize and lead movements effectively. In the early stages, even the design team was not aligned about the balance between the technical and interpersonal skills in the program.

Over time, however, the team came to consensus on a key point: While engaging people in intellectual study is important, being a good leader is not just about what you know. It is also about having “presence,” seeing more than your own view of the world, and being humbly curious and disciplined about continued learning.

“In our early discussions, we assumed leadership development was primarily about making sure people had a core set of skills and knew the basics about political economic theory, strategic organizing and social movement history,” said Chiang. “But after the design team had a taste of Rockwood’s take on leadership, we shifted our thinking.”

### Self-Awareness as A Starting Point

As they have engaged in personal leadership training and team skill-building, even one-time skeptics have come around to recognizing the value of a comprehensive approach to leadership development: first, help participants become more aware of themselves, then help them shift their behaviors so they can work more effectively with others, and then sustain their

personal change through ongoing support and organization-wide systems that reinforce learning and reflective practice.

Kica Matos, CCC’s director of racial justice and immigrant rights, said she was “dragged kicking and screaming” to the Rockwood Cross-Movement Yearlong training program. Matos had only been with CCC for a year when her Rockwood program started in 2013, and with immigration reform increasingly in the spotlight in Washington, D.C. and throughout the country, it was a hectic time for her team. Besides, as a hard-nosed lawyer (formerly handling death penalty cases) and a one-time deputy mayor, Matos said she saw the Rockwood approach as “new-agey” and “touchy-feely.” “I just didn’t see the value of it,” she said.

But in the middle of the first Rockwood retreat, Matos said she “got it.” “The Rockwood approach is about seeing the whole person. It’s about listening. It’s about doing all those things that allow you to work more effectively with other people. And it changes you,” she said.

While Matos believes CCC still has considerable work to do to ensure that all staff benefit from this kind of intensive leadership development support, she said she admires CCC for making the effort to ground organizational change in individual change.



*Deepening relationships and trust in small group exercises at a leadership training for newer staff in October 2014.*

"I feel there is a certain amount of kindness and thoughtfulness about how we do our work and try to understand each other and take care of each other. It's something you don't see in organizing and campaign work elsewhere," Matos said.

## Connecting People to Purpose

An example of the new skills that CCC staff have been exposed to is a four-step method designed by internationally known leadership coach Robert Gass to manage your state of being when someone else's actions or statements might trigger a defensive or emotional reaction. The method helps a leader recognize when she/he is likely to respond from the amygdala, the emotionally reactive part of the brain.

"I've learned that how I respond to a given situation is a choice," said Director of Institutional Advancement Tori O'Neal-McElrath, who participated in Rockwood's yearlong program in 2012-13. "I can get all defensive and let that be a barrier to working effectively with someone, or I can own how I respond and use it as an opportunity for genuine communication and reflection."

CCC's emphasis on "leading with presence, power and vision" is starting to carry over to how it works with partners and allies in the field. In 2012, Rudy Lopez, then CCC's

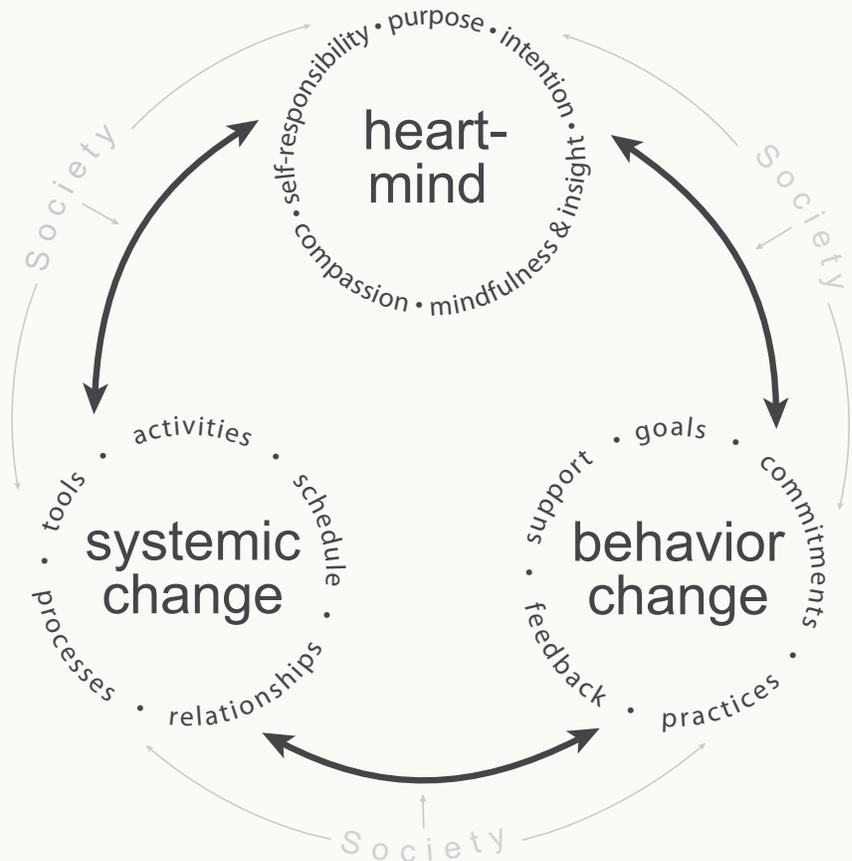
national field director for politics, started to lead his electoral trainings across the country with activities and exercises aimed at connecting people to their hearts and minds. For example, he opened sessions with a guided, eyes-closed visualization where participants see the faces of the people whose lives they are trying to improve. This set the stage for several days of nuts-and-bolts training, keeping participants connected to their purpose.

## Welcoming the "Full Self"

Hand-in-hand with CCC's emphasis on collaborative skills, the organization has set out to create an environment that breaks down the barriers between staff members' personal and professional lives. CCC staff members regularly observe that, thanks to CCC of the Future, they feel more comfortable bringing their "full selves" to work. Even as the organization continues to struggle with how to manage workloads for

## THE WHEEL OF CHANGE for individuals

To create real change for individuals (including ourselves), we must work in an integrated way with the three major domains that comprise our human system:



©Robert Gass 2009

CCC HAS USED ROBERT GASS'S WHEEL OF CHANGE MODEL. GASS HAS DEVELOPED THIS MODEL FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

overburdened staff (see page 34), those who have worked for other employers note that CCC's commitment to personal-professional balance is unique, particularly in the hard-charging world of organizing and social justice.

With two children at home, for example, O'Neal-McElrath said she does not "have to apologize" when a parent-teacher conference or other family commitments keep her out of the office.

"There is an understanding here that there is not a personal and a professional Tori," she said. "It's one and the same, and if you value what I am bringing to my work, then you will acknowledge these other aspects of who I am that I will not deny."

Similarly, Irma Rivera, CCC's deputy director of operations, said that after four years of fieldwork running electoral campaigns and immigration organizing for CCC, she became a mother in 2010 and needed to cut back on work travel.

"Just to be able to have that conversation and say (to my supervisors), 'I love this work but I need to be home more,' it makes me so appreciative of how this organization is changing," she said. Rivera now works in CCC's D.C. office with minimal travel. "It's very refreshing that this place where I spend at least eight hours of my life every day is living its values and creating an environment where you can be your full self."

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: VALUING LEARNING AND PARTNERSHIP

In addition to the emphasis on building individual skills and self-awareness, CCC has endeavored to nurture stronger relationships among its staff members so they can work together more effectively.

### Teambuilding Through Storytelling

Storytelling has become a key tool for fostering a higher level of understanding and mutual respect among the staff. In retreats, team gatherings and one-on-one meetings, staff members regularly share the stories of their lives and work, and what inspires them about CCC and its mission of social change. As they learn about the many paths that brought others to CCC, staff members start to see their colleagues differently.

"We have gotten really good about letting people be themselves and tell their stories," said Ryan Young. "It helps you start to know each other and appreciate and respect the diversity of experiences and passions that brought people to this organization."

"You start to see people as people rather than just coworkers," said Julia Paik of the experience of hearing colleagues' stories. She recalled a time when a colleague, Grecia Lima, shared her story of immigrating at age 13 to the United States from Mexico and trying to navigate the U.S.'s complex and inhumane immigration system with her family. "Hearing those stories adds a lot more urgency to the work," Paik said.



*Grecia Lima, senior electoral organizer, shares her immigration story at the 2013 CCC All Staff Retreat.*

## Creating “Real and Authentic Connections”

Beyond storytelling, CCC staff members have been exposed to many other skills that can help build and sustain strong working relationships. During the 2013 staff retreat, for example, consultant Jose Acevedo facilitated an in-depth training session entitled “Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback.”

The retreats themselves have become a highly valued time for staff to connect and renew relationships in an organization where many people are working in scattered locations across the country. The 2013 retreat attracted 72 staff members from all corners of the country. While the bulk of the retreat was focused on daytime working sessions, one of the six outcomes for the event listed in the planning documents was, “Have fun and appreciate one another.” Each evening, staff members gathered for dinner and “organized fun” that included poker games, beanbag tournaments, dancing and more.

Seth Borgos, who has been on the CCC staff since 2003 and is now director of research and program

**“I learned at CCC how to take on a bigger vision and how to lead with purpose, and the leadership training I did while I was there truly and honestly set me on a path to helping NAACP make history in 2012.” – Marvin Randolph**



*Game night at 2013 All Staff Retreat.*

development, said one of the signature impacts of CCC of the Future has been the creation of “a strong relational culture” across the organization.

“The level of relational functioning and collegial behavior has remarkably improved over the last four years,” Borgos said. “That is quite important and it has a profound effect on what we are able to accomplish as an organization.”

Vanessa Aramayo, a staff member since 2011 who directs CCC’s California Partnership, an effort to reduce poverty in that state through public education and advocacy on budget issues, added:

“What CCC has done is provide us with tools and opportunities that help us establish real and authentic connections with people that allow us to make the most of our work relationships.”

## Impacts Beyond CCC

CCC’s investments in the collaborative skills and the leadership abilities of its staff have had an impact beyond the organization as staff members have moved to other positions in the social justice field.

Rich Stolz, for example, started working at CCC in 1997 and served in a range of capacities, including deputy director for public policy, senior organizer and policy coordinator for the Fair Immigration Reform Movement. In 2012, Stolz moved on to become the executive director of OneAmerica in Seattle, where he has continued to play a leading role in the immigrant rights and economic justice movements. His ability to bring diverse interests together to work toward a shared

purpose contributed to Seattle's groundbreaking \$15 minimum wage ordinance in 2014.

Similarly, Marvin Randolph worked at CCC from 2006 to 2011 before taking a position at NAACP as senior vice president for campaigns. (He has since left NAACP.) Under Randolph's leadership, NAACP helped register more than 900,000 new voters and mobilized more than 1.2 million people to vote in the 2012 elections. Those voters

delivered key victories for the progressive movement in areas from repealing the death penalty in Maryland to achieving a living wage law in Washington state to ensuring equal access to health insurance under the Affordable Care Act for low-income people in states across the nation.

Both Stolz and Randolph credit the leadership development skills they learned at CCC as an important factor in their subsequent success

on behalf of progressive causes. "I appreciate that CCC made a commitment to investing in its staff," said Stolz. "I continue to draw on those skills I learned at CCC practically every day."

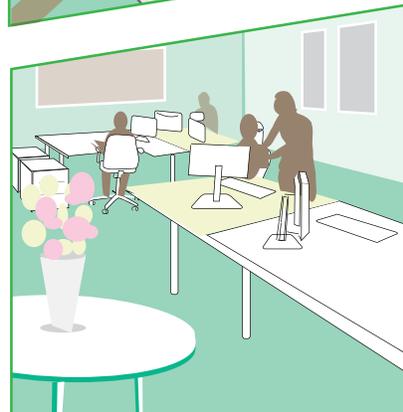
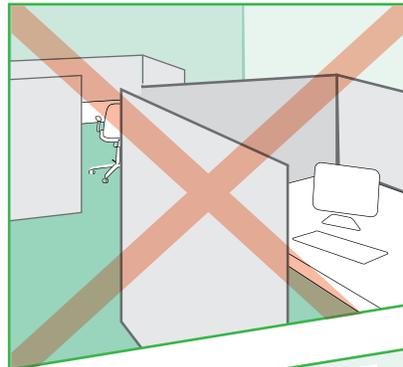
Randolph added: "I learned at CCC how to take on a bigger vision and how to lead with purpose, and the leadership training I did while I was there truly and honestly set me on a path to helping NAACP make history in 2012."

## JUST SAY 'NO' TO CUBICLES

When a CCC staff group started meeting in 2011 to explore changes in the organization's culture that might contribute to a higher level of productivity and better working relationships, it wasn't long before they began to focus on the physical layout of the CCC offices in D.C.

Like many other workplaces, CCC had come to rely on walled cubicles to organize staff offices in open areas. But the "New Ways of Being" exploration group suspected there might be a better way. After a site visit to an architectural design firm and successive conversations, they learned that the physical layout of a work environment can impact the quality of collaboration and work flow.

"The walls on the cubicles in our offices were pretty high, and we decided as a group that we wanted to break them down and have more open space and



see if that would help create a more collaborative work environment," said Julia Paik, a member of the group.

Today, most of the open space in the CCC office is just that: open

space. Staff in these areas work at their desks without walls between them and their colleagues.

Sonia Medina was a human resources staff member who worked in the finance suite in an open-space arrangement. "I think the open space has helped tremendously because it makes it easier to communicate," she said. "Now I actually get up and go and talk to a person if I have a question."

Medina and Paik both said there are sometimes challenges with the arrangement if someone needs privacy or if things get too loud. But CCC also has a significant number of conference rooms, and there are usually closed-door offices available if someone needs to have a private conversation.

"Overall, even if it has created a little more noise, the result is a higher level of communication and collaboration," said Paik.

# TRANSFORMING

# THE ORGANIZATION

**Transforming how people relate to their work and their colleagues is a critical element of improving an organization's effectiveness and impact. But individual transformation must be met with organizational transformation. As CCC embarked on the journey of cultivating change within and among its staff, it also set out to change its systems, structures and working norms so staff would be supported in exercising their new skills and capacities to the fullest benefit of CCC's broader mission.**

Following its initial investments in leadership development for staff, CCC moved to a second phase in its organizational change effort in 2010. The focus: integrating ongoing leadership development into an ambitious, multi-year "organizational transformation" process aimed at achieving significantly greater impact.

"The fact is, we used to get stuck a lot," said Seth Borgos of the period in the organization's history preceding the CCC of the Future initiative.

"There were a number of structural issues that I and others felt were causing unnecessary problems for the organization," Borgos continued. "I felt we were capable of tackling big and important questions for the organization and the country, but we just didn't have the systems in place to figure out how to do it."

Borgos said that after President Obama's first election in 2008 when there was an opening for CCC and the progressive movement to have a significant influence on the design of the White House's economic stimulus measures. "We had a very hard time figuring out what our response should be, and I feel we were unable to manage that opportunity effectively," he said.

Borgos and others also noted that CCC's relationships with local and national partners often suffered from a lack of consistent and clear communications and expectations.

"There was a need for more clarity about who we are and what we want to achieve in the world, a stronger sense of purpose," said Gary Sandusky. "We didn't have a cogent way of thinking about how

to manage all the tensions and the competition that are a fact of life when you are working with community-based organizations."

## A Focus on Culture Change

As part of CCC of the Future, the organization set out to address these challenges by engaging staff in a structured process to develop a shared vision and goals that could drive CCC's future work. In addition, the organization created two leadership bodies in 2013 to involve a broader cross-section of people in strategy-setting and decision-making, while striving to adopt a new ethos of "distributed leadership" so staff could be freer to take risks and develop creative solutions to problems and opportunities in their work.

In addition, an important focus as the organizational change effort continued was to try to encourage a learning culture where staff are able to reflect on their work, weigh what's working and what is not, and consider innovative and alternative solutions. CCC also has invested in the development of selected staff teams to improve their ability to work together effectively and get better results.

The work of organizational transformation continues, and many staff members say it is resulting in a stronger, more unified and more confident CCC. "Today, CCC is more of a premier organization in the field than it was five years ago," said Sandusky.

*The following section of the report explores key elements of the CCC approach to transforming the organization, including: creating a unified vision and goals; embracing distributed leadership; building a culture of creativity and risk-taking; promoting learning and reflective practice; and investing in staff teams.*

## UNIFIED VISION AND GOALS

"Holding the whole." You hear the same phrase again and again in conversations with CCC staff about the goals and the impact of the organizational change process of the last several years. What they are talking about is a sense that every staff member, whether they work in an administrative position or in the field, has a solid understanding of what CCC is working to achieve, how the organization goes about its work and why. To the extent that staff are "holding the whole," they are focusing their work on the broader success of the entire organization, and not just their individual programs or teams.

But in order to get to a place where people are holding the whole, it's important first to articulate exactly what the "whole" is. What does CCC want to achieve in the world? What values does the organization want to see guiding its work? How will it know when it is successful? Achieving consensus answers to

questions like these is a challenge in an organization of people who work across the country on a range of campaigns addressing issues from housing and retirement security to immigration reform. Undeterred, the CCC of the Future design team set out to create a process to engage the staff in imagining and articulating CCC's vision, along with a set of core, enduring organizational values and a unifying goal for the years ahead.

### The Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal

In the summer of 2010, CCC convened three "visioning retreats" of staff to start this process. Led by Chiang and Acevedo, the retreats included exercises aimed at supporting staff to reflect on the organization's current and future work, as well as their individual leadership roles in the organization. One key focus of the retreats: to start work on part of the shared vision that Chiang and Acevedo (borrowing from management guru Jim Collins) called the "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal," or BHAG for short.

CCC defined the need for such a goal in a report to a funder in early 2010: "CCC needs a big goal for the next 10 to 20 years—one that will create energy around our work and our movement, unleash creative thinking, facilitate an innovative fundraising plan to support the work, inspire movement energy, and define strategic alliances for the future."



*CCC staff at a 2010 off-site retreat during a facilitated discussion crafting the organization's Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal*

The process of defining goals and values continued at CCC's November 2010 all-staff retreat and other gatherings in early 2011. In April 2011, after a process that even included online voting among staff, CCC settled on an alliterative list of three values (the "three Cs") that would drive the organization's work: creativity, compassion, courage. And, in June 2011, staff finalized the BHAG, which reads in part as follows:

***By 2020, CCC will have built powerful, grassroots movements in the United States that can empower everyone, particularly low-income people and people of color, to have enough to thrive.***

Staff developed a shorthand moniker, "scale with soul," to describe CCC's new approach, and identified a set of "key results areas" (KRAs) that offered specific actions that would start the organization down the path toward its 2020 goal.

### An Empowering Process

Throughout the process of developing the BHAG and the values, staff members proposed countless ideas. Because of the nature of the process, many of these ideas did not make the cut, and some staff members noted their disappointment that suggestions they either proposed or favored were not selected. In addition, some staff raised questions about the amount of time and energy spent developing the BHAG and the values and everything else. "There were aspects of the process that were silly in retrospect and we

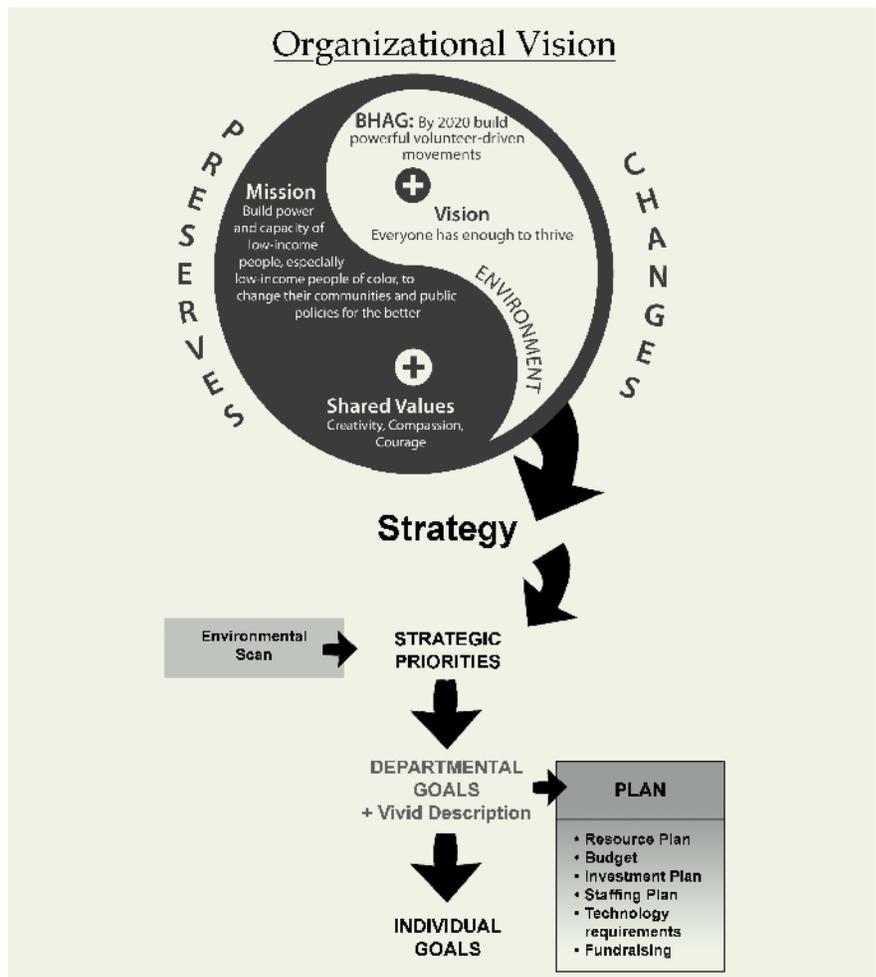
probably could have forced a decision earlier," said one staff member.

But in the end, most staff members said it was a valuable process to bring the staff together to envision CCC's future. Michael Anderson joined the CCC staff as a deputy director of the Housing Trust Fund Project in February 2010, just as plans for the visioning process were taking shape.

"Right away, I got the sense that this was an organization that was willing to reflect on its work and figure out where it wanted to be," Anderson

said. "I felt the process of going through that with staff was very empowering and deep."

Other staff members noted that the work on the BHAG has had a direct impact on CCC's planning for a new campaign focused on economic justice. "Now that we are thinking more broadly about poverty and poverty reduction, that notion from the BHAG of people having 'enough to thrive' has taken on added energy and momentum," said Borgos, who has led CCC's planning for the economic justice work.



*Borrowing from the James Collins and Jerry Porras model, the CCC of the Future effort engaged staff and board in creating this comprehensive vision over an 18-month period between 2010 and 2011.*

## DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Like most large national organizations, CCC traditionally has been a place where decisions came down from the top. New ideas, policies and strategies generally required a sign-off from Bhargava and Lassen. One longtime staff member said CCC had long suffered from a “top-heavy approach” to decision making. But an important focus of CCC of the Future has been an effort to promote more “distributed leadership” within the organization.

While Bhargava and Lassen still have the final say on big-picture decisions, they increasingly are ceding control to others, both out of necessity (because there is too much on their plates) and out of a recognition that relying on a narrow group of top leaders to drive change doesn't cut it.

“We knew that getting to the scale of change we were talking about meant it couldn't just be me and Mary and a couple of other people going off and cooking things up in a room somewhere. There had to be broader participation and imagination,” said Bhargava. “We needed much more distributed leadership in the organization.”

### New Leadership Structure

In order to engage a broader cross-section of staff in leadership decisions and oversight, CCC created a new leadership structure for the organization as part of the CCC of the Future process. The new structure, announced in May 2013, was the result of several months of planning and discussion, including strategic guidance from The

Management Center, a Washington, D.C.-based consultancy that had partnered with CCC in the past on staff restructuring processes. The new structure includes two leadership bodies: the Executive Team and the Management Team, as follows:

- The **Executive Team** is a group of 10 staff members including the executive director and managing director, together with senior program and field staff from across the organization. Its charge is to “hold the whole” of the organization's work. The Executive Team sets organization-wide strategy and is tasked with making decisions that further the organization's long-term vision and health. The Executive Team holds biweekly phone conferences, quarterly all-day meetings and one annual planning retreat.



*Small group discussion during the Management Team retreat, October 2014.*

“There had to be broader participation and imagination. We needed much more distributed leadership in the organization.”

– Deepak Bhargava

- The **Management Team** includes the Executive Team plus 15 additional staff members who manage various bodies of work across the organization (including policy and legislative team leaders, directors of specific programs or field activities, as well as selected finance, operations, communications and institutional advancement staff not included on the Executive Team). Its role is to support the Executive Team by informing organization-wide decisions and then weighing how best to align resources, staff and systems to carry out the work. The Management Team meets monthly and holds an annual retreat.

CCC described its goals in establishing the two new teams in a report to a funder in June 2013: “These two forums will enable us to include a wider range of views as we deliberate, decide on, and implement our strategic goals and priorities, while at the same time streamlining decision-making and enabling us to move nimbly on those strategic priorities.”

### “Works in Progress”

While the two new leadership bodies were in existence for a year at the time of this report, many staff members welcomed the new leadership structure as a positive step. “I think the changes have affirmed a somewhat different approach to leadership here,” said Mary Dailey, who is a part of the Executive Team. “I think people feel more empowered and I feel there is more permission

## MAKING MEETINGS “POP”



CCC staff members came back with a variety of answers when asked to list a couple of key skills or tools they have learned as a result of CCC of the Future that have had the most impact on their work. But at or near the top of most lists is something called “POP.”

“POP” stands for “Purpose, Outcomes, Process,” and it is a way to organize meetings and other staff interactions in a way that keeps everyone focused on what they are intending to achieve in coming together. As they have learned about the POP approach from the Rockwood Leadership Institute, staff have become much more intentional about designing meetings in a way that will get at hoped-for outcomes.

“If everyone used the POP, meetings would be so much more productive because we would be clear about the outcomes of those conversations,” said Tori O’Neal-McElrath, director of institutional advancement.

“If everyone used the POP, meetings would be so much more productive.”

– Tori O’Neal-McElrath

for everyone to speak freely so we can make better decisions for the whole organization.”

Most staff members, however, noted that both the Executive Team and the Management Team are works in progress. A commonly expressed concern among staff is how the Management Team in particular will carve out a distinctive and productive role within the organization. “It’s going to be a struggle for the Management Team to find its place,” said one staff member. Another noted the “ambiguity” in the Management Team’s role as both a consultative body and one focused on the nuts-and-bolts of CCC’s day-to-day operations.

But again, the majority of staff members interviewed for this report said they support the goal of the new leadership bodies to help engage a broader cross-section of staff in decision-making and collective oversight of CCC’s operations.

Mary Brooks, CCC’s senior advisor to the Housing Trust Fund Project who serves on the Management Team, said she believes it has “real potential” to contribute to a higher level of collaboration across the organization. “The conversations we’ve had to date are building a foundation for all of us to work across teams, build stronger relationships and watch out for each other,” she said.

## CREATIVITY AND RISK-TAKING

Of course, embracing distributed leadership is about more than creating leadership and management bodies that are representative of a broader cross-section of staff. It is also about creating an organizational culture where people feel they have the power and the license to think creatively, to take initiative in their work, and to try out innovative approaches that advance the organization's broader goals and strategies.

Chiang said that including "creativity" among the organization's three core

values was an important signal. "CCC is tackling huge problems, and we need to cast a wide net for solutions. We need everybody thinking outside the box about what it is going to take to create the future CCC wants to build," she said.

Interviews turned up many instances in which staff members have developed and implemented new ideas and initiatives based on an understanding that CCC wants them to take leadership of their work and to approach what they do with a

heightened sense of experimentation. One prominent example is the Retirement Security team's launch of a new organizing effort in manufactured housing (i.e., mobile home) communities.

### An Organizing Experiment

Mary Dailey, who heads up the Retirement Security team, said it was because of CCC of the Future that she and her colleagues challenged themselves to come up with new and experimental ideas for building added support for Social Security and other vital programs for seniors. One of those ideas, inspired by senior organizer Kevin Borden's pre-CCC organizing experiences, was to launch an organizing project aimed at seniors living in manufactured housing communities.

The idea gained traction based on simple demographic facts: as many as 17 million Americans live in manufactured homes, and residents of these communities are disproportionately low-income. Manufactured housing residents, however, rarely are the target of progressive organizing efforts. Among the reasons: they tend to live in rural and exurban areas; and with high numbers of seniors, these communities often lean conservative in their political views.

But the Retirement Security team saw clear potential in organizing seniors in these communities to stand up for protecting Social Security, which for many of these residents is a primary source of income. The focus

**Embracing distributed leadership is about creating an organizational culture where people feel they have the power and the license to think creatively, to take initiative in their work, and to try out innovative approaches that advance the organization's broader goals and strategies.**



Leader from CCC's Grassroots Ambassadors Program rallies for retirement security, 2014.

**“All of this work came out of a push on the part of the organization to experiment and try new things, and it’s having a real impact.”**

**– Mary Dailey**

of the resulting campaign was to organize homeowners that reside in communities owned and operated by Equity LifeStyle Properties, Inc. (ELS). Chaired by Sam Zell, ELS is the nation’s largest corporate owner of manufactured home communities that are marketed to seniors. In addition to advocating for fair rents and infrastructure improvements, the campaign is focused on getting Zell, a prominent political contributor in conservative circles, to take a public stance on improving Social Security and Medicare so that homeowners in ELS communities can have a secure retirement.

In less than two years, the campaign has built a nationwide network of resident leaders who are working in their communities to raise awareness and call for action to protect seniors’ security. Through the campaign, CCC has forged a strong working partnership with the National Manufactured

Home Owners Association and has organized attention-getting protests by seniors in locations from Florida to Utah.

“This is about changing hearts and minds in these communities, and it has generated a lot of interest and excitement around the country,” said Borden.

Dailey said the manufactured housing campaign was not the only new work to emerge from her team’s creative thinking about how to create “scale with soul.” Another innovation was the new Grassroots Ambassadors program, which identifies and trains residents in communities across the country to be spokespeople, recruiters and “basebuilders” for local campaigns aimed at building support for shoring up Social Security and other programs. “All of this work came out of a push on the part of the organization to experiment and try new things, and it’s having a real impact,” Dailey said.

### **The Confidence to Innovate**

Rudy Lopez credits the same push for innovation with CCC’s launch of a voter registration and mobilization program that eschews the traditional practice of paying local people to do voter outreach. “We went out on a limb and said we were going to use volunteers, and I had strong support from CCC leadership to do that,” Lopez said. The result, he said, is a more sustainable model for grassroots electoral work that partners CCC with local organizations and volunteers and that creates natural

tie-ins between electoral work and issue organizing.

Yet another story of how CCC’s emphasis on distributed leadership and creativity has supported staff to get better results comes from Salvador Cervantes, an organizer working in the Southeast. In April 2013, Cervantes helped organize a group of more than 200 people from Alabama to travel to Washington to draw attention to the fact that their U.S. Senator, Jeff Sessions, remained a leading opponent of comprehensive immigration reform.

“My analysis was that we needed to focus more attention on Alabama because of the Senator’s strong anti-immigrant stance, and CCC supported me in that,” Cervantes said. “This organization really has given me the confidence I need and allowed me to take the lead in getting things done that need to get done.”

**“This organization really has given me the confidence I need and allowed me to take the lead in getting things done that need to get done.”**

**– Salvador Cervantes**

## LEARNING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In addition to promoting distributed leadership and creativity, CCC has set out to create opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and dialogue that can foster new learning. These activities are designed to complement the individual training and coaching outlined earlier in this report, with the goal that staff are developing the capacity to learn together based on the work they are doing.

Akaya Windwood, of the Rockwood Leadership Institute, has called this kind of reflective practice “slowing down to move fast.” The idea is to create time and space for reflection and learning so that individuals, teams and the organization as a whole can be more intentional and effective.

The following are a few of the CCC activities designed to embed learning in the ongoing work of staff:

**All-staff learning calls.** During 2012, CCC held a series of all-staff learning calls to allow staff members to take a deep dive into some of the insights generated by specific pieces of work that might not be in the spotlight in the regular all-staff calls CCC holds each month. Topics of the learning calls included CCC’s organizing efforts in manufactured housing communities (*see page 25, “An Organizing Experiment”*); and lessons learned from the organization’s successful effort to help partners defeat a discriminatory voter identification amendment in Minnesota.

CCC experimented with sophisticated conferencing systems that

One secret to success: creating time and space for reflection and learning so that individuals, teams and the organization as a whole can be more intentional and effective.

facilitated presentations and staff participation in the calls, all with the goal of creating a valuable opportunity for shared reflection and creative thinking. Positive staff response to the calls prompted CCC to take steps to incorporate more learning and sharing into CCC’s monthly all-staff calls, as well as phone meetings of field organizers.

**Staff exploration groups.** As staff were working to articulate the BHAG and the values that guide CCC’s work in 2010 and 2011, the organization convened three staff-led exploration groups on issues considered critical to CCC’s long-term success. Staff members voluntarily signed up to participate in the groups, which were intended as a place where they could freely explore problems and solutions.

One group focused on gender equity, with the goal of exploring how to increase gender awareness both in CCC’s internal work and across its programs. Another group looked at how to achieve “Scale with Soul,” or what it takes to make large-scale mobilization a success while still



CCC staff in an exercise demonstrating the power of purpose and vision at a 2010 visioning retreat.

## INTEGRATING REFLECTION INTO HOW CCC WORKS



### Learning calls on innovative organizing:

- ◆ Simulated real-time gathering over the phone that includes break-out groups
- ◆ Discussion sparks self-awareness questions that challenge limiting beliefs and default habits



### Redesigned staff retreats:

- ◆ Foster cross-pollination of ideas and relationships
- ◆ Deepen learning and shared analysis of CCC's work
- ◆ Help people see totality of CCC's work so they can "hold the whole"
- ◆ Enhance personal leadership



### Structured spaces for learning:

- ◆ Short-term "exploration groups" studying movements with scale and soul, gender equity, and organizational culture and systems
- ◆ Conversations among field organizers to share and examine new organizing approaches

paying attention to meaningful leadership development and political engagement for participants. A third group did its work under the moniker "New Ways of Being," focusing on changes in CCC's organizational culture, systems and structure that would allow CCC to abide by the vision and values identified in the course of the CCC of the Future work. The latter group arrived at several ideas that CCC has carried out in the months since, including changes to its physical space in D.C. to encourage more collaboration (*see sidebar, page 19*).

**New tables based on specialized areas of work.** The "Scale with Soul" exploration group mentioned above has since evolved into regular conversations and convenings of CCC field organizers working in vastly different settings and regions. The objective of these gatherings, titled "New Organizing Practices," is to create a venue where organizers can share their experiences, insights

and challenges while exploring evolving strategies to successfully organize and empower more low-income people. Gary Sandusky and Seth Borgos lead the group, which in 2013 met in Denver for an in-person retreat.

"This is a valuable, spin-free zone where we can have no-holds-barred conversations about what's working and what's not, and what we're learning as we do our organizing work that's changing how we think about the work," said CCC organizer Kevin Borden.

**Retreat content.** CCC's annual staff retreat has become another forum for shared learning. In addition to all-staff presentations and discussions on various aspects of the organization's work, CCC now dedicates one morning or afternoon of the retreat to what it calls "The CCC Bazaar."

The Bazaar is a time when staff teams offer interactive presenta-

tions about innovations or lessons in their work in a round-robin format. The idea is to connect staff more deeply to the work of colleagues, and to prompt discussion and reflection throughout the organization. Recent Bazaar topics have included: an overview of CCC's Housing Trust Fund Project; and the Communications team's efforts to strengthen its effectiveness and impact through stronger collaboration (*for more on the Communications team's work, see page 29*).

In addition to promoting reflection and learning, these activities have become a spark for encouraging more staff to "hold the whole" of the organization in their work. "There is always room for improvement, but we are getting much better now at finding ways to build in places for reflection and learning for staff even as the work is moving very quickly," said Lassen.

# INVESTING IN STAFF TEAMS

Another way CCC is investing in cultural change across the organization is through deep work with individual staff teams. Starting in 2010, the organization launched a coordinated effort to strengthen the ability of three critical CCC teams to work together more purposefully and achieve better results. The teams involved were Institutional Advancement (which is responsible for fundraising); Finance & Operations; and Communications. In team retreats and focused training and coaching sessions led by Chiang and Acevedo, the teams addressed critical questions and learned new skills in areas from alignment and accountability to listening and resolving conflicts.

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## Communications Team Development

The Communications team was the first to start focused team development work. A year or so after Director of Communications Jeff Parcher joined the CCC staff in 2009, he began talking with Bhargava, Lassen and Chiang about how to apply the leadership development and team-building content of the CCC of the Future initiative to the Communications team in a more focused and intensive way.

With Parcher's arrival, CCC was working to strengthen its communications function so it could play a more impactful role in achieving the organization's campaign goals. Rather than working "in

service" to the organization's issue campaigns, the new vision for the Communications team was for it to become an integral and embedded partner with campaign staff in setting strategy and determining when and how CCC could use its communications muscle to help move the needle on issues from immigration reform to housing affordability.

To get the Communications team to a place where it could perform this role effectively, Parcher felt the staff would benefit from focused team-building support. He also pointed to a number of other reasons why the time was right for this kind of team development work. For example, there was some turnover in the staff as the communications function became centralized in CCC's Washington, D.C. office; new staff had come on board to broaden the



Results from an organizational effectiveness session where teams made requests of each other and responded to those requests at the 2012 All Staff Retreat.

**“You realize going through this how much a team or organization relies on strong and honest relationships as opposed to the hard skills on everyone’s resumes.”**

**– Jeff Parcher**

organization’s capabilities in digital communications and other areas; and Parcher felt the team had work to do in order to gel and effectively lead CCC’s efforts to promote its issue priorities in a fast-paced media environment.

“To be perfectly honest, some people simply were not getting along,” Parcher said. “There were conflicts we needed to resolve, and we also needed to get to a place where people were growing into leadership and taking more responsibility for the work so I didn’t have everyone reporting directly to me.”

Parcher benefited from individual coaching and consulting help from Chiang and Acevedo as he was trying to help the team address these issues. Acevedo and Chiang provided leadership coaching to other members of the team as well. In addition, the team held a retreat in 2010 where Acevedo engaged the group in a variety of exercises focused on topics like giving good feedback and having difficult conversations. Other group training sessions followed during retreats and regular team meetings in 2011 and 2012. One exercise Parcher remembers as especially valuable was when Acevedo asked everyone to share their understanding of the responsibilities of other members of the team, and then discuss how those perceptions matched (or didn’t) team members’ actual perceptions of their roles.

“That was a real eye-opener,” Parcher said. “It helped you see what everyone thought they were supposed to be doing and where there might be misunderstandings and conflicts about who’s doing what.”

Today, Parcher tries to make space for reflection and relational work in all team meetings and retreats. He also is one of three CCC senior staff members who took part in Rockwood’s 2013-14 Cross Movement Yearlong Fellows program.

**“The morning huddle really centers everyone. It creates an environment where we all know what everyone else is working on, where people can ask for help if they need it, and where we can inject some fresh ideas into the work on a day-to-day basis.”**

**– Michael Saldarriaga**



2013 CCC All Staff Retreat

“You realize going through this how much a team or organization relies on strong and honest relationships as opposed to the hard skills on everyone’s resumes,” Parcher said. “Today, we have a team that is functioning much more as a team. Not everything gets named and dealt with, but the elephants are out there for all to see and there’s a new sense that we’re all in this together.”

Michael Saldarriaga pointed to the team’s “morning huddle” as a testament to its collaborative spirit. Every morning, the team gathers to go over what’s happening that day and where individual team members might need help.

“The morning huddle really centers everyone,” Saldarriaga said. “It creates an environment where we all know what everyone else is working on,

where people can ask for help if they need it, and where we can inject some fresh ideas into the work on a day-to-day basis.”

The results of the Communications team’s collaborative work are evident in the enormous volume of communications content that CCC regularly produces across fifteen social media streams, and in the organization’s ever-rising profile in national debates on immigration reform, economic justice and other issues.

When two teen activists made national news in late 2013 by interrupting House Speaker John Boehner’s breakfast at a diner on Capitol Hill to make the case for immigration reform, it was an example of CCC’s communications team at their collaborative best—filming and posting the video of the exchange within

minutes, securing high-profile media coverage of the event and creating a viral response on social media.

“I think the way the Communications team has stepped up its role in the organization is a testament to the power of this work to produce real results,” said Bhargava.

## Building Connections: Operations and Institutional Advancement

The two other teams that have benefited from focused work through CCC of the Future, Institutional Advancement and Finance & Operations, have engaged in many of the same kinds of activities as their colleagues in Communications. Finance & Operations only became a team in 2010 after several other departments and functions were brought under one umbrella, now called the Operations Team. In retreats and other team gatherings, Director Ryan Young enlisted the help of Acevedo and Chiang to work on team alignment and collaborative skill-building.

“This is a team where people are not program staff, and there can be a feeling that we’re here just to crunch numbers or fix things or hire people,” said Young. “So we have been doing a lot of work to try and connect people to why they are really here, what excites them about the work, and how to develop a sense of shared purpose with others.”



*On Nov. 13, 2013, Speaker John Boehner was confronted at Pete’s Diner in Washington, D.C., by two young immigrant rights activists with the Fair Immigration Reform Movement who asked him why he would not support immigration reform. This photograph is from a CCC-disseminated video capturing the moment and was used widely by national media outlets. The two girls were interviewed by numerous national reporters.*

“A lot of us have pretty great stories about why we are here. Getting to know your colleagues on a different level makes the whole process more worthwhile.”

– Stefan Perazich

Stefan Perazich, who works as an operations project manager on the team, said the retreats and leadership development support have had a profound effect on his work and that of his colleagues. “We’re just a lot better now at communicating with each other and closing loops and stepping up to get things done when they have to get done,” he said. In addition, Perazich added that the sharing and the storytelling the team has done in retreats and other venues have had a huge impact. “A lot of us have pretty great stories about why we are here. Getting to know your colleagues on a different level makes the whole process more worthwhile,” he said.

Recognizing that the Operations and Institutional Advancement

teams do a considerable amount of work together to keep CCC moving forward and functioning effectively, Young and O’Neal-McElrath worked with Acevedo and Chiang to organize a joint retreat of the teams for two days in late 2013. The goal was to try and build trust and cooperation across the teams.

Coming out of the retreat, O’Neal-McElrath said she noticed right away that people were working differently together. As an example, she said that shortly after the retreat a member of the Operations team sent an email encouraging her teammates to take part in CCC’s employee giving program so the organization could get to 100-percent staff participation. “We never asked for that,” O’Neal-

McElrath said. “And it just blew me away that this person and this team now had a better understanding of our team’s work and what we are trying to achieve.”

O’Neal-McElrath and Young participated together in Rockwood’s 2012-13 yearlong leadership program. O’Neal-McElrath said that going through the training with a close colleague was “transformational.” “We really got to know each other over the course of that year and built a real and authentic trust and alignment. I think that pays real dividends for the organization as a whole, given the amount of work we do together across our teams,” she said.



*Practicing ways to talk about economic justice and anti-poverty work over a mock Thanksgiving family dinner at the 2013 All Staff Retreat. From left to right: Jeff Parcher, director of communications; Ouassim Sadallah, senior technology manager; Rudy Lopez, senior organizer; Maribel Molina-Villa, campaign support coordinator; Son Ah Yun, former senior organizer; Jeff Brewer, California Partnership communications and public policy specialist.*

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The journey of organizational change is not for the faint of heart. Transforming how an organization and its people do their work takes commitment, resources and time. There is universal consensus among CCC's staff that CCC of the Future has led to important improvements in everything from how meetings are run to how staff work together within and across teams to how people "hold the whole" of the organization and take responsibility and leadership in their day-to-day work.

In addition, staff point to numerous examples of how the work of organizational change has contributed to a higher level of impact for CCC—for example, how the spirit of creativity and innovation prompted the Retirement Security team to launch its successful manufactured housing organizing campaign, or how focused team-building has dramatically enhanced the Communications team's ability to generate fresh buzz and attention for CCC and its policy goals.

Bhargava said what impresses him most about what's happened at CCC in the last few years is the collaborative spirit of the staff. "Sure, there are always issues, but one of the striking

things is that we find ourselves spending a lot less time refereeing people and trying to solve problems related to how people and teams are working together," he said. "What has emerged from this work is a clear set of expectations around how we all show up with each other and cooperate to get things done."

Lassen added that she has noticed "a remarkable improvement" in leadership at all levels of the organization. "I see people taking on tasks and assignments that are critically important but that may not be inside their exact area of work. I also see people collaborating deeply in new ways and taking responsibility for surfacing and solving problems. There is a lot less hanging back," she said.

"I also see people collaborating deeply in new ways and taking responsibility for surfacing and solving problems. There is a lot less hanging back."

– Mary Lassen

## Priorities for the Future

Lassen, Bhargava and other staff also acknowledge that there is still much to be accomplished if CCC intends to live up to the goals it has set for itself in the course of the CCC of the Future work. Interviews for this report surfaced several key areas for continuing attention and reflection. These include:

### **Broadening participation in in-depth leadership development.**

The Rockwood Leadership Institute has been a key partner with CCC in developing the capacities of the organization's staff. Many staff have participated in formal Rockwood training, and CCC also has incorporated tailored leadership development content into training for all staff during retreats and individual and team coaching sessions.

CCC has work to do to create a culture where people have time to exercise and refine the skills and behaviors they are learning.

But conversations with staff who have participated in formal leadership development suggest that it is hard to compare the extensive leadership training they have received to the episodic development opportunities that have been afforded to the rest of the staff. "You come back from Rockwood and you expect everyone else to change like you did, but most of them haven't been there," said one Rockwood participant.

**Embedding the work.** Chiang noted that true change comes about through practice and the "repetition of action." In the leadership training and coaching she has done with CCC staff, she said she regularly encourages people to adopt daily practices to make their new skills a more intuitive part of how they behave.

But in an organization of people carrying heavy workloads and often jumping from one urgent task to the next, finding time to practice these behaviors can be a challenge. One staff member came back from a Rockwood training and pledged to himself to set aside 20 percent of every day for creative writing, reading and other reflection. That lasted a week. Staff members regularly remarked that CCC has work to do to create a culture where people have time to exercise and refine the skills and behaviors they are learning.

"All of this needs to be embedded in the culture and the day-to-day practices of the organization," said one staff member. "It has to be consistent and intentional, and I'm not sure we're there yet."

**Addressing workloads.** One of the principal reasons why many staff feel they haven't been able to fully develop their leadership skills or focus more intently on improving how they show up at work is because of heavy workloads.

As the CCC of the Future design team was identifying priorities for 2014 and beyond, it identified "load" as a critical area to focus on. CCC has taken important steps to try and distribute the load of the work across more staff members through new hires and by creating a new management structure, but staff at all levels still say load is an issue for the organization.

"You could say it is the nature of the work, but that doesn't mean you don't keep focusing on it," one staff member said. "At the same time you are building all these skills, it's important to pay attention to whether people have the time or the energy to use them."

**Dealing with staff turnover.** Another challenge for this work over time is how to deal with the fact that staff regularly are joining and leaving the organization. Of the original group of 14 staff members who participated in the pilot Rockwood training, only six remain at CCC today. Chiang does not see a problem with people who have developed new skills and capabilities because of CCC of the Future moving on to other social justice organizations; she said it helps enhance the capacity of the field as a whole (*see page 18*).

*Conclusion continued on page 36.*

## THE CONSULTANTS' PERSPECTIVE

Over the years, leadership consultant Jose Acevedo has played a central role in CCC's organizational change work, providing individual and team coaching, leading staff development sessions at the annual CCC staff retreat, and participating in the CCC of the Future design team with senior staff. Pamela Chiang, who oversaw this work as CCC's Director of Organizational Learning for five years, now is working as a consultant herself and is advising CCC and others on organizational change.

Both Chiang and Acevedo reviewed drafts of this report and offered their input and reflections along the way. They also provided their own take-aways on some of the key issues that the organization continues to face in its efforts to live up to the promise of transformational change. Together, they highlighted two topics for CCC's continuing attention.

**#1: Senior leaders need to embrace personal and organizational transformation.** As noted elsewhere in this report, CCC Executive Director Deepak Bhargava and Managing Director Mary Lassen have been deeply engaged in CCC of the Future from the start, based on their belief that they needed to model positive behavior change from the top. But even with that commitment from top leaders, being able to maintain a focus on personal change was inconsistent among the organization's senior leadership.

"We see it all the time," Acevedo said. "It is easier to try and fix people and situations outside yourself than to really own the negative impact you have on people and the behavior you need to shift."

Chiang and Acevedo noted that CCC has made enormous progress in creating a culture where people are working on an ongoing basis to strengthen their relationships and change behaviors in ways that will make the organization more effective as a whole. At the same time, they said there is still considerable work to do to promote change across CCC's senior leadership ranks.

"It can be different for everyone. Some people need to be tougher and some need to be more tender," Acevedo said. "The key is to understand the work you need to do and to do it."

Chiang added, "When senior leaders model behavior change, then staff are going to be more inclined to change themselves. Together, when teams live in this zone of learning they have a higher chance of becoming high-performing."

Interviews for this report suggest that top leaders in the organization understand the work still to be done and are committed to continuing progress.

**#2: The next frontier for CCC is transforming relationships with partner organizations.** The main focus of CCC of the Future to date has been internal; it has been about how to change personal behaviors and organizational norms to promote higher levels of performance. Chiang and Acevedo both said that an important priority for the months and years ahead has to be strengthening CCC's external relationships with partner organizations.

CCC is an organization that exists within a larger ecosystem of social change organizations that include grassroots partners at the local, state and regional levels, national networks and allies, and funders. CCC is uniquely poised to help convene this diverse system of organizations in service of the broader movement-building goal articulated during the CCC of the Future process (creating "powerful, grassroots movements in the United States that can empower everyone, particularly low-income people of color, to have enough to thrive"). Chiang said that going forward the CCC staff will need to "model resilience in times of stress, build durable relationships grounded in trust, and continually invite feedback and honest conversations" in their work with external partners.



Deirdra Reed, senior organizer, at the 2009 CCC All Staff Retreat

“What’s changed here is that people are really trying to see themselves in the work of the organization. There is more compassion for each other, and more attention on understanding your role and your place and how you can support the whole. And I think it’s really paying off in the results we’re getting on the ground.”

– Deirdra Reed,  
Senior Organizer

**Continued from page 34.**

But as new staffers come on board, how can they play catch-up when their colleagues have in some instances had several years of exposure to the practices and the behaviors at the heart of CCC of the Future?

“The fact is I can’t put everyone who comes on board back through the 25 training activities we have already done,” said Parcher. Chiang said the organization is looking at how to create an orientation for new staff that encapsulates the work of individual and organizational change.

**Sustaining the Work**

Interviews for this report affirm that CCC is a stronger, more effective organization today—and a much

better place to work—than it was just a few years ago, and that much of the credit for this transformation goes to the organization’s CCC of the Future initiative.

Of course, the extent to which these changes can stand the test of time remains to be seen. In the end, the survival and sustainability of CCC’s organizational change effort will depend on two things: 1) CCC’s leadership making this an ongoing priority; and 2) CCC’s funders continuing to recognize that this work is worthy of their support.

CCC has used general support dollars to cover the costs of the CCC of the Future activities, in addition to targeted grants for this work from Hidden Leaf

Foundation and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. Over the past two years, approximately 87 percent of the funding for CCC of the Future has come from general support, and the remainder from targeted grants.

CCC’s leadership and staff feel fortunate to have the resources and the flexibility to make organizational change a priority. The question now is how to sustain this work and build on the successes achieved to date, and how to attract new funders to support this work at CCC and other social justice organizations in the years ahead.

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# CHANGE STARTS HERE

## A Report on the Center for Community Change and Its Continuing Journey to Individual and Organizational Transformation

“Achieving exponentially greater impact required us to change as an organization. As we considered what needed to happen to address the huge and daunting issues of inequality and injustice in this country, there was a realization that launching more campaigns wouldn’t be enough. We needed to reinvent the organization—and we needed to reinvent ourselves.”

– Deepak Bhargava

