Strategic Plan

2020-2022

Executive Summary
Adopted by the NACEDA Board of Directors
November 22, 2019

NACEDA Strategic Plan

Organization Background

The **National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA**) is an association of state and regional membership organizations who promote community development and affordable housing. NACEDA was founded in 2006. NACEDA's founders believed that an organization was needed to advance a strategic, national community and economic development public policy agenda and provide peer-to-peer learning among organizations that support this agenda at the national, state, and regional level.

Mission Statement
Lead the community development field and its partners in shaping and influencing strategies that advance community prosperity.

Strategic Direction & Results
In the next three years NACEDA will seek to add value to its member organizations and the community and economic development field by: supporting **Thriving Networks** of community developers at the state and regional level, **advocating** for public policies that benefit community-based development organizations and the places they serve, developing **state and regional systems** that support improved outcomes for low- and moderate-income people and places and communities of color, and **building a movement** of place-based community developers that advocate on their own behalf and learn from each other.

Supporter of **thriving networks**	NACEDA will strive to provide value to its dues paying members. These services could include: financial resources, capacity building services, technical assistance, facilitator of knowledge exchange among peer networks, and relevant and timely information.
State and regional systems builder	NACEDA has a unique membership of state and regional networks that support local, state and national public policy, interface with the philanthropic and private sectors, provide training and technical assistance and perform local research, all critical components of the challenge of building better places for the people who live there. NACEDA strives to achieve systems that maximize those outcomes.
Advocate	Outside actors intentionally and unintentionally influence the ability of practitioners to develop low- and moderate-income communities and neighborhoods. NACEDA provides a practitioner voice to outside actors, be they in government, philanthropy, academia, or elsewhere.

Movement builder	NACEDA sees its role as a vehicle to build a sense of shared purpose among networks of community-based organizations and community development advocates.

Operating Environment

NACEDA has positioned itself as having the network, relationships, and access to the field that can help disparate institutions and actors reach and achieve solutions for low- and moderate-income people and places. These actors have included federal agencies, health-based organizations and institutions, arts and cultural advocates, think tanks, other national peer organizations, and foundations, among others. Maintaining that strategic positioning will remain a core strategy and challenge for how NACEDA defines success over the next three years.

Comprehensive community development strategies are gradually getting more attention from philanthropy and other economic sectors, most notably the health sector. This is likely due to multiple factors, one of which is increased recognition and outside research about the efficacy of community development strategies to improve lives. The NACEDA network's access to the field of community-based organizations can be a critical asset to those new to community development. Similarly, the network's positioning as state and regional advocates, trainers, and 'system-builders' also has unique value to new community development actors looking to bring new strategies, skills, and approaches to the field. Even some traditional housing and community development advocates, networks, and funders have a renewed, and potentially temporary, enthusiasm for state-based advocacy and policy due to frustrations with the federal government's inability to aggressively deal with the challenges low-income communities face.

The environment for community development has changed in substantive ways since NACEDA's last strategic plan was developed in 2014. The federal political environment makes it challenging to achieve ambitious proposals and ideas, as it is divided and unwilling to compromise. Conservative regulatory proposals (e.g. CRA, predatory lending, etc.) have necessarily put community development advocates on the defensive. Alternatively, housing and community development has a prominent place on the national agenda for the first time in decades, placed there by prominent Democratic senators running for president in 2020. As a result of increased attention on the sector and ongoing federal programs that remain relevant, despite the political environment, it remains crucial for NACEDA to continue to position itself as a solution-oriented organization that can provide the federal government access to the field and, conversely, the field access to crucial federal programs. That said, NACEDA should be ready for political changes, either through new federal initiatives or electoral change in 2020 and/or 2022.

NACEDA should also be aware of potential economic swings. Some forecasters are predicting another recession-type event in the coming years, the severity of which is uncertain. And while increasing affordability gap persists and grows, the mortgage crisis of 2009/10 is no longer considered urgent by most politicians.

The national conversation around race and gender equality has also significantly changed since the last strategic plan. NACEDA's ability to add value in these conversations will be important to its credibility as an organization capable of working with and supporting communities of color. NACEDA's work in creative placemaking and its People & Places partnership are the organization's most easily recognizable initiatives with an explicit racial equity focus. The explicitness of equity in these initiatives will help NACEDA's credibility in broader equity conversations.

NACEDA supporting tomorrow's places

NACEDA's 2020-2022 Strategic Plan reaffirms the general direction the organization took during its last plan from 2014-2018, with adjustments in emphasis. The organization will continue to identify opportunities for members to weigh in on federal policy; help build stronger regional systems and networks through training, technical assistance, peer sharing, and state/local policy development; contribute to the movement of place-based organizations developing more prosperous communities; and capitalize on NACEDA's unique access to the field and expertise in creative placemaking. The plan emphasizes the need for NACEDA to advance its long-term financial sustainability by capitalizing on NACEDA's unique membership and knowledge of the creative and health sectors.

NACEDA Strategic Focuses

1) Thriving Networks

Deliver services to NACEDA's members, maximizing their ability to increase the effectiveness of community-based development organizations. NACEDA had 35 association members in good standing in 2019. Delivering value is NACEDA's primary role with its members. Value can come through program delivery and resources, peer-learning, one-on-one strategic assistance, and convening. The Thriving Networks strategic focus is 'bottom-up', spreading information about what is happening at the state and regional level, either across the membership, up to national institutions, or driving on-the-ground delivery.

- **NACEDA's membership accumulates 1,000 hours of training from NACEDA annually that meets needs of network organizations (goal for exact hours determined annually).**
- **Actively support and encourage peer-sharing among members.**
- **Thriving Networks Assessment Tool deployment**: The Thriving Networks Tool will focus the organization's one-on-one assistance on community development network organizations, primarily NACEDA's members. It will also generate revenue for the organization as a line of business.
- **Bi-Annual Summit:** NACEDA's Summit remains the organization's core gathering of members and organizational stakeholders.
- **People & Places Collaboration** NACEDA sees its role as helping its association members put community development placemakers front and center in the national conversation about improving low- and moderate-income people and places. NACEDA accomplishes this, partially, through the organization's advocacy and priority on advocacy-partnership with the People & Places Collaborating partners who are also networks of placemakers. NACEDA's leadership of the People & Places Collaboration and Conference provides a visual and memorable focal point for the role local placemakers play in making the community development field vibrant and effective, a conversation we feel is too often lost among policy makers, national advocates, funders, and intermediaries.

Equity & Thriving Networks: NACEDA sees itself as a primary platform for peer sharing among its members, through regional caucuses, professional development unique to network organizations, and through its conferences. For the duration of this plan, NACEDA will place a priority on recruiting diverse speakers at its convenings, take time to acknowledge the cultural roots of the place in which convenings are hosted, provide additional resources and accommodations to ensure inclusive participation, help its members learn through peer exchange and external expertise, and explicitly name these strategies as part of a priority on equity.

Further, NACEDA's People & Places Collaboration will remain a high priority. People & Places Collaboration offers NACEDA's national platform, resources, and assets to other national peer organizations of color, representing racially diverse communities and community-based organizations. People & Places reaches diverse, local organizations and provides them a national platform. As such, People & Places will remain a key program and strategy by which NACEDA attempts to serve equity goals.

2) State and Regional Systems Building

This body of work positions NACEDA as a leader, partnering with its members to help the broader field adjust to trends and new ways of approaching the work. NACEDA's members build regional systems of *emerging* areas of practice, research, advocacy and policy development within the community development field, particularly among emerging growth strategies, such as creative placemaking, healthy places, middle neighborhoods. The Regional Systems Building strategic focus is 'top-down,' NACEDA gathering resources and information about trends in the broader community development field that the organization delivers and utilizes to its members. Lessons, peer-sharing, training, and other types of information sharing related to these areas of work are also designed to be shared through the "Thriving Networks" activities outlined above, such as through the Annual Summit, regional convenings, peer-groups, etc. What NACEDA does with one member, it shares with all.

- **Creative Places:** Creative Places is a robust, unique and resourced body of work for NACEDA. The strategies outlined in this plan help NACEDA's members identify how their associations adapt creative placemaking strategies into their organization, including their convenings, capacity building activities, relationship-building, policy and advocacy work, and research.

- **Healthy Places**: NACEDA commits to continued focus and growth in its Healthy Places work over the next three years. That focus includes prioritizing it in this plan, building relationships among experts, shopping concept papers to funders, and positioning and supporting NACEDA's members to effectively lead state and regional community development systems capable of utilizing health partnerships and policy toward better outcomes for low- and moderate-income people and places and communities of color. Similar to "Creative Places, this plan helps NACEDA's members identify how their associations adapt healthy places strategies into their organization, including their convenings, capacity building activities, relationship-building, policy and advocacy work, and research.

- **Middle Neighborhoods:** NACEDA became the fiscal agent for the Middle Neighborhoods concept in 2019, assuming administrative responsibilities through December 31, 2019. NACEDA will continue to serve on the Middle Neighborhoods Steering Committee and explore roles within the movement that fit the work and focus of NACEDA and its members, such as policy and advocacy.

> **Equity & Regional Systems:** NACEDA's value to those outside the traditional housing and community development field is the organization's access to a wide number of community-serving organizations. NACEDA has demonstrated some credibility with the grassroots, based on feedback from members, partners, and funders, and its ability to attract hundreds of these types of organizations to People & Places.
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> When other sectors approach NACEDA about accessing its network and the tools of community development, NACEDA is often the leading voice in the room on the importance of equity, targeting resources, and using the tools of community development for the direct benefit of low and moderate-income people and places and communities of color. This has been notably true in the organization's roles and programs related to Creative Places, Healthy Places, and Middle Neighborhoods.
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> NACEDA will encourage and support its members to be this vital voice in its programming related to state and regional systems building. Doing so ensures programmatic outputs and

3) National Advocacy and Access to the Field

For the purposes of this plan, it's useful to understand "policy and advocacy" as a constellation of many different government and corporate leadership functions. That constellation certainly includes governmental funding streams and regulatory frameworks. But it also can include the important role public/governmental leaders can play as conveners and advocates, using their "bully pulpit" to lend credibility to community developers, and drawing diverse entities around shared goals, or also non-governmental entities such as private corporations and other housing and community development organizations.

NACEDA approaches policy and advocacy, primarily, through the lens of the needs and priorities of its member networks and the local community development organizations NACEDA's members serve. It advocates those needs to the institutions and governmental agencies that have demonstrated commitment to the outcomes of low- and moderate-income people and places.

NACEDA's advocacy strategy generally supports policy advocacy at all levels of government, though with varying strategies at each level, outlined below.

State & Local
- **Peer sharing:** In addition to a strategy that supports state and regional system building (Section 2 of the Strategic Plan), NACEDA supports its members to share policy and advocacy ideas and strategies 'across state lines'.

- **Examples:** Notable examples of peer sharing related to policy and programs that have birthed new ideas among NACEDA's members include state community development tax credits, annual 'affordable housing and community development weeks', community loan centers, and health policy ideas, among others.

Federal Government
- **Federal agencies:** NACEDA provides the platform for local organizations and networks to voice concerns, needs, and successes directly to federal agencies and to provide practitioner-centric expertise and knowledge to agencies, as well as connect practitioners to agency resources and expertise. NACEDA has access to the networks of placemakers that can 'tell the story' and impact programs have on the ground.
- **Coalition participation:** Activate NACEDA networks and their members on the most salient federal issues effecting the affordable housing and CED field.
- **Private Sector:** NACEDA staff annually serves on 1-3 advisory boards of financial institutions and other private entities. NACEDA also advocates for its members to also serve and provide a practitioner voice.

4) Organizational infrastructure

This strategic plan will emphasize the need for strategies to enhance the organization's infrastructure and financial stability by the plan's conclusion in 2022. In order to set and achieve financial goals, NACEDA will explore external expertise to help it plan for its financial future. A more detailed plan is anticipated by mid-2020.

NACEDA will develop strategies to help ensure stable funding and long-term financial sustainability of the organization; attract funding for new initiatives contained in this strategic plan; regularly assess the efficacy and relevance of the organization's programs and spending; and build a $50,000 operating reserve by 2022.

- **Deepen the bench of NACEDA's relationships with current and potential funders.**

- **Retain and expand NACEDA's funders**

- **Work to cultivate potential new funders to support our work, diversifying our funders beyond financial institutions.**

- **Expand earned income**

- **By 2022, secure multi-year operating funding, even if at a modest level.**

- **Oversight of financial sustainability**
  - Continue to convene a Resource Development Committee to oversee creation and implementation of a resource development plan by mid-2020.

  - Build a reserve fund of at least $50,000 by the end of 2022 and an accompanying plan to contribute to the reserve fund on an annual basis.

  - Review programs annually to analyze each program/activity's efficacy. Review should also weigh the program's impact and cost.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

This strategic plan acknowledges the significant role racial wealth, income, and achievement disparities plays in US society and in the community development field, particularly when considering these disparities through a place-based lens. This explicit institutional recognition began during NACEDA's last strategic planning process in 2014 in which the organization stated the importance of leadership and programmatic diversity. For the duration of that plan NACEDA has placed a priority on its People & Places partnership, building a platform for racially diverse national community development networks. Further, the organization's signature programmatic achievement focuses on creative placemaking as a means of achieving racial equity. The organization placed a priority on the inclusion of younger (and often more racially diverse) participants in its programs. It did so by altering the content and scholarship structure of the organization's conferences and convenings to make them more accessible to non-

executive directors in the membership and those newer to the field. The organization also made progress in diversifying its board membership and leadership.

This continues and grows those strategies and takes additional steps toward becoming a more inclusive organization. This plan includes specific diversity and inclusion strategies and tactics throughout and across all its programs. Further, it sets a priority to continue to diversify its board leadership, as well as its partners, consultants, vendors, staff, and interns. This plan acknowledges the need for NACEDA to take the necessary steps to achieve inclusivity, including but not limited to, compensation, recruitment, and marketing strategies

Governance and Leadership

NACEDA recognizes the importance of a diverse and engaged board of directors representative of the constituency it serves. The organization primarily subscribes to the principles laid out in "Governance as Leadership," a book that outlines best practices for highly effective boards. Particularly relevant to NACEDA's board is the importance of the organization practicing at three levels of governance.

- **Fiduciary:** Ensures organizations are faithful to mission, accountable to performance, and compliant with relevant laws, regulations, and financial practices.
- **Strategic:** Enables boards to set the organization's priorities and course, and to deploy resources accordingly.
- **Generative:** "Problem-framing" and "sense-making."

All three levels are equally important in order to achieve a generative level understanding about the organization; this plan prioritizes several strategies and tactics aimed at getting the board to act more generatively. The organization commits to reconsidering how its governing body convenes and focuses.

- **Board meeting structure.** The board will meet more in-person for the duration of this plan and will have fewer virtual full-board meetings.
- **Standing committees will be minimized.** Committee work will be at its highest and best use when focused on the organization's needs and goals and narrowly paired with the expertise of each board member.
- **Board Recruitment**. This plan recognizes that term limits require long-serving board members to roll off the board annually beginning in 2019. Special attention must be given to continue cultivation of committed future board members. A governance/nominations committee shall regularly consider annual nominations with board turnover and diversity in mind, but also multi-year strategies to ensure NACEDA is recruiting the quality and type of board directors it needs in order to be effective. The organization will consider annually providing extra resources to recruit/enable new board directors to lead the organization if it will help NACEDA achieve its goals.