INTRODUCTION

We hope you enjoy this sample section of the ReFrame Association Best Practices Guide for Home Repair Nonprofits. The self-assessment at the end is designed to help you celebrate successes and identify areas for continued growth.

This sample section is about Community Partnership. The complete 60-page guide contains links to over 100 resources and covers these additional topics:

- Stewardship of Volunteers
- Partnership with Homeowners
- Home Repair Practices
- Temporary Staff
- Assessment & Evaluation

The guide is designed to help nonprofit home repair programs become more effective and efficient. Our goal was to provide guidance for all types of nonprofit home repair organizations—urban and rural, faith-based and secular, small and large—as well as for a diversity of program models. More than 25 ReFrame members from 16 home repair nonprofits worked together for over 2 years to create the guide.

If you find this sample section useful, we hope you’ll join ReFrame Association in order to gain access to the rest of the guide. We help home repair nonprofits get the information they need to complete more sustainable repairs so that occupants of substandard housing can enjoy safer, more livable shelter.

Together in service,

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GUIDING PRINCIPLE:
Home repair nonprofits must understand the issues that affect the community where they work so they may engage with and be relevant to that community. The community they serve will then view the nonprofit as a partner focused on their concerns.

CORE ELEMENT 1: ENTER THE COMMUNITY RESPECTFULLY
The nonprofit ensures that each community they serve wants them there, regardless of whether it’s their immediate community or a distant location.

Best Practices:

A. Solicit feedback in advance from a diverse range of voices in the community to find out whether the nonprofit’s service is wanted and welcome.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Soliciting feedback helps to avoid issues of paternalism that are likely to occur when individuals and organizations assume they have the answers to a community’s problems.
- Organizations are wise to continually seek feedback from residents. A continuing dialogue is foundational to a continued invitation to serve. Community-based invitations to serve are even more important in short-term situations where volunteers are outsiders. Listening to a community and engaging in dialogue with residents can make the difference in volunteers being viewed as welcome guests instead of interlopers.
- Similarly, if the nonprofit considers serving a new neighborhood, county, or area, a best practice is to sit with local leaders for preliminary talks. These gatherings will help ensure that they welcome the organization and the volunteers and services to be provided. These meetings will:
  - Introduce key players in that community.
  - Help establish relationships that allow leaders to share their hopes, concerns, and wisdom about the people the nonprofit will serve as well as their advice about how to serve their community respectfully.
  - Foster vital two-way communication from the beginning.
  - Assure that the nonprofit will not duplicate services offered by other organizations.
  - Discover opportunities to serve with local partners. Working together is powerful and assures that even more people will be better served.
- A true test of whether an organization is truly responsive to local needs and situations is whether they are open to deciding not to serve in a particular community. When evaluating a community as a service location, if a nonprofit finds that what it can do is 1) not a high priority for that community, or 2) is already being performed adequately by another organization, they should be willing to stand down.
- Some organizations conduct needs assessments. When an assessment is conducted with vulnerable groups or communities that do not resemble an organization’s staff, research how to conduct successful assessments that truly represent the needs of that particular community. An alternative is asset-based community development; see Core Element 3 on page 40 for more information.
- Example: Appalachian Community Action & Development Agency in Gate City, Virginia conducts a thorough community assessment. They look at “hard” data (Census, health, employment, etc.), conduct client and partner surveys, examine other community surveys, and host focus groups. This helps them focus the agency’s planning around the community’s most critical needs.
B. Communicate the nonprofit’s mission and vision.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Communicating the particulars of an organization can be of incredible value both to individuals and organizations to be served as well as to other community stakeholders in the network. When community stakeholders are clear about a nonprofit’s capabilities and offerings, they can discern how and where the organization can best serve the community. For example, if the home repair nonprofit’s purpose is to be a good neighbor or to eradicate substandard housing, these stated outcomes will help clients and other stakeholders see what is offered and how the nonprofit can fit into the larger community and its existing social and service network.
- Consider what marketing materials can be generated, including both digital and print media. Printed materials for clients with no access or limited access to the internet are necessary. Brochures, flyers, or other printed materials will help those being served understand the organization’s core mission and other interesting facts, figures, and stories.
- By networking and partnering with similar organizations, home repair nonprofits will understand which services are already available and which services are needed. Aligning the scope of the organization’s abilities and services along with the needs of the community will help inform how and where the organization should serve. As the community understands who the nonprofit is and what services they provide, a necessary niche is naturally created to help identify clients and serve them.

C. Consider making a long-term commitment to the community(ies) the nonprofit serves.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Wherever the nonprofit serves, the need to build trust between the organization and the surrounding community is vital for the mutual understanding and respect that leads to productive and effective service.
- One way to build this trust is to internally and externally communicate the nonprofit’s long-term commitment to stakeholders in each community. For example, a goal to serve 10 years in each community is something that both the organization and the community can share. Not only will this create trust in the organization, but it also will help to establish credibility for other nonprofits. Because relationships take time to build, a long-term commitment helps build up the larger community infrastructure, allowing organizations to refer clients to the nonprofit while the nonprofit directs clients to other services the community offers—providing holistically for their needs. Committing long-term also allows organizations to raise up and hire indigenous leaders from the area/neighborhood they serve.
- Example: Sierra Service Project served in the small, impoverished town of Chiloquin, Oregon, for the two summers of 2004 and 2005, they experience was not very satisfactory. Housed in the local high school, they encountered hostility from local teens and generally lacked points of connection with the town’s few civic organizations. In retrospect, they realized that their understanding of the community was entirely inadequate. In 2013, they needed a project location in southern Oregon, and they returned to Chiloquin. This time, however, they initiated contacts across the spectrum of this small community: the local Indian tribe, several local churches, city hall (with its one part-time employee) and a loosely organized civic group. Two incredible local champions emerged from these contacts and conversations, and a strong relationship was formed with the very small local United Methodist Church. All of this led to a number of mutually beneficial relationships. Sierra Service Project made a commitment to serve in Chiloquin...
for at least 10 years, and in exchange, various elements of the community embraced their presence in a very significant manner. The result was tangible and visible impacts in this very isolated and underserved community.

CORE ELEMENT 2: SERVE RESPECTFULLY

*The overall foundation and trust from which the home repair nonprofit serves is built on the idea of respectful service.*

Best Practices:

A. Prioritize community needs and desires over the organization’s assumptions and desires.

Details, examples, and resources:

- Serving respectfully means listening and learning about the needs of the community, finding out who is meeting which needs, and figuring out how the home repair nonprofit fits into the infrastructure. Taking on a learning posture toward providing services helps organizational leaders grasp cultural norms and assumptions, smoothing the way to get the job done.
- By consistently asking whether the organization is meeting the right needs in the community, nonprofits take on an attitude of serving the community respectfully. Listening and having an attitude of humility guards against the problems of paternalism and social justice issues such as diversity and race as well as social and economic differences. Serving respectfully means that the nonprofit identifies with those it serves through elements of employment and organizational culture.
- Resources: Recording of the ReFrame webinar *Diversity + Inclusion* from October 2017 and *Let’s Talk*, a free resource for transformational dialogue about white privilege from the United Church of Christ.

B. Take steps to reduce the risk of paternalism.

Details, examples, and resources:

- *Paternalism* is habitually doing things for people that they can do for themselves, assuming a superiority that is both untrue and insulting.
- *Resource paternalism* gives people resources they do not truly need and/or could acquire on their own.
- *Knowledge paternalism* assumes the outside organization has all the best ideas about what needs doing and how to do it.
- *Labor paternalism* does work for the materially poor that they could do for themselves.
- *Managerial paternalism* takes ownership of change away from the poor, insisting that they follow the organization’s “better, more efficient” way of doing things.
- Home repair organizations can create strategies around respectful service to minimize the potential for paternalism as they serve their community. One of the key components to consider is the ethics surrounding information shared about homeowners. What is reported back to community partners that referred clients as well as to other stakeholders? Keeping community partners abreast of what happens as a result of their recommendations and their input (or voice) into the organization is key to promote networking and future referrals. Home repair organizations should be careful to balance information sharing with stakeholders with ensuring the confidentiality that is so important to many homeowners.
C. Understand the context of home repair work in the larger issue of poverty alleviation.

Details, examples, and resources:

- While worthy endeavors, much of the work home repair organizations conduct—repairing leaky roofs, weatherizing homes, constructing ramps—offer only temporary fixes for symptoms of the larger issues underlying poverty. It’s not that these physical repair needs are always indicators of poverty, but material poverty is the foundation and focus for the work of home repair organizations. Understanding the context of home repair work will help nonprofits understand where they fit within the spectrum of poverty alleviation.

- As home repair organizations establish objectives and long-term plans and reach for mission success, they could also prepare clients/homeowners for planning a path out of poverty—a plan to flourish. This means coordinating with other agencies once home repairs are complete—referring clients, for example, to a financial planning agency to help learn about saving for the next roof repair rather than relying on a home repair nonprofit for that service.

- While root causes of poverty are difficult to diagnose and treat, understanding the larger systems in place that lead to poverty and the condition of those being served is critical. How nonprofits define poverty plays a major role in how they determine the solutions they use in attempts to alleviate poverty. Ideological, social, and political systems greatly impact poverty issues facing a community. These include economic factors that determine job opportunities, affecting the material well-being of individuals and families throughout the community. Home repair organizations should reflect on whether they are empowering or enabling individuals and families to move out of poverty.

- Poverty not only includes material possessions but also manifests itself as:
  - Poverty of being—the attitude and feeling of inferiority and shame on the one hand or having a god-complex on the other. Understanding a poverty of being, then, can challenge how home repair employees work with homeowners, moving from only repairing a house to also initiating and sustaining a relationship with the homeowner. This is an engaged relationship that not only works on the home but also serves the individuals involved in the ways each needs.
  - Poverty of community,
  - Poverty of being, poverty of spirituality.

- Staff and volunteers can also understand that homeowners (families served) also have assets and strengths. In this broader understanding of poverty, consider seeing more than just the materially poor. This helps home repair nonprofit staff and volunteers understand that each person experiences poverty on some level, though poverty looks and feels different for each individual. Organizations should be in conversation with local leaders, asking: What does poverty alleviation look like in this community? What’s our role here? How can others come alongside the homeowners we serve to provide resources and support in ways we can’t or don’t?

- Community groups such as advisory councils can be utilized by home repair nonprofits to gain perspective on community information, forming action plans and alliances. Using the advice and recommendations the council produces will help home repair nonprofits to engage in their mission and vision within the community while best combating poverty. These councils can provide insight about how the organization is viewed and can also speak to eligibility and share wisdom to move forward in home repair work on individual homes.
CORE ELEMENT 3: UNDERSTAND HOW SERVICE IMPACTS THE COMMUNITY

The nonprofit sees their work as part of the larger development for this community, valuing and helping to steward the gifts and talents of the people they serve while focusing on home repair.

Best Practices:

A. Consider assets of the community and homeowners.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Asset-based development (holistic service) focuses on identifying, mobilizing, and connecting the capabilities, skills, and resources of a person or community to solve problems. It recognizes that all individuals, regardless of physical assets, have tangible and intangible gifts and assets that are viable in problem-solving. Asset-based development also tasks the materially poor to be stewards of their own gifts and resources. It also looks for resources (including material resources) and solutions to come from within the community rather than outside of it.
- Asset-based development stands in contrast to needs-based development, which focuses on a person or community's deficits and shortcomings. Here solutions typically come from outside the community.
- Seeing both the assets and liabilities of those the organization serves encourages the strategy of homeowners coming alongside employees and volunteers, serving together.

B. Take steps to create an organizational culture of mutual giving.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Mutual giving furthers and gives “feet” to the efforts of asset-based development. The idea of mutual giving assumes that those serving via home repair work (employees and volunteers) and the recipients of their repairs (homeowners) both have assets they can use to serve one another. By seeing and interacting with homeowners at a relational level, home repair volunteers may understand that building relationships is equally important as repairing homes.
- Establishing authentic, ongoing relationships with homeowners communicates dignity and builds community. Equally important in mutual giving is the need to ask the homeowner and family what they can provide in the process of working on their home. This may include the homeowner partially financing their home repairs, donating supplies, or assisting in the repair work. Or the homeowner may give in other tangible ways, such as cooking a meal for or serving sweet tea (or a similar refreshment) to volunteers. They may give intangibly through getting to know and conversing with the people working on their home. This mutual giving between those serving and those being served creates community, raises self-esteem, and engages in the gifts and talent each brings.

C. Determine whether the nonprofit provides relief, rehabilitation, development, or a combination.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Home repair organizations are able to serve in a variety of contexts, including providing support immediately after a natural disaster, rebuilding homes months after a crisis, or doing long-term focused work to eradicate unsafe, substandard housing in a community.
All of these responses are needed to solve poverty and create communities full of safe homes. Understanding the type of home repair response needed is critical to long-term development. The following are contexts for providing home repair:

- **Relief:** “An effort to stop the bleeding.” The urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce suffering from a crisis, whether natural or man-made. The key element of service to provide relief is a provider-receiver dynamic where the provider gives assistance—often material—to the receivers, who are largely incapable of helping themselves at the time.

  - When disaster occurs and home repair organizations find themselves responding, they should realize that there are additional resources available during times of crises. It’s vital that home repair nonprofits understand that they are one resource among many, providing similar relief to victims of disaster. Understanding the niche home repair organizations provide and having the ability to point residents to other resources is vital for holistic recovery. Organizations providing post-disaster relief work include: housing coalitions, affordable housing collaboratives, State Emergency Management, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). In order to partner in relief efforts, a home repair organization can actively participate in community coalitions such as long-term disaster recovery committees, coalitions addressing issues related to homelessness, etc.

- **Rehabilitation:** Starts as soon as the “bleeding” stops, seeking to restore people and communities to the positive state existing before the crisis. The key feature of rehabilitation is working with victims as they participate in their own recovery.

- **Development:** Walks with people across time in ways that move everyone involved—volunteers and homeowners—closer to a self-sustaining place. Development avoids “doing for” and focuses on “doing with.” This is often referred to as empowerment.

- Discerning which of these contexts—relief, rehabilitation or development—is present and communicating what the organization can (and cannot) do in the present context is of great importance. Most home repair organizations work in the development context as they reach for the eradication of substandard housing and provision of long-term improvement to their communities. However, home repair organizations often fail to provide development strategies as they serve. If they use relief strategies instead, they may actually cause long-term harm, creating dependency on outsiders rather than empowering those served.

**CORE ELEMENT 4: ENGAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

The nonprofit connects to the community(ies) in multiple ways because substandard housing negatively impacts not only homeowners, but also neighbors and the broader community as well.

**Best Practices:**

A. **Determine who your community partners are (and/or who you want them to be).**

**Details, examples, and resources:**

- A partner organization is any local entity with whom the nonprofit can have a mutually beneficial relationship. Some [key potential partners](#) are discussed below. This list is far from exhaustive. Indeed, virtually any person the nonprofit staff meets may be a potential partner. Meeting people with this idea in mind is the best approach to effective
networking. Spend time researching potential community partners to try to reach all those willing to partner or serve as referral sources. Initial contact takes many forms: a cover letter introducing the organization and opening partnership discussions, and phone calls/emails, introductions by a mutual friend, etc.—try them all! Consider conducting interviews with community partners prior to making new strategic plans.

- **Teachers and principals** will often know families who can benefit from home repair services. Schools also serve as clearinghouses for information, and influential community members sit on school boards. Building relationships with key school contacts can be beneficial: school nurses, guidance counselors, superintendents. Sources outside the school such as Family Resource Centers. Head Start programs are also excellent connections since they visit homes.

- **Local government** is all about solving real problems for real people. When local officials understand that the nonprofit is all about that too, they usually do everything they can to help repair homes in their community. Finding the right people depends a lot on the community and its size. For a very small organization working in a major U.S. city, getting the attention of the elected mayor is probably not realistic. However, getting a meeting with a local city council member or aide is entirely possible. In many towns, getting on a council meeting agenda as an informational item is a great way to spread the word about what the nonprofit is doing. Elected leaders (and their staffs) need to deliver benefits to the people who elect them. Helping a nonprofit work in their community is a great way for them to deliver. In addition, elected officials know a lot of other people and can provide all manner of useful connections for home repair nonprofits. One growing source of funding is grants and partnerships with local municipalities, such as cities, counties, and states.

- **Other nonprofit organizations** are great sources of information and access to people needing home repairs. For example, senior service organizations will often know people who are unable to repair their own homes, or who need wheelchair ramps. Neighborhood organizations or block clubs will want to connect their members to a home repair nonprofit. Local food pantries may know of people in need of home repair, and are great places to leave fliers and information about the nonprofit’s services.

- **Religious communities** are natural connection points. Many have members that need repairs in their homes. These churches also may offer access to part of the community that may be difficult to access otherwise—particularly immigrants, refugees, and non-English speakers. Places of worship are often delivery points for other services, like ESL classes or food/clothing distribution, and can reach certain populations even if they are not part of that worship community. Churches and other religious institutions can also be sources of volunteers. Make it easy for people to volunteer by leaving simple sign-up forms and information about the organization for each congregation.

- **Community Action Partnerships/Agencies** and Community Development Organizations may be interested in working with home repair nonprofits to stretch their resources. Nonprofit affordable homebuilders, for example, may be interested in using volunteer labor for low-skill rehab projects or certain aspects of new construction.

- **Other home repair organizations** in the area are excellent partners. There may be opportunities to refer clients to one another or to collaborate in other ways. Consistent communication will minimize encroachment concerns. They can be partners in home repair instead of competitors for resources.
Community foundations can provide a networking service (and may be a source of funding). In addition, utility companies may be helpful in some locations.

- Examples of successful community partnerships:
  - Rebuild Upstate partners with other nonprofits, churches, and businesses in a number of ways. The City of Greenville, South Carolina contracts with Rebuild Upstate to manage its home repair/home rehab program. Rebuild Upstate also partners with three area agencies focused on aging to provide minor home repairs for seniors, the state Housing Trust Fund to provide larger repairs for residents, and the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority to provide home rehabilitation to county residents. They recently launched an initiative to provide financial literacy counseling and education to low-income families to build more financial independence and promote sustainable home ownership. This initiative would not be possible without collaboration with CommunityWorks Carolina, a well-recognized community development corporation.
  - Ozark Mission Project partnered with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. Cooking Matters classes were held at some OMP camps for community members. OMP also built two community gardens.
  - Home Works of America partners with the Help My House energy-efficiency program, an initiative from South Carolina’s consumer owned electric cooperatives. HWA repairs homes first (fixes roofs, builds wheelchair ramps, etc.) at no cost to homeowners. Then, contractors approved by the electric cooperative complete weatherization projects such as adding insulation or fixing HVAC systems. This is paid for with low-interest loans that homeowners pay back on their monthly electric bill by using a portion of what they save on energy costs. The rest of the savings is theirs to keep. Monthly savings of $85 to $175 have been documented.
  - Nehemiah Mission has two project managers who seek out needs of community members, listen to them with empathy, and work to improve their situation. Nehemiah Mission is also very motivated in developing and maintaining relationships with the Liberian community in Cleveland, Ohio.


B. Respect community partners in all interactions; be prepared to follow, not just lead, and be honest about limitations.

Details, examples, and resources:
- The importance of approaching the community with an attitude of humility cannot be stressed enough. If a nonprofit comes to a community with a rigid agenda, they will likely fail at the goal of strengthening the local community’s assets and resources. Instead, nonprofits should be prepared to follow the lead of others, being very mindful of local leadership and priorities while seeking the best ways to fit in.
- Ask lots of questions. Generally, home repair nonprofits approach a community where they perceive human needs that their organization can help to address. However, every organization needs to be humble and honest enough to recognize that what they have to offer may not be what the community needs. For successful partnerships, nonprofits must be clear about their limitations as well as their strengths. This includes the type, scope, and volume of work they can do.
- Example: Sierra Service Project in California clearly states their limitations—they don’t do any major rehab, electrical, or plumbing. Instead, they focus on repairs such as ramps, stairs, and roofing.
C. Maintain ongoing communication with community partners.

Details, examples, and resources:
- While managing volunteers and completing projects, it is easy to neglect ongoing communication with partners. Like any supporter, nonprofit partners will be more engaged and can be more supportive when kept informed about activities and efforts. Home repair nonprofits should also educate themselves about partners by reading their e-newsletters, websites, etc. Occasional phone calls, regular emails, photo sharing, and social media posts all help to serve this purpose.
- If community partners refer clients, be sure to communicate about whether or not the client was selected to receive repairs, and about the status of work completed.

D. Look for gaps in services.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Sometimes it’s easy to see a gap in service, such as a need to replace roofs, but other times it’s not. A best practice is to work with other community organizations to begin advocacy with government, church, and social service organization leaders to meet that need. While both small and large organizations have limited resources, informing local community leaders about a service gap may open new resource potential—especially when this notice comes from a nonprofit willing to spearhead a new initiative. This update will put weight behind an issue that may otherwise remain unknown or ignored.

E. Share credit generously with community partners.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Home repair nonprofits should bend over backwards to share credit for accomplishments with community partners participating in the project.
- During networking meetings and community events, share information about collaborations and how working together builds greater success within the community. Sharing these stories and giving credit builds unity among organizations and points toward even more significant partnerships.
- Example: YouthWorks, based in Minnesota, gives credit to local VOADs and Community Action Partnerships when volunteers accomplish projects identified by a VOAD or CAP but are completed by YouthWorks volunteers. This furthers the mission of all organizations and shows how working together toward solutions is a much better and sustainable model than trying to solve problems alone.

F. Survey community partners to gauge satisfaction.

Details, examples, and resources:
- Explore community partner opinions about the organization’s community impact and ways to improve. An annual survey at the end of a home repair program cycle is a good way to do this (at the end of a summer blitz, or at the end of the calendar year).
- Stress the importance of honest, frank feedback. Nonprofit work is rife with unintended negative consequences. To uncover (and reduce) these unintended outcomes, consider asking open-end questions like these to get a fruitful conversation started: How is the organization perceived by the community? Have you seen positive changes in your community as a result of the nonprofit work? Have you seen any negative impacts or problems? Are we doing things that cause problems or hold us back from achieving more?
• An in-person or phone-based interview aided by a written questionnaire is also an effective approach. These interviews can be scheduled in advance. Ask all stakeholders the same few questions so that feedback can be compiled and compared. However, because of the direct, real-time communication, staff will not be limited to these questions. Take good notes and summarize the conversation immediately so that valuable insights are not lost.

• Consider partnering with a local college or university to collect feedback. Psychology departments may be willing to help create, administer, and analyze surveys.

G. Support local businesses.

Details, examples, and resources:
• One side-benefit of bringing volunteers to serve in a community is that the fees these volunteer groups pay put the nonprofit host in a position to inject a considerable amount of outside money into the local economy. For many small towns and rural areas, this can be a very large benefit and a great source of local goodwill. These volunteers spend additional money on gas, meals and snacks, gifts and souvenirs, and more. The nonprofit spends money on food, building materials, vehicle repairs, and more.

• At its root, substandard housing exists because of unemployment, lack of jobs that pay well, and lack of economic opportunity and development. In addition to a mission to alleviate poor housing conditions, home repair nonprofits should be concerned with fundamentally changing the conditions that allow substandard housing to persist. One way to do this is to spend money locally.

• In most communities, local vendors can be found to supply practically everything an organization needs. Local grocery stores, hardware stores and lumber yards will be happy to have more business. Volume purchases may create challenges, but planning and good communication will overcome any challenges involved.

• For example, with a few days advance notice, most local grocery stores will be happy to special order and assemble a weekly food order. The same is true of hardware stores and lumber yards. They will typically provide a volume discount, and perhaps free delivery. Many will also waive restocking fees, making returns much easier. Items like eggs, fresh produce, and meat can be purchased directly from local farms. Prices may be a little higher, but the increased quality and the decreased waste should offset that.

CORE ELEMENT 5: PROBLEM SOLVING & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The nonprofit is prepared for community-related crisis situations.

Best Practices:

A. Identify community-related threats to safety of employees, volunteers, and homeowners.

Details, examples, and resources:
• What do home repair nonprofits do when things go wrong? When staff is targeted by angry graffiti from local youth? When a local family is angry because a neighbor’s house is being worked on and not their home? Clearly, there is no easy, one-size-fits-all way to address all of the situations that might arise in the course of home repair work.

• By adopting the practices laid out in this guide, nonprofits will prevent many problems that might otherwise arise.
• Go to community partners. Use them as resources to help understand the community, what’s going on, and best ways to respond. Rather than pretend that everything is going perfectly if it isn’t, be open and honest, and let them help find solutions.

B. Create a crisis management plan that includes a media packet.

Details, examples, and resources:
• Inform local media outlets about the nonprofit and what it is doing in the community. During times of crisis, having media outlets that are knowledgeable about an organization speeds up response time and help others know what services the organization provides.
• Every organization faces community-related crises situations. While this guide will not provide a solution to every crisis, understanding the threats to employee, volunteer, and homeowner safety is of vital importance. A key first step in crisis management is to have policies, systems, and trained personnel in place to respond when a crisis does occur. It is important to understand how this crisis is perceived by the community. The ability to gather data and respond quickly, while engaging all key stakeholders is essential in both internal and external crises.

C. Coordinate the crisis management plan with local government and other community partners when the crisis extends beyond the organization, e.g. natural disasters.

Details, examples, and resources:
• Government agencies want to form partnerships with nonprofits to help prepare for and mitigate disasters. FEMA defines the “Whole Community” approach as a new philosophy of emergency management, encouraging greater reliance on the resources of local groups. They acknowledge that nonprofits are a source of invaluable knowledge about how to coordinate volunteers. Even if an organization’s mission statement makes no mention of emergency management, FEMA suggests that they can play an instrumental role in preparing for disasters and aiding in emergency management when catastrophic situations arise.
SECTION 5: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Home repair nonprofits must understand the issues that affect the community where they work so they may engage with and be relevant to that community. The community they serve will then view the nonprofit as a partner focused on their concerns.

CORE ELEMENT 1: ENTER THE COMMUNITY RESPECTFULLY

The nonprofit ensures that each community they serve wants them there, regardless of whether it’s their immediate community or a distant location.

- A. Solicit feedback in advance from a diverse range of voices in the community to find out whether the nonprofit’s service is wanted and welcome.
- B. Communicate the nonprofit's mission and vision.
- C. Consider making a long-term commitment to the communities the nonprofit serves.

CORE ELEMENT 2: SERVE RESPECTFULLY

The overall foundation and trust from which the home repair nonprofit serves is built on the idea of respectful service.

- A. Prioritize community needs and desires over the organization’s assumptions and desires.
- B. Take steps to reduce the risk of paternalism.
- C. Understand the context of home repair work in the larger issue of poverty alleviation.
CORE ELEMENT 3: UNDERSTAND HOW SERVICE IMPACTS THE COMMUNITY

The nonprofit sees their work as part of the larger development for this community, valuing and helping to steward the gifts and talents of the people they serve while focusing on home repair.

Status: In progress Completed Needs Attention

A. Consider assets of the community and homeowners.

B. Take steps to create an organizational culture of mutual giving.

C. Determine whether the nonprofit provides relief, rehabilitation, development, or a combination.

CORE ELEMENT 4: ENGAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The nonprofit connects to the community(ies) in multiple ways because substandard housing negatively impacts not just those who reside in those houses, but also neighbors and the broader community as well.

Status: In progress Completed Needs Attention

A. Determine who your community partners are (and/or who you want them to be).

B. Respect community partners in all interactions; be prepared to follow, not just lead, and be honest about limitations.

C. Maintain ongoing communication with community partners.

D. Look for gaps in services.

E. Share credit generously with community partners.

F. Survey community partners to gauge satisfaction.

G. Support local businesses.
CORE ELEMENT 5: PROBLEM SOLVING & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The nonprofit is prepared for community-related crisis situations.

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To view the complete Best Practices Guide, become a member of ReFrame Association. Dues are based on the size of the organization’s budget and number of employees; annual rates start at just $150.

ReFrame Association is a national network of nonprofit home repair organizations committed to providing occupants of substandard housing with safer, more livable shelter.

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