May 4, 2013

The "Seven 'C's'" Test for Legalization Tsunami Seaworthiness:
Assessment Tool and Place-finder for Implementation Readiness

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As articulated in the one-page essay entitled "The Legalization Tsunami and the Progressive Tide" (available from Larry Kleinman, larrykleinman@pcun.org), comprehensive immigration reform proposals could, if passed, set in motion movement-building opportunities of epic proportions. While no one should take enactment for granted, the legislative pace seems such that preparations must be happening *now*. Given that immigration reform would unfold over many years and the first stage of the application process would take months to set up. However, millions of immigrants will want reliable information and will seek it from trusted organizations *on the day President Obama signs the bill…**if not sooner!***

This document offers guidance on how community organizations might navigate these uncharted waters. Some organizations have never ventured beyond the shore; others have plied relatively calm and sheltered expanses. But even for seasoned "seafarers," the Tsunami will arrive with unprecedented intensity. As the essay puts it, we must prepare to be *lifted, **not drowned.***

Your place and role in the immigrant world

Most organizations utilizing this tool are well-established in an immigrant community or multiple communities. Most have played an active role in advocating and organizing for immigration reform. However, for some organizations, especially in relatively isolated areas, working directly with immigrants will be a novel undertaking. A threshold question for those to consider would be: "*do you want to develop a base or constituency in the immigrant community or do you simply intend to be helpful?*"

As the Fair Immigration Reform Movement or "FIRM", we believe that "agency" or leadership by and from people most affected—in this case, immigrants—and a vision to build power to achieve justice for all, are the most essential ingredients for base building devoted to social change. We commend those qualities to organizations new to engaging immigrant communities.

We also recognize that the capacity at hand is woefully insufficient to meet even the most basic challenge we'll all confront: fulfilling the "Hippocratic Oath" of mass legalization response paraphrased as "*first, prevent harm.*" Immigrants will be victimized by out-right scammers, by illegitimate entrepreneurs, and ill-prepared do-gooders. For some groups, *preventing harm* will be the extent of the value that they can add.

We visualize a continuum of response options which we roughly categorize as follows:

- Be relevant by supporting others who serve and organize immigrant communities;
- Take a direct role in orienting and/or serving immigrants on the application process;
- Put in place the structures and capacities to formalize relationship with your immigrant community base and to generate financial support from it;
- Build out your existing immigrant-community membership, as well as the capacities to serve it and to generate support from it to sustain existing and expanded capacities.

This document is primarily aimed at those in the third and fourth categories.

The "7-C's" Test for "Seaworthiness"

Assuming that your organization has an established reputation in the immigrant community as a "go-to" organization, the tsunami will bear down on you. Even as you assess how best to prepare for the legalization application process (proposed in S. 744 to commence twelve months after enactment), "first response" duty will require all hands on deck.

Like mariners earlier in human history, we'll build (or build out) amazing new vessels relying mostly on ordinary parts and readily available resources. Befitting the nautical theme, the Legalization Tsunami Seaworthiness Test is mapped out under the "Seven 'C's':" **"Call, Compress, Convene, Cast, Cost, Collect, Credential".**

The order of these categories is only loosely sequential. An undertaking of this magnitude and complexity does not follow a straight line and you may loop back through the list a few times, adjusting your plan as you refine it.

- **"Call":** *The "word" and how you get it out.*
    - Clear, simple and practical messaging: "Do's & Don't's";
    - Website and the capacity for regular—even urgent—content updating;
    - Website platform offering the opportunity to register (e.g., to receive alerts);
    - Media relations: proactive & reactive; main-stream & immigrant-focused;
    - Email, text, Twitter, Facebook and similar mass broadcast capacity;
    - Rumor-busting rapid reaction (tied in to all of the above);
    - Coordination with home-country consulates to ramp up documentation issuance;
    - Support: funders, donors, key collaborators, "stakeholders".

- **"Compress":** *Freeing up and making the most of your organization's existing capacity.* (Note: Some users prefer "***C*ynergize**" as the second "C".)
    - Contingency plans (including messaging & funder/member/supporter buy-in) for:
        - projects to pause
        - services to curtail or suspend
        - activity to re-schedule or re-purpose;
        - time span for these re-arrangements (e.g., 30 days);
    - Creation or link to an "avatar" style self-screening tool;
    - Hot-line: switch from answering to "recorded message" directing callers to websites or mass events;
    - Office hours: Reduce and/or re-shape office schedule to free up staff and to limit the "swamping" effect of folks coming directly to your offices.

- **"Convene":** *Planning and executing mass educational gatherings*

- Identify and assess suitability of locations/facilities for staging mass gatherings to impart information, answer questions, sign up members;
- Schools & municipal facilities, even some state facilities;
- Security (overflow, traffic, provocateurs);
- Proactive overflow strategy (e.g., free tickets for a planned *but non-advertised*, gathering the next day);
- Bi-lingual program? Multi-lingual? Organize sessions by language?;
- Ask yourself: "how big it *too* big?"—not just logistically but also regarding the *quality* of engagement you think is most important. Consider whether ten sessions, each with 300 participants, occurring daily over ten days, is more effective for your aims that one huge event with 3,000 people.
- Take into account that people will bring their families. If you opt for a "ticket" system to curb overflow, be explicit about who is admitted with a ticket.
- Devote a portion of each mass gathering program to messages or calls rooted in organizing, e.g., "who has a child or other relative who is eligible but not registered to vote?" (See the "*AgJOBS Flood*" memo for suggestions on this.) This strategy might partially fulfill objectives that were "compressed" to make way for First Response (e.g., Affordable Care Act sign up and other outreach).
- Plan "group help" follow up sessions (e.g., peer advice for locating documentation of presence in the country);
- Readying the "Call" for support could include convening a statewide or city-wide "table" of key actors—government agencies, NGOs, funders. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) and National Partnership for New Americans have a developed a template for launching such a process.

- **"Cast":** *The crew(s) you'll need as the wave comes into view*

  - Volunteers:
    - identified;
    - screened for basic suitability (e.g., reliable, honest);
    - trained about limits on giving advice and on keeping calm and centered in a high stress atmosphere ("First Responder" training);
    - if undocumented or have immediate family who are undocumented, prepared to "register" or apply for status (e.g., has obtained identity documents, is saving money for fees) to minimize the pressure of choosing between serving others and attending to their own needs.
  - Staff:
    - identify and pre-screen candidates using the five-step approach outlined in the "Legalization Staffing Talent Search" narrative.
  - Team units
    - to prevent burn-out and limit fatigue, organize interchangeable units of staff & volunteers.
  - Top leadership
    - develop a central team and, if possible, limit their other roles (e.g., as main presenters at gatherings) so they can concentrate on managing.

  - Membership:
    - beyond your core "base", who do you most want to serve and organize?
    - how can members help spread key messages?
  - Your organization: identify your place in the legalization "eco-system".
- **"Cost":** *Estimating the fuel you'll need…or, getting by with the fuel you expect to have*

  - 90-day "First Response" budget. As hard as it is to project how much is "enough", it's harder still to know what emergency resources will flow. One approach is creating budgets that assume new resources at the "minimal", "modest" and "moderate" levels ("maximum" seems beyond the pale).
  - 20-day "Life-boat" budget. Similar to the 90-day version, but assuming virtually no new resources beyond what can be generated directly from the community;
  - If you have the planning capacity, sketch a one-year or even multi-year budget;
  - Reputable outlets offering micro-loans, lending circle programs, etc. for applicants needing/seeking application cost resources.

- **"Collect":** *Getting a hold of and holding on to the valuables all around*

  - Member sign-up and/or data on participants plus the technology to manage it. If you don't presently collect data or, if you're contemplating expanding the types of data, do your utmost to pinpoint how you imagine actually *using* the data.
  - Membership: Cash-less capacity? Mobile payment? Many undocumented immigrants have no access to banking because they lack an ITIN or Social Security number (SSN). (Once applicants get work authorization, they can get an SSN.) At the outset, "cashless" probably means dealing in money orders.
  - Donations: do you have an on-line portal or vendor? Do you have containers and protocols for "pass-the-hat" contributions at mass gatherings?
  - Video. Record a mass education presentation and edit it for showings later in your organization's waiting area and/or on-line;
  - Basic reference materials , training outlines, flyers, checklists, website links.

- **"Credential":** *To pilot beyond the Tsunami tide*

  - Recognition/accreditation. This is one of the few aspects which is aligned more to the post "First Response" period, i.e.., when eligibility screening or pre-screening gets underway. If you intend to offer representation or conduct screening (and don't have lots of volunteer lawyers), Board of Immigration Appeals "recognition" and "accreditation" of staff is the way to go. It requires months of lead time. See *http://www.justice.gov/eoir/statspub/raroster.htm*
  - Reputable legal referral resources;
  - Membership, its rights, privileges and "proof of." It's a stretch to quickly create a membership structure if you don't have one. Still, the tsunami wave offers an unparalleled opportunity to conduct sign up (and collect dues). If you intend to issue a photo-type membership card, get the kind and quantity of hardware.

The categories of "C" could extend onto the horizon: ***Connect, Collaborate, Coordinate…*** Like the seas themselves, they wash together at some point. *Seven* seem to pretty much cover the world of legalization tsunami preparedness.

For more on this topic, contact Larry Kleinman, larrykleinman@pcun.org