

Recovery Community Organization (RCO) Toolkit



**Building A Culture Of Recovery:
A How-To Guide For Developing Local Recovery Capital**

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NYS OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez cuts the ribbon at Creative Connections Youth Clubhouse in Amsterdam.

Executive Summary

FOR-NY is a statewide coalition of people in recovery from addiction. Our community includes people in recovery, our families, friends and allies. We come together from across New York State to ensure that any person struggling with addiction has the opportunity to recover and reclaim life as a dignified member of society.

We know that the voices of those in recovery have been marginalized because those who've spoken up, often did so alone or in small groups. But, other historical movements have taught us that we can do together what we can never do alone. We know that building strong local Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) helps to connect people in recovery with each other, and erases feelings of shame and isolation from which the early pioneers of the recovery movement sought relief. In addition, all evidence shows that peer-based, peer-driven advocacy creates solutions for the very people that need help. Quite simply, peers know what's best for themselves and for the members of their community. Such has been the case with the countless grassroots organizations that have sprung from the need to form a collective voice that could effect, positive social change.

Our toolkit is based on lessons learned from local and national partners in the Recovery Movement, including National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), Faces & Voices of Recovery, noted recovery researcher William White, and our local RCO partnerships around the state. This is a guide intended as a practical tool to help in the development of your local RCO.

Building and maintaining community-based recovery supports requires patience, understanding of group processes, and appreciation of cultural differences. The late Dr. Steven Covey said that the greatest desire of the human heart is to be understood. It is with that intent our toolkit is designed – to provide tools needed to engage local communities to work together to develop a culture of recovery.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Here's a snapshot of what you'll find in the RCO Toolkit:

- Benefits of developing relationships with members of the recovery community and other groups
- How to engage new members and communities
- How to conduct meetings with members of the recovery community
- Challenges and potential solutions to building and sustaining community partnerships
- Tools to help in creating partnerships— i.e. sample event flyers and summaries
- How to evaluate your RCO – measurable outcomes



FOR-Putnam's Jon Cassidy & FOR-Dutchess' Meghan Hetfield



Members of Columbia Pathways to Recovery host screening of The Anonymous People

Grateful Acknowledgments

The development of this toolkit was supported by NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASAS). In particular, we express much appreciation for suggestions made by both Susan Brandau, Director, Bureau of Recovery, and Fredrick Hodges, Assistant Director, Bureau of Recovery at OASAS.

We are profoundly grateful to Faces & Voices of Recovery – the leading national Recovery Community Organization (RCO) for creating the Faces & Voices of Recovery RCO Toolkit, and to Patty Metcalf McCarthy, Executive Director at Faces and Voices of Recovery, for her suggestions and edits.

We are eternally grateful to William L. White, M.A. - Emeritus Senior Research Consultant, for his research and expertise which guided our efforts. Bill has authored more than 400 articles, monographs, research reports and book chapters and 19 books.

We thank our many reviewers in the recovery communities – including our friends at Recovery Advocacy In Saratoga (RAIS), Long Island Recovery Association (LIRA), FOR-Albany, FOR-Delaware-Otsego (FOR-DO), Alumni Association of New

York, Columbia Pathways to Recovery (CPR), FOR-Orange, FOR-Warren/Washington (FOR-WW), FOR-Dutchess, FOR-Sullivan, FOR-Mohawk Valley, FOR-Onondaga, New York Recovery Community Coalition (NYRCC), for their insights, comments and suggestions.

And finally, but most importantly, we are profoundly grateful to you - the countless individuals, family members, and friends of the recovery world – who took time out of your busy lives to review and add your comments. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and hope that the toolkit you helped us develop will provide support to recovery communities working to bring help and hope to those struggling with the disease of addiction.



2nd Annual Recovery Resource Fair - Marketplace Mall- Rochester, NY



About This Toolkit

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When Friends of Recovery - New York (FOR-NY) was founded in 2008, our members were the beneficiaries of a meeting between a stockbroker and a doctor 75 years earlier.

Those two men – Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith - co-founded Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), as a way to support each other in recovery from a disease which was both stigmatizing and isolating, and from which there was no known cure.

Bill and Dr. Bob knew that helping other alcoholics was necessary to build and sustain their own recovery; and so they did. And, in turn, those they helped, helped others; and that act of one alcoholic helping another has continued for nearly a century. As a result, millions of men and women have recovered from “a seemingly helpless and hopeless state of mind and body.”ⁱⁱ

Bill Wilson’s prodigy, Mrs. Marty Mann, was a pioneering woman in recovery who founded the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) – the first advocacy organization aimed at educating and reducing stigma around alcoholism and addiction. Mann’s efforts raised legislative awareness nationally, and sparked an organized advocacy movement that has brought hope and help to millions of individuals and families impacted by addiction. Inspired by that movement, FOR-NY founders created an organization that carries on that vision – “a world where anyone in need has access to the entire spectrum of effective, recovery-focused services; where people in recovery are free to pursue meaningful lives and can experience recovery as a celebrated reality.”

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Whether new to the recovery movement or not, the FOR-NY RCO Toolkit is written for individuals and family members, friends and other allies of those impacted by addiction, who want to engage community based groups, public and private organizations, as well as local, state and federal government agencies. While it is written to advance addiction recovery advocacy, it can be equally useful to individuals and groups addressing other public health and social issues.

“When you see the light go on, and somebody says, ‘I’ve never advocated for myself or anyone’... and they claim their right to be on the face of the Earth, in this space and time... it is incredible. What a gift... that’s why I do the work.”

– Laura Elliot-Engel,
FOR-NY Founding Member

OVERVIEW OF TOOLKIT AREAS

The toolkit is divided into three distinct sections – (1) Introduction to Developing Recovery Capital, (2) Three Phases of Building an RCO, and (3) Appendices.

1 INTRODUCTION TO BUILDING RECOVERY CAPITAL

Describes the principles and benefits of building community partnerships. (A visual aimed at helping explain the stages of building community-based recovery partnerships is included.)

2 3 PHASES OF DEVELOPING AN RCO

PHASE 1

Reviews the need to look at member resources and commitment levels before launching a recovery community organization. A self-assessment tool is provided to help your fledgling organization determine whether or not it is ready to pursue a larger partnership with the community.

PHASE 2

Offers suggestions on how to engage the community and recruit people who may be potential partners. This section also includes information and tools to guide you in engaging influential community leaders.

PHASE 3

Discusses how to build the structure and function that will support and sustain the RCO. Tips on how to work within the group, stay focused on the primary purpose, and overcome challenges are also reviewed.

3 APPENDICES

Includes tools, references, and other resources to guide you along the way

SPECIAL TERMS

Like so many fields, those in the addiction recovery community tend to speak with jargon and acronyms that can seem like a foreign language to those unfamiliar with them. As such, we have taken care to ensure that all clinical terms, acronyms, and other addiction recovery jargon appear in bold type throughout this toolkit and definitions for each can be found in the Glossary at the very end. If you are uncertain about the meaning of any term, please do not hesitate to contact us for clarification.



Hundreds of recovery advocates march to the State Capitol on Stand Up for Recovery Day

Introduction to Building Recovery Capital



WHAT IS A RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION?

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Nearly 22 million Americans suffer from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Addiction is the number one cause of preventable deaths. The modern recovery movement seeks to change this by erasing the shame and stigma, getting individuals and families the help they need, and building supports to sustain recovery. Friends of Recovery – New York (FOR-NY) is committed to organizing, advocating, and bringing the power and promise of recovery to individuals and families across New York State, community by community. Click on the link below to see how New Yorkers are building recovery capital across New York State: <http://bit.ly/2roUpbT>

RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (RCOS) ⁱⁱⁱ help bridge the gap between professional treatment and building healthy and successful lives in long-term recovery. They increase the visibility and influence of the recovery community and engage in one or more of four core strategies:

1. Educating the public about the reality of recovery
2. Advocating on behalf of the recovery community
3. Delivering peer recovery support services
4. Providing / Developing a Social Recovery Support Network
 - Sober fun / Social Events
 - o Sober St. Patrick's Day
 - o Sober Super Bowl
 - o Recovery Walks
 - o Other events

WHAT IS RECOVERY CAPITAL?

RECOVERY CAPITAL is “the breadth and depth of internal and external resources that can be drawn upon to initiate and sustain recovery from severe alcohol and other drug problems.” ^{iv} Recovery capital provides “the potential antidote for problems that have long plagued recovery efforts: insufficient motivation to change alcohol and drug use, emotional distress, pressure to use within intimate and social relationships, interpersonal conflict, and other situations that pose risks for relapse.” ^v

THREE CORE PRINCIPLES OF RCOs

The Three core principles of RCOs include (1) Recovery Vision, (2) Authentic Voice, and (3) Accountability to the Recovery Community.

1. **RECOVERY VISION:** All RCOs share a Recovery Vision that focuses on the solution to the addiction problem, which is recovery. An RCO's primary goal should be to enhance the supports and services available to people seeking and sustaining (or "living in") long-term recovery from addiction. This includes embracing an "all pathways approach" to recovery. An RCO's work centers around influencing public and private policies at the local, state and federal levels aimed at helping individuals and family members get the help they need to recover. That includes access to effective treatment, as well as peer and other recovery support services. Strategies and tactics to remove discriminatory policies leveled against (or "faced by") individuals and family members impacted by addiction are at the forefront of calls to action. ^{vi}
2. **AUTHENTIC VOICE:** All RCOs share an Authentic Voice which means that the interests of the community are represented by organizations that draw their leadership from members of the recovery community. In other words, the majority of board members, staff, and volunteers are members of the local recovery community. This safeguards against competing interests and ensures that the voice of the RCO is valid. ^{vii}
3. **ACCOUNTABLE TO THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY:** All RCOs are Accountable to the Recovery Community and as such, are subject to being responsible and sensitive to its needs. To ensure that accountability, RCOs are independent, nonprofit 501-C (3) organizations with autonomy to members, and relationships and partnerships with external recovery allies – most often local councils, community prevention coalitions, and treatment or diversion programs in the health or court systems. This is all to say that RCOs are not influenced by clinical or legal entities, but rather speak with the authentic voice of the recovery community.

RCOs engage and recruit members from the local community who are in recovery, family members of individuals currently or formerly addicted (who may or may not be anonymous), and friends and other allies of the recovery community who are committed to eliminating the stigma and discrimination society has attached to addiction. They see their RCOs as a way to give back to their communities; to seek recovery and work with allied organizations by offering recovery support services; and others who wish to advocate on common public policy agendas, - broadening public understanding of the reality of recovery while remaining accountable to the recovery community." ^{viii}

OTHER KEY PRINCIPLES ^{ix} INCLUDE:

- Mutual trust and respect for all participants
- Recognition of strengths and contributions of all participants
- Shared leadership, decision-making power, resources and credit among members
- Assurance that each member is treated equally
- Promise of a safe environment for clear and open communication that values feedback from all members
- Respect for the knowledge and expertise of members
- Belief that community input is essential
- Commitment to the value of diversity
- Understanding that relationships must be nurtured and that they evolve and change.

CORE STRATEGIES OF RCO^x

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

The core strategies of RCO includes key tactics to foster recovery-focused values and communities and advance mission

- 1. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS** takes many forms and includes changing the negative perceptions of people with a history of addiction (and their families) by replacing the tragic images and stories of active addiction with the life-affirming stories of hope achieved through the process of recovery. Personal stories have power, and when individuals share their stories of life in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, they kick the shame and stigma to the curb. It is estimated that there are 23.5 million Americans who have found a new and wonderful life through any number of the multiple pathways of recovery. One fact they all know to be true is that hope is the solution to addiction. When we highlight the solution with stories of recovery, we educate the community and begin to break down the long-held stereotypes about people who are (or have been) addicted. Ultimately, we change discriminatory practices that serve as barriers and we create a culture of recovery focused on hope and healing. We do this by hosting a variety of recovery-focused events in the community. Events like Recovery Arts Festivals, Recovery Walks, Sober 4th of July picnics and First Night celebrations, screenings of recovery-focused films, etc. As these events become somewhat regular, public perception about addiction and those it impacts will begin to change.
- 2. TWO TYPES OF ADVOCACY** (Individual & Systemic) involve the practice of influencing government policy.
 - **Individual:** Advocates influencing policy to increase access to recovery supports and services, build recovery capital in communities across New York State and the nation, and eliminate discriminatory practices and stigma. For example, FOR-NY organized individuals around the state to participate in a legislative awareness campaign that brought recovery to the forefront of the opioid and prescription drug epidemic discussion. The campaign engaged individuals, family members, and allies through email blasts, phone calls, letters to the editor, visits to lawmakers, and testimony at public hearings. The campaign helped bring an increase of \$37 million to the NYS Budget aimed at improving prevention, treatment and recovery services.
 - **Systematic:** Partnerships were developed with members in the New York State Assembly, Senate and Governor's office that resulted in a historic legislative package in 2016 that mandated new prescriber education, expansion of services to support long-term recovery, hospital discharge planning for people with an alcohol and/or drug addiction, limits on opioid prescriptions, as well as the expansion of mandatory insurance coverage for people diagnosed with an alcohol or drug addiction.
- 3. DELIVER PEER-BASED RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES** (P-BRSS) RCOs are transforming the way communities build and sustain recovery by delivering an assortment of peer recovery support services. These include recovery coaches, family support navigators, phone and web recovery support services, all-recovery meetings, SMART-Recovery, wellness programs (mindfulness, meditation, yoga, etc.), faith-based recovery meetings, in addition to a host of other services organized and delivered by trained volunteers and / or paid staff.
- 4. SOCIAL RECOVERY SUPPORT NETWORK** In some cases, RCOs provide oversight for the growing network of Recovery Community and Outreach Centers (RCOCs) – also known as Recovery Community Centers (RCCs), or Youth Clubhouses (YCHs) - which provide a centralized hub for community-wide, safe and sober social activities, workshops, recovery meetings, and resource connections for individuals, family members, friends and other allies of the recovery community.

5. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Fundraising and membership development:** In order to grow and sustain RCO programs and services, RCOs must invite and encourage public and private charitable donations for community-based recovery supports; cultivate volunteer involvement, and engage friends and other allies in recovery efforts within the local community.
- **Recovery research development:** The development of strategies for sustainable recovery and peer supports. Members of the recovery community must participate in the research process. Researchers should work side-by-side with individuals and family members to identify a problem and develop and implement a plan to learn more about the problem. Upon evaluation, results and recommendations are presented to the larger community and a plan of action is developed to address the problem. ^{xi}
- **Educational campaigns:** targeted to legislators, policymakers, service providers, public agencies, and the general public about the multiple pathways of recovery. Again, education about addiction and recovery will help to eliminate stigma and break down barriers to recovery.
- **Needs assessment:** The implementation of surveys and other forms of valid and reliable assessment tools which help to improve the adequacy and quality of local recovery support services, which may include health and human services.
- **Resource assessment:** Taking continual inventories of strengths, assets and other resources that might be beneficial to the recovery community.
- **Advocacy on local, state and national levels:** Inspire activism around the slogan “nothing about us without us” – so that representatives of the recovery community are at the table for all major discussions and decisions regarding policies that impact their community.
- **Leadership development:** Developed for individuals and family members in recovery, as well as friends and other allies of recovery, to develop a collective voice, skills and responsibilities, as well as community partnerships.



Recovery Community Organizations from around the country met in Dallas in 2016 to Celebrate Recovery!

SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF NEW YORK STATE RCOS

LONG ISLAND RECOVERY ASSOCIATION (LIRA)

Founded in January 2000, the **Long Island Recovery Association (LIRA)**^{xii} was the first local community-based, grassroots recovery organization in New York State and is now a fully incorporated 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization focused on the rights of individuals and family members in recovery from or seeking help for addiction-related illnesses. LIRA looks to bring together individuals in recovery, their families, friends and other allies, to advocate for the rights and needs of those affected by addiction.

Through education and advocacy, LIRA aims to eliminate the stigma around addiction and secure genuine mental health care and alcohol and drug addiction parity and treatment on demand for those seeking help in order to ensure that a compassionate, well-informed understanding of addiction becomes the norm, not the exception among legislators, institutions, family members and society in general. Addiction is a public health issue and the evolving science behind addiction is finally driving a system change away from a cruel and failed criminal justice focus to a healthcare approach.

Based on a 2012 OASAS survey, it is estimated that at least 250,000 people are living in sustained recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs on Long Island. LIRA provides a face and a potent voice to this rather large recovery constituency. In addition to individuals in recovery, LIRA membership includes family members, political figures, teachers, healthcare and treatment professionals, retired citizens, civil servants, business owners, white-and blue-collar workers, and those interested in a better society in general. At the core of LIRA is a group of passionate, dedicated individuals, leading the drive for equality and a voice on the public policy front.

LIRA provides a place for recovery to flourish through a wide-range of activities, including:

- Advocacy Training
- Rockin' Recovery
- Screenings of The Anonymous People
- Our Stories Have Power trainings
- Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum
- Science of Addiction and Recovery (SOAR) Trainings
- And many other health and wellness workshops

Because of their advocacy efforts, LIRA was instrumental in helping to secure one of six state-wide grants for a Recovery Community Outreach Center (RCOC) on Long Island, and a Youth Club House (YCH).



Rock N Recovery VIII - Long Island Recovery Association (LIRA)

FRIENDS OF RECOVERY - DELAWARE/OTSEGO (FOR-DO)

By contrast, **FOR-DO^{xiii}** is an RCO that operates two RCOCs and two Youth Clubhouses. FOR-DO provides information about its programs and services, as well as its history, mission and guiding principles; the latest news about addiction and recovery; advocacy efforts, and opportunities to contribute financial support.

FOR-DO also provides news about various activities and events taking place at its two RCOC locations – The Turning Point in Oneonta and The Turning Point in Delhi. These centers serve as a community resource for skill-building education, information support services, emotional support services, and socialization for those in recovery and their loved ones. Its success is testament to the fact that recovery from alcohol and drug addiction is possible. The basis for available services and programming through an RCOC are Peer-Based Recovery Support Services (P-BRSS).

These are non-clinical services that focus on removing barriers and providing invaluable resources to those who are seeking to achieve and maintain long-term recovery. Peer-driven and peer-delivered support services are fueled by the energy of volunteers who seek to share their experience and knowledge with others. The support offered is not meant to replace treatment, Twelve-Step support or other Mutual Aid support groups. RCOCs acknowledge and support multiple pathways to recovery.

The Turning Point RCOCs promote quality of life, relapse prevention and sustained recovery through a variety of activities, including:

- The FOR-DO Annual Recovery Dinner
- The Youth Clubhouse Project
- Club Odyssey
- Peer-led groups for individuals and families
- Connecting people to recovery supports and services, including:
 - o Employment
 - o Housing
 - o Public assistance
 - o Emergency relief
 - o Legal services
 - o Vocational rehabilitation and training
 - o Health and wellness classes
 - o Child care
 - o Transportation
 - o Clothing,
 - o Food assistance
 - o Emergency services



RCO's Visit Turning Point Recovery Community Center- FOR Delaware Otsego- Oneonta, NY

The Turning Point RCOCs are places where individuals in recovery learn how to face life's challenges with guidance and solutions; where skills are shared and learned; and where isolation becomes inclusion and strangers become friends.

RECOVERY ADVOCACY IN SARATOGA (R.A.I.S.)

R.A.I.S.^{xiv} began as a grassroots, volunteer-based movement and in the summer of 2014, was established as an RCO.

R.A.I.S. was inspired by “The Anonymous People” (a film about the growing Recovery movement) and like other Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) across the country, its beginnings can be traced to a conversation about solutions and agreement that the recovery community in Saratoga County needed a voice to reduce the stigma of addiction by changing public perception of the disease and those affected by it; and to promote wellness in long-term recovery.

Following the models provided by *Faces and Voices of Recovery* and with the support of FOR-NY, RAIS has become a significant voice in their community through outreach, education, awareness and support. RAIS is a program of The Prevention Council in Saratoga County and may become a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the future. After RAIS established the suggested core elements that distinguished their RCO from other alcohol and drug related organizations, they submitted an application to the Association of Recovery Community Organizations (ARCO) to gain exposure and support from other RCOs.

Some of the many activities that RAIS hosts to engage the recovery community include:

- FOR-NY Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum
- Screenings of *The Anonymous People* and *Generation Found*
- The Annual Lighting of the Tree of Hope
- Movie Nights
- Candle Light Vigils for those who have lost their lives to alcohol and drug addiction
- Sober Super Bowl Parties

R.A.I.S. has been a strong partner in the successful application that The Prevention Council of Saratoga County secured as one of six state-wide applicants to open a Recovery Community & Outreach Center (RCOC) in their region.



2015 Recovery Talks in Saratoga kicked off a statewide conversation of Recovery

PHASES OF RCO DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: GETTING STARTED	PHASE 2: MOVING FORWARD	PHASE 3: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
<p>Are you ready for a Recovery Community Organization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess your community's readiness for an RCO 	<p>How will you Connect with and Engage the Recovery Community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the Recovery Community Do Your Homework Connect with the Recovery Community & Allies Create a Community Dialogue – Meet Recovery Community Stakeholders and Possible Partners Form a Core Planning Group 	<p>How to Build and Maintain an RCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define Your RCO Develop Your RCOs Identity and Purpose Build RCO Membership and Leadership Create Organizational Structures and Guidelines that Support Your RCO Regularly Evaluate Your Partnership with Measureable Outcomes

KEY STANDARDS TO BUILDING SUCCESSFUL RCOs

Faces & Voices of Recovery has identified key standards for building successful RCOs. Agreement should be reached as a joint and ongoing effort among all RCO participants. These standards are applied throughout the life of the RCO. In some cases, it may be helpful for additional principles to be defined to fit the specific RCO's vision and purpose, and to build and maintain unity among members.^{xv}

- **VISION/MISSION:** Taking time to develop a shared vision and mission
- **ORGANIZATION:** Maintaining organizational independence, ownership, and control
- **FUNDING:** Diversifying funding streams
- **ADVOCACY:** Making advocacy a part of a recovery community organization's agenda
- **RECOVERY:** Maintaining a focus on recovery
- **DIVERSITY:** Recognizing and embracing diversity within the recovery community
- **MULTIPLE PATHWAYS:** Valuing and respecting diverse pathways to recovery

- **LEADERSHIP:** Empowering existing leaders and developing new ones
- **RCO NETWORK:** Building relationships with local, national and international recovery community organizations
- **ALLIES:** Building alliances with allied organizations and movements
- **PROCESS:** Organizing and building a recovery community organization is a process, not an event
- **MEMBERS:** Developing membership structures that fit your organization's needs
- **HUMANIZING:** Educating the public by putting a face and a voice on recovery

SUMMARY

An RCO provides a structure and function for individuals, family members, friends and other allies of the recovery community to work together to address issues and concerns that are important to the recovery community. While creating an RCO offers extraordinary benefits, it requires time and patience, and can, at times be challenging. A guiding tradition should always be “principles before personalities.”

This toolkit is intended to guide members of the recovery community through the three phases. Every RCO has its own identity and autonomy. Some of the steps may occur in different order for each RCO. In other cases steps may happen simultaneously. Still others may experience that their developing RCO will revisit steps, especially when new members join, or the focus of a specific project or issues changes. Flexibility is key. We wish you all the best in your journey towards building your recovery community organization. FOR-NY will offer technical assistance and support along the journey.



Charlene Payne stands up for Recovery - Brooklyn Recovery Talks



Friends of Recovery from across the state heading to the nation's capital

Phase 1: Getting Started

Is Your Community
Ready for an RCO?

ASSESS YOUR COMMUNITY'S READINESS FOR AN RCO

Developing an RCO requires passion, patience, commitment, time, skill and resources. Know that you are not alone: FOR-NY is happy to support you through this process. Before you start organizing an RCO, it's important to consider whether or not your members have the commitment and resources necessary to make it successful.^{xvi}

When assessing your community's readiness for an RCO, think about your individual and organizational strengths and limitations. What might be some of the benefits your group might gain, and what might be some of the benefits will you provide to the larger community? This may also be a good time to look at your past and current relationships with the larger community. Remember to be open-minded and honest and to listen to all suggestions.

With respect to diversity, assessing cultural competency or cultural humility so that there will be mutual understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the recovering community's population is critical. **Cultural Competency** looks at the abilities of individuals

and organizations to work effectively with people of different backgrounds. In community education and advocacy work, we appreciate and respect diversity, understand the cultural context of the individuals and families we work with, and have the willingness and skills to work within this context. In short, this means appreciating community-based values, traditions, and customs, and working with knowledgeable people from the community to plan, implement, and evaluate inclusive activities.^{xvii} **Cultural Humility** is a daily practice of self-examination to acknowledge and amend power imbalances among individuals and to commit to working effectively across cultures and diverse populations.^{xviii}

The following readiness assessment tool can help you measure personal and organizational readiness to form an RCO in your community. It is designed to assist your group in articulating its strengths and limitations so that you'll be better positioned to understand what you are able to do on your own and what areas may need outside assistance. While utilizing this assessment tool, you may also become aware of potential barriers to building relationships in the community. No worries. In the next phase of this process, you'll be prepared to collaborate with your members and community stakeholders.



Hundreds of Recovery Advocates Rally For Recovery - FOR WW - Glens Falls, NY

FOR-NY RCO READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

(see [Appendix](#) for RCO Readiness Assessment Tool)

Answer each of the questions below twice. First from your perspective, then from your RCO’s perspective:

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Are you genuinely interested in (and committed to) the recovery community?						
2. Do you know why you want to form a Recovery Community Organization? (<i>Check one or more</i>)						
a) Save lives						
b) Change community understanding of addiction and recovery						
c) Change community response to and support of addiction recovery						
d) Need to break down barriers to recovery for individuals and families						
e) Need RCO to meet funding requirements						
f) Need to recruit individuals from recovery community for a study						
g) Need credibility that may come from partnering with recovery people and family members						
h) Need resources that come from partnerships with outside community organizations						
i) Other (<i>write in</i>)						
3. Do your plans and priorities encourage and support the values of all pathways of recovery?						
4. Do you have a previous history of working with “the many pathways of recovery” community?						

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Is this history a positive one?						
5. Do you know about the recovery resources in your community?						
6. Do you have existing relationships with the recovery community?						
a.) Are these relationships positive?						
7. Do you have the time needed to engage with the recovery community and create partnerships with allies?						
8. Do you have the necessary skills to begin and sustain an RCO? (Check one or more)						
a) Communication:						
1) Ability to provide and receive feedback						
2) Strong listening skills						
3) Ability to be a clear and effective verbal and nonverbal communicator						
b) Cultural competency / humility						
c) Ability to share power and control over decisions						
d) Group facilitation and interpersonal skills						
9. Can you contribute any of the following to the RCO?						

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Staff and/or volunteers						
b) In-kind resources (e.g. meeting space, technology, distribution network)						
c) Connections to key community leaders and resources						
d) Knowledge of the issues/topics to be addressed						
e) Training and technical assistance						
f) Other: (e.g. financial resources)						

PLEASE WRITE YOUR RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

10. What are the potential benefits of an RCO for the recovery community in our county?

11. What are the potential benefits for our RCO in partnering with the outside community?

12. What concerns might you have about starting an RCO in your county?

SUMMARY

Before officially considering your organization an RCO, it's helpful to assess your and your fledgling members' resources, skills and commitment. The *FOR-NY RCO Readiness Assessment Tool* will help you reflect on your group readiness. If you have concluded that you are indeed prepared and committed to engaging the larger community, the following sections will prove helpful in developing strategies for identifying and approaching influential stakeholders.



Color Blaze 5K Recovery Run - Walk- FOR-Dutchess

Phase 2: Moving Forward

How will you engage and connect with the recovery community?

IDENTIFY THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY

Recovery from substance use and mental health disorders is defined as the “process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”^{xix} Individuals achieve recovery through a variety of pathways, including formal treatment, mutual aid, medication-assisted, faith-based, wellness, and without any help from treatment professionals or mutual aid groups. Each individual selects the form of recovery most appropriate for them. Like other chronic illnesses, recovery from addiction requires ongoing support. That said, the process of recovery is different for everyone. Certain pathways are more suitable or available for some than for others.^{xx} And, as in recovery from other chronic illnesses, there may be transitional stages in recovery from addiction, including periods of use, abstinence, treatment, or incarceration.^{xxi}

WHAT IS THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY?

The recovery community consists of more than 23 million Americans currently living in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families, friends and other allies – all who wish to engage in the process of healing from addiction.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK: GET TO KNOW THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY

No single organization or individual represents the recovery community. To ensure a diverse and representative recovery partnership, members of the RCO should represent various sectors of the recovery community. In identifying individuals and groups that may want to partner with your RCO, try to engage with individuals, family members, and other allies of recovery from a variety of sectors or fields. For example:

- Multiple Pathways for recovering individuals, family and friends
 - o 12-Step Programs (Anonymous)
 - o SMART Recovery
 - o Young People in Recovery (YPR)
 - o LifeRing Secular Recovery
 - o Physical Fitness Recovery
 - o Faith-based Recovery
 - o Women for Sobriety (WFS)
 - o Many more
- Addiction and mental health prevention and treatment professionals
 - o Council on Addictions of New York State (CANYS)
 - o Treatment and Recovery Alumni Groups

ASSESS COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, ASSETS, RESOURCES

Learn about the issues that are important to the individuals and groups supportive of the recovery community. Check to see who the various community groups are. If you have worked with any of them, identify what worked and what didn't. Engage your group in discussions about strategies that may be helpful in partnering with those individuals and organizations supportive of your mission so that your RCO can build solid relationships.

As with any organization, it's important to take an inventory of your members' assets and resources. As you gather information about your needs and assets, priorities will materialize. No one can determine the RCO's true priorities without having a clear perspective on what resources and assets are available.

CONNECT WITH RECOVERY COMMUNITY ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Members of the recovery community are often the easiest to engage, while identifying other recovery partners and allies takes a little more effort. Multiple Pathway Groups and Mutual Aid members, and leaders of local prevention councils and the Council on Addiction of New York State (CANYS) or community-based organizations are good places to start. You can also determine whether or not existing organizations have established protocols for determining their involvement in new partnerships. However, the best way to assess and build relationships is to attend local events and meet with community members in person. There is no substitute for real face time! Here are some potential allies and partners to consider:

- Law enforcement
- Local business leaders
- Schools and universities
- Community-based social organizations
- City/County government organizations
- Health, wellness and medical professionals
- Clergy, spiritual community and faith-based organizations
- Other parent and youth groups

RCO PARTNER INVENTORY FORM

List possible recovery community members / allies

Sector	Name	Organization	Address	Phone	Email
Prevention					
Treatment					
Family / Youth					
Older Adults					
Health & Human Services					
Community Organizations					
Education					
Faith-Based					
Government					
Advocacy					
Business					
Law Enforcement					
Other					

CREATE A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE – RECOVERY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND ALLIED PARTNERS

Recovery Community members and allies can help you to plan your initial meetings to discuss the development of an RCO. These meetings provide an opportunity to educate local leaders about the critical need for recovery supports in the community and allow your group the opportunity to get to know each other.

The Checklist below lists several planning tasks to help you organize your early community meetings:

RCO MEETING PLANNING TASK LIST

- Prepare a list of recovery community members and allied partners.
- Arrange an in-person meeting with core group to discuss the objectives of the meeting.
- Set a date and location for the meeting that is a “neutral” public meeting space.
- Prepare an agenda.
- Send an email invitation stating the purpose of the meeting and enclose agenda.
- Prepare educational recovery materials to distribute at the meeting.
- Arrange for food/snacks and water/soft drinks at the meeting – appoint some greeters to welcome people to the meeting.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Send a follow—up email summary and gather feedback from meeting participants. Enclose a meeting summary with date and time of next meeting.

CONDUCT SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

The first couple of meetings are critical to the success of your RCO, so we suggest the following:

- Identify a facilitator to conduct a series of meetings in your community.
- Establish an agreement among attendees at each meeting that there will be a concerted effort to develop a unified purpose.
- Have an agenda for each meeting which includes the organization’s vision and opportunities for the community to learn about issues of importance to the recovery community.
- Meeting summary should include a list of attendees and suggestions for who should be invited to future meetings.

- Present a broad vision of the power and promise of recovery, the solution to the problem of addiction through the building of recovery capital in a community.
- Gauge community interest and support for the creation of an RCO.
- Listen carefully to community members as they discuss their concerns and priorities.
- The facilitator should ensure no one dominates the meeting with a one-sided discussion about their own agenda, elicit feedback, seek collaboration and propose flexible alternatives.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS ^{xxii} (see [Appendix](#) for Successful Meetings Handout)

- Designate someone to chair the meeting and another to take notes
- Distribute the agenda to all participants a few days before the meeting
- At the beginning of the meeting, ask people to introduce themselves and their connection to addiction/recovery
- Have a set schedule for the various agenda items and stick to it
- Start on time and end on time
- Develop and distribute a meeting summary including next steps and responsible parties with date of next meeting
- Thank everyone for their time, passion and commitment

Some Tips for Successful Meetings:

- Meetings are an important part of the process of building an effective Recovery Community Organization (RCO). And, it is important that meetings have structure, organization and follow some basic rules. Following these steps will help to engage/support all attendees, develop plans, and monitor progress.
- For each meeting, there should be an agenda and the groups should establish and follow some “ground rules.” These are important because you want to make progress and keep people involved and engaged. Don’t forget that everyone is donating their time and talent and you don’t want to lose their investment and commitment to moving forward together.
 - 1). **CHAIR:** Always designate someone to chair the meeting, manage the agenda and discussion
 - 2). **MEETING AGENDA:** Always have a written agenda sent out to all participants before the meeting. At the start of the meeting, ask for any additions or changes to agenda
 - 3). **MEETING SUMMARY:** Ask someone to take notes and typed up as a meeting summary that can be sent to everyone before the next meeting. Meeting Summary is notes, not a word for word report. And, the Meeting Summary should be in the same order as the Meeting Agenda.
 - 4). **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:** Ask everyone to introduce themselves- Who am I?; Where am I From?; Why Am I Here?- In recovery, family member, friend/ally.
 - 5). **SIGN-IN LIST:** Ask everyone to sign-in so you can build your communications- ask for e-mail and phone- PLEASE PRINT
 - 6). **START ON TIME/END ON TIME:** Have a set amount of time for the meeting and agenda items.
 - 7). **SUMMARY AT END OF MEETING:** Chair reports on what happened in the meeting and who will take responsibility for next steps.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media can be a powerful tool for connecting the Recovery Community. Consider building your RCO's presence and following on a few of the leading platforms. These would include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Linked In and Google+. While each has its own style and "best practices," the following points apply to all of them.

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA

- Get the word out – fast and free
- Engage friends and friends of friends
- Build a community of supporters (Allies, Advocates, Ambassadors, Donors)
- Easily reach the folks your RCO exists to serve
- Become a thought leader in the community
- Tell your story
- FOR-NY used social media as one of its primary communications tactics to promote Stand Up for Recovery Day 2017 and attracted a record-number of recovery advocates to Albany. Follow this link to see Recovery Advocacy in action - <http://bit.ly/2roUpbT>

OPPORTUNITIES SOCIAL MEDIA CREATES

- Educate community about your cause and update them on your organization
- Connect with supporters who support Recovery
- Engage community by creating opportunities for members to interact with you and each other
- Inspire action by communicating your messages, sharing knowledge, promoting events, etc.
- Attract Donations – financial & in-kind

BEST PRACTICES

- Content should be short and to the point, include links, images, announcements, and knowledge sharing
- Be human – don't post boring, sterile content
- Posts should be informal and conversational
- Aim to catch attention and inspire action
- Follow and/or like other community and like-minded groups
- Establish expectations by posting consistently
- Posts with images see 37% more engagement than those with just text
- Posts with exclamation points generate 2.7 times more interactions
- Posts that end with question marks, rather than periods generate 2x as much engagement
- Be sure to Tag (@Username) Individuals and organizations mentioned in your post

- In addition to sharing news about your organization, use social media to:
 - express appreciation to donors, supporters, volunteers, and other allies
 - engage and share content of other recovery-focused organizations
 - solicit donations or help (no more than 1/3 of posts)
- Stay involved with like-minded individuals and organizations by liking, sharing, and / or commenting on their posts
- Analysis – Most platforms include free insights that allow you to determine what types of posts are most effective. Be sure to check them regularly to see what types of posts/topics generate the most engagement.

Looking for recovery-focused news and content to share on your social media platforms? You'll find a variety of material from news updates to recovery research, support services, event information, and more at [FOR-NY.org](https://for-ny.org).

FORMING A CORE GROUP

Following the initial meeting, individuals can decide if they want to:

- Form a core group or steering committee
- Leaders from the recovery community could partner with other recovery allies to take the first steps towards developing the RCO
- Core Group can convene future next meetings, establish the agenda, and determine key issues on which to focus.
- These issues should include creating formal Mission and Vision statements, developing the RCO's structure, and a plan for the recruitment and retention of members.

SUMMARY

In this section, we presented a step-by-step process for involving members of the recovery community. It focused on the need to:

- Identify the recovery community
- Do your homework
- Connecting the recovery community with allies and partners
- Creating a community dialogue
- Using social media
- Forming a core group

Next, we'll look at the steps to formalize and sustain your Recovery Community Organization (RCO)



Science of Addiction & Recovery Training, NYC

Phase 3: Putting it all together

How to build and
maintain an RCO

STEPS TO ORGANIZING THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY^{xxiii}

- Establish the core group
- Establish leadership and /or champion(s) for the cause
- Determine RCO's mission, vision and purpose
- Establish a working infrastructure (Board of Directors, Staff, Volunteers)
- Recruit, engage, and retain more recovery advocates
- In early stages, pick one or two priority projects and execute them extremely well to establish credibility
- Make sure these early stage projects are “right-sized” – not too small or too big
- Build on your successes/strengths
- Promote successes among constituency, stakeholders, potential funders
- Share information among all members – opportunities as they arise
- Create a system to prioritize; and evaluate what's working and what needs improvement

RCO DO'S AND DON'TS^{xxiv}

DO

- Support recovery potential for everyone
- Represent independent and peer-led members of the recovery community
- Commit to recovery-related social change i.e.: recovery-focused community reeducation; advocating pro-recovery social policies
- Invest in organizing recovery resources within your local community
- Offer peer-based, non-clinical recovery support services to individuals and families
- Bridge gap between clinical treatment and long-term recovery
- Work towards cultural competency
- Celebrate multiple pathways of recovery

DON'T

- Advocate for personal recovery
- Provide clinical assessment or treatment
- Take positions on controversial, non-recovery partisan issues
- Act as 12-step sponsors in their volunteer role
- Provide clinical services
- Provide addiction counseling
- Exclude members based on social status, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, history of incarceration
- Promote any one pathway

BENEFITS OF FORMING AN RCO

- Helps overcome barriers to recovery
- Creates social network of recovery
- Sponsors / supports “Fun in Recovery”
- Reduces stigma and shame around addiction / recovery
- Empowers individuals and family members impacted by addiction and provides hope for recovery
- Creates and sustains community interest and commitment to recovery issues
- Connects recovery community with allied partners to increase and improve recovery supports and resources
- Establishes relationships with the wider recovery community (state and national)
- Shares resources and reduces competing services and supports
- Raises positive public awareness around addiction and recovery
- Builds recovery-oriented and supportive communities and strengthens recovery capital
- Establishes credibility with decision makers which helps shape policy, regulations, legislation and funding for recovery supports and services



Capital Steps - Advocacy Day

DEVELOPING AN RCO IDENTITY AND PURPOSE – A SHARED VISION

RCO's can build relationships that reflect the priorities of the recovery community. What is most important is that multiple views and ideas that represent the many pathways of recovery and stakeholders of the community are shared.

Ways to gather input from the broader community include:

- Hosting *Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forums* and Town Hall meetings
- Fielding online or hard copy surveys
- Presenting screenings of recovery-focused films like the acclaimed *The Anonymous People* and *Generation Found*, followed by discussion and a Q&A session

GROUP NAME AND LOGO

Creating the name and logo for your RCO is an important group process that provides a sense of identity and ownership, and will position your organization to the public. It is a wonderful opportunity to build group connection. It is also critical to make sure that the name and logo for your RCO is not already being used by any other organization. Suggested process:

- Group members brainstorm and list potential names
- Group comes to a consensus on top two names
- RCO members may contribute their time and talent or find community graphic artist willing to develop a design for the logo. Logo should represent the mission and vision of the RCO
- Both the name and logo should be approved unanimously by RCO members

VISION, MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- A **VISION STATEMENT** offers hope for the future. It's the end point of what the RCO hopes to achieve and reflects the RCO's worldview of what will happen if the problem of addiction is addressed with the solution of recovery. It is understood and shared by members of the recovery community, is broad enough to respect diverse perspectives within the various pathways of recovery, is inspiring, and easy to communicate.
- A **MISSION STATEMENT** describes the RCO's reason for existence. It supports the vision statement and addresses what the RCO is going to do and why it does it. Mission statements serve as an orientation for the RCO and serve as a measurement to gauge if your group is moving in the right direction. Mission statements are concise and outcome-oriented. No project should be undertaken without first confirming that it aligns with the organization's mission statement.
- **GOALS** are specific, action-oriented items that the RCO strives to achieve. These should include what the RCO wants to accomplish, and a sense of when it will be accomplished.
- **OBJECTIVES** are measurable strategies and tasks that will be used by the RCO to achieve its goals. Objectives should be **S.M.A.R.T.**^{xxv}
 - o **S** = Specific
 - o **M** = Measureable
 - o **A** = Achievable
 - o **R** = Realistic
 - o **T** = Timed (has a deadline or timetable attached to it).

BUILDING RCO MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Each RCO must recruit and retain its membership. Below are some strategies that may help your group find and engage members. Inclusiveness and diversity should be encouraged.

RECRUITING AND MAINTAINING MEMBERS

RECRUITING MEMBERS

- Connect face-to-face and via phone to invite members of recovery community and allies
- Invite members to monthly meetings
- Ask new members to help identify others to ensure diverse group
- Use flyers (see appendix) and brochures to distribute and post at community events
- Use membership form (see appendix) to track who is participating in the group and what expertise they bring
- Hold meetings at convenient times and locations
- Address barriers to attendance such as childcare, transportation and conflicts with other recovery group meetings
- Ask community leaders to help identify potential recruits

MAINTAINING MEMBERS

- Create warm and friendly meeting environment
- Provide clear information about group goals, objectives, and agendas (see appendix)
- Keep sign in sheets of who attends meetings and how to contact (see appendix)
- Use evaluation forms to gather feedback about how meetings are run (see appendix)
- Use Social Media and email to communicate group activities and future meetings
- Use your website and listserv to disseminate messages to membership
- Plan fun social events to build strong personal ties between members and the larger community
- Involve members as often as possible in planning and implementation of group activities

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education is critical to reducing the stigma associated with addiction and creating an informed society where recovery for individuals and families becomes a societal norm. There are multiple programs designed to help RCOs engage members of the recovery community and their allies through a variety of educational and training opportunities, including:

- Family-to-Family Toolkit
- *Our Stories Have Power* – Recovery Community Message Training
- *Science of Addiction & Recovery*
- *Supervision of Recovery Coaches*
- *The Anonymous People*
- *Generation Found*
- FOR-NY/ASAP Annual Recovery Celebration and Conference
- FOR-NY Recovery Advocacy Day
- Recovery Coach Academy (RCA) Trainings
- Recovery Arts Festival - September
- *Stand Up For Recovery: Recovery Advocacy Training*

RECOVERY COMMUNITY MESSAGING TRAININGS HELP INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND ALLIES

It is important that we learn how to talk about recovery so that the public understands what it is. We are also empowered through the process. Often, communities will host a *FOR-NY Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum*, followed by the *Our Stories Have Power Training*. Some people describe it as a “coming out of the closet experience” – that is liberating and life-affirming. Through this process, we:

- Learn that it is okay to talk to others about recovery
- Recognize our shared experiences and encourage mobilizing to advocate for changes to public policy
- Create a strong national recovery movement organized at the local, state and federal levels
- Learn that talking about recovery publicly doesn't violate the traditions of any 12-step fellowship
- Help to educate others in 12-step groups about their right to speak out
- Put a face and a voice on recovery to break down misperceptions and change attitudes (stigma)
- Advocate to change policies around access to healthcare, housing, employment and ultimately eliminate discrimination

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

RCOs can help address public policy barriers that keep people from building and sustaining their recovery. This is critical to helping individuals and families impacted by addiction to get the recovery services and supports they need. One of the unintended consequences of criminalizing addiction, rather than treating it as a public health crisis, is the impact it has on those with criminal justice involvement. Advocacy for treatment rather than incarceration is one way in which the recovery community is rallying around ending punishment for individuals addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

Stigma results in discrimination which creates barriers that make it difficult for people to gain access to healthcare, find safe and sober housing, gain employment, re-enter their communities, and reunite with their families. RCOs can provide strong advocacy on the local, state and national levels. Such advocacy promotes policies to enforce parity mental health and addiction equity, legislation and regulations that expand prevention, treatment on demand, and recovery services, and resources to support recovery in communities. Through their advocacy efforts, RCOs:

- Reduce stigma and shame
- Ensure addiction is addressed as a public health issue, not a crime
- Eliminate barriers to getting help
- Advocate for systems that engage / support individuals and families
- Develop non-punitive, nonjudgmental recovery services

RCOs can mobilize the recovery community and help energize allies for change through a variety of ways, including:

- Hosting *Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forums*
- Hosting educational forums and trainings
- Disseminating surveys to their members
- Advocating with local, state and national representatives for recovery specific legislation, policies and funding
- Developing policy/advocacy committees to partner with FOR-NY Policy / Advocacy Committee

BUILDING GROUP TRUST AND COHESIVENESS

- Critical to the survival of an RCO is trust. It is an ongoing process, built upon members' past histories, ability to work together, share power, and experience working professionally. When trust is present, meetings and planning go smoothly. When trust is not present, consensus building and group functionality breaks down.
- Confidentiality and mutual respect are key to building group trust and cohesiveness. While this may seem obvious, it is important to remind group members of this when sensitive topics are discussed. It may also be beneficial to set aside time once or twice a year to go on a weekend retreat or some other specific event as a group so that relationship-building and cohesiveness can be maintained.



Rev. Donnelly of Long Island spoke out for recovery at a LIRA Recovery Talk in Huntington Station, NY

CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND GUIDELINES THAT SUPPORT YOUR RCO^{xxvi}

Should you choose to incorporate or not incorporate, there are several things you might want to consider:

PARTNER WITH LOCAL NON-PROFITS

When you first get started it may be easiest to partner with a non-treatment provider, community-based organization like a local council (Council on Addictions of New York State - CANYS) member. As a partner, you benefit from their tax exempt status for purchasing and tax deductible donations.

INCORPORATION

Before tackling incorporation as a 501(c)(3) organization, there are a variety of resources available to help you determine whether or not you want to pursue non-for-profit status. Alternatively, you may be able to obtain legal expertise and guidance from one or more of your members.

BUSINESS PLAN

Whether or not you incorporate, your RCO will also want to develop a business plan, establish a budget and bookkeeping system for keeping financial records, as well as a template for developing reports to funding agencies. The business plan should include the development of informational materials and resources, setting up an office, web site, communications and other systems.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS^{xxvii}

You'll want to determine as a group how your Board of Directors will be set up and operate. (Note: your Board will need to include a percentage – generally 50% or more – of people from the recovery community.) You'll also need to appoint a Board Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as specific committees (i.e. Fundraising, Policy, Communications). If you've decided to incorporate, you'll need to draft bylaws and set up a formal organizational structure.

DEVELOPING SYSTEMS FOR DECISION MAKING^{xxviii}

RAPID is an acronym for the roles that your members can play in the decision-making process. Each letter stands for a specific role and members can have more than one role assigned to them, depending on the context of the decision and the size of the group. The order of the letters is not important, but the acronym "R-A-P-I-D" is a device to remember these roles:

- "**R**" stands for "**recommender**"—the person who drives the process.
- "**A**" is for an individual who needs to "**approve**" or veto a recommendation.
- "**P**" stands for "**perform**"—the person who carries out the decision once it has been made.
- "**I**" stands for "**input**." An "**I**" must be consulted, but does not have a vote or veto.
- "**D**" means "**decide**." The "**D**" has final authority to commit the organization to action.

DEVELOP RCO BYLAWS

Your RCO will need to agree on a set of rules (or bylaws) to guide its work. Many of those rules are set during the initial brainstorming sessions at community meetings. It is often necessary to have a corporate structure, particularly if your RCO has decided to incorporate. Bylaws state the mission, purpose, goals, and rules of your organization. They also establish the roles and responsibilities of members, define the organizational and operational structure, and establish meeting rules.

BYLAWS CHECKLIST^{xxix}

Use this checklist as a guide. You can adapt or expand these as needed

Name and Jurisdiction

Defines the official name of your RCO and who your group represents

Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

Defines your RCO's purpose

Membership

Explains membership criteria and member rights and responsibilities

Governing Structure

Explains the governing bodies and the process for making decisions. You may also want to cover:

- Election of steering committee
- Establishment of Board of Directors
- Roles and responsibilities of committees
- Voting procedures
- Resignation process
- Length of term of elected positions
- Amendment process

Meetings

Defines the criteria for the meetings. You may also want to cover:

- How often will the RCO Board and committees meet?
- Who will facilitate the meetings?
- Who will keep minutes of the meetings?

Staff

Explains procedures for hiring staff. You may also want to cover:

- Reasons and procedures to terminate staff
- Who determines staff qualifications

Funds Management

Explains management of funds and budget. You may also want to cover:

- Who is responsible for distributing funds
- How to submit a request to receive funds
- Fiscal year
- Financial reporting process

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising from numerous sources will be necessary to support events, open an office, hire staff, and cover other expenses. Most RCOs started with nothing more than an idea and some people committed to recovery – and no money! Some RCOs have benefitted from large grants that allowed for substantial budgets in their early years and the ability to develop strong infrastructure. Others have grown with business plans that had no initial investment in paid staff or office space and secured funding after demonstrating an ability to carry out their agenda. Fundraising is about giving people an opportunity to invest in recovery!

Your RCO will need to identify who potential funders and build strong relationships with them. Fundraising is a way to demonstrate a belief in the mission and vision of your RCO. Some examples of where you might identify potential funding streams include:

GOVERNMENT FUNDING:

- **Federal funding:** ie: Access to Recovery; Recovery Month; Reentry programs
- **State funding:** ie: Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC); block grants; Medicaid program billable services; contracts through Department of Corrections or other state agencies, Recovery Community Outreach Centers (RCOCs), Youth Clubhouses (YCHs), Family Support Navigators (FSNs), Peers Services
- **OASAS Link RFP Announcements:** <https://oasas.ny.gov/procurements/index.cfm#RFP>
- **NYS Grants Gateway:** Streamlining State Grant Processes site: <https://grantsreform.ny.gov/>
- **Recovery Month Fundraising Tips and Tools:** <https://www.recoverymonth.gov/events/plan-events/fundraising>

PRIVATE FUNDING:

- **Start with your members:** asking others to “invest” in your mission is best done when members give first!
- **Community fundraising:** ie: businesses, Local Government Units (LGUs)
- **Private foundations:** ie: Christopher D. Smithers Foundation; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Open Society Foundation; Health Foundation, and other local family foundations
- **Self-funding:** ie: Donations from people in recovery, their friends and associates
- **Paid memberships:** ie: membership dues
- **Campaigns:** ie: the campaign for addiction recovery (CFAR)
- **Event sponsorships:** ie: conferences, walks, runs, etc.
- **Allied organization:** ie: employers, educators, faith-based and business communities; health-care providers, attorneys

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO MAINTAINING RCO PARTICIPATION

Your RCO may face challenges as you move towards building and strengthening your recovery capital. You are not alone. Many of us exclaimed, “what an order! I can’t go through with it.’ Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress...not perfection.”^{xxx}

CHALLENGE 1 FAILURE TO ACT

Some RCO members spend too much time on discussion and planning and not enough time on action. Members may become discouraged and frustrated when they don’t see results.

SOLUTION: BE ACCOUNTABLE

- Share minutes with your members
- Be clear on what work needs to be done, who will do it, and when it will be done
- Eliminate confusion and misunderstandings by addressing concerns immediately



5K Run - Walk- Recovery Rally- FOR Rockland- Valley Cottage, NY

CHALLENGE 2 LIMITED RESOURCES

Money and staff are most often limited. While time is often the most valuable commodity, it is also often in short supply.

SOLUTION: RESPECT MEMBERS' TIME

- Create realistic work plans that fit with members schedules
- Volunteers should have realistic goals and work plans
- Ask for help when needed from outside partnerships

CHALLENGE 3 GROUP DYNAMICS

The behavior of a few can influence the dynamics of the many. Recognize that conflict is a necessary part the group process.

SOLUTION: PRINCIPLES OVER PERSONALITIES

- Process of resolution can be outlined in bylaws or guidelines
- Agree to disagree agreeably with focus on RCO mission / vision
- Designate an internal skilled group facilitator or mediator
- Focus on main goals rather than getting tangled in conflict

CHALLENGE 4 POWER RELATIONSHIP

RCOs suffer when members have unequal power.

SOLUTION: THERE IS NO "I" IN TEAM

- Power is balanced among all members
- Knowledge and opinions of all members are respected
- Skills and knowledge can be transferred to other members of the RCO through training, education and technical assistance

CHALLENGE 5 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Social inequalities including racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of intolerance exist.

SOLUTION: CHERISH DIVERSITY

- Define set of values and principles reflective of cross-cultural respect
- Manage dynamics of difference respectfully
- Utilize institutional cultural knowledge where gaps exist (through trainings if needed)
- Adapt to diversity and cultural context when issues arise

CHALLENGE 6 SUSTAINABILITY

Keeping the RCO going is not just about money or resources.

SOLUTION: BUILDING CAPACITY

- Training and information sharing increases RCO knowledge and skills
- Recruit new members for fresh energy and ideas for the RCO
- Celebrate your RCO's success

CHALLENGE 7 FINDING SOLUTIONS

RCO building will bring new challenges that require creative and thoughtful solutions.

SOLUTION: DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

The chart on the next page lists strategies you may find helpful in overcoming some of those challenges.

OVERCOMING KEY CHALLENGES TO RCO DEVELOPMENT

- Take time to learn about the people, politics and dynamics of the recovery community before recruiting members
- Work with people who share your RCO's common commitment to building recovery capital
- Allow enough time to build and nurture relationships with members
- Familiarize members with the mission and vision of your group
- Develop rules to guide your RCO's work
- Support development and capacity building among members
- Understand how to run meetings, engage in negotiations, and foster decision-making
- Set up an effective communications system
- Be clear and transparent about how much money and support is available
- Create flexible timelines for events and projects



RAIS Community Event, Saratoga Springs, NY

REGULARLY EVALUATE YOUR RCO – MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES^{xxxi}

Every RCO should be assessed on a regular basis for a variety of reasons. Accountability for use of grant funds is a big one, but we all want to deliver quality services regardless. Outcome measurement will help your RCO understand where your strengths lie and where improvement is needed.

Some guiding questions:

1. What has changed in the lives of individuals, families and the community as a result of our RCO?
2. Has our RCO made a significant difference and if so, how?
3. What would make your community better through actions taken by our RCO?

STEP 1 IDENTIFY OUTCOMES AND DEVELOP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Your RCO can measure the relationship between program activities (performance indicators) and the changes those activities will produce (outcomes). That can help you evaluate if your RCO is beneficial to the community you serve; in other words – whether the connections between what you do and what you hope to achieve make sense. It also provides greater clarity and helps you tell the story of the RCO. What’s important to remember about outcome measurement is that you will not measure everything your organization does – you’ll want to select only those that are most directly connected with the RCO’s goals.

OUTCOME / INDICATOR EXAMPLE:

OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<p>Increase community awareness and access to recovery supports and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information development, display, distribution • Referrals for help – Individual and / or family • Community training workshops • Recovery events • Website and social media traffic • Surveys • Conferences • Legislative education • Advocacy • Newsletter distribution • Outreach and engagement • Links to recovery community • Monitoring and supporting contacts • Recovery materials disseminated

LOGIC MODEL FOR MEASURING OUTCOMES

Inputs/Resources: What inputs or ingredients do you need to operate your RCO? How many volunteers? How many staff? How large is your budget?

Activities: What will you do? What product or service will you provide? What methods will you use to deliver your product or service? What tasks will you deliver?

Outputs: What will be the tangible products of your service? To how many groups/individuals will you provide education and training? How many policy guidelines or advocacy papers will you produce? How many events will you hold? How many hours of services will you provide? How many people will you help?

Outcomes: What impact will your assistance have on the people you serve? What is reasonable to expect in the way of change?

INPUTS OR RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
<p>Resources available that allow and support delivery of assistance, including money, staff, volunteers, materials or equipment</p>	<p>The tasks carried out by staff/volunteers</p>	<p>The product or service, usually described numerically, such as the number of people served or number of hours of service</p>	<p>Changes that occur as a result of the assistance provided</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 paid staff member • Computer / printer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a FOR-NY <i>Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event flyers and agendas created • Event summary report PDF for distribution • Follow-up with attendees and decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase education and awareness on addiction recovery • Recruit membership for local RCO

STEP 2 CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A DATA COLLECTION PLAN

- **Surveys:** standard written instruments that can be administered by mail, email, or in person
- **Interviews:** person-to-person or over the phone (usually individually)
- **Focus Groups:** assessment conducted in group setting
- **Observation:** at recovery events, trainings, community meetings
- **Record Review:** data collected through internal or external organizational records

STEP 3 ANALYZE THE DATA

After you've collected your data, it's time to analyze! Data analysis isn't just about pretty pictures and pie charts – it's about understanding what the data really means. You will need to apply judgment and decision making skills. The data can help you make informed decisions about what is working and what is not.

STEP 4 COMMUNICATE YOUR RESULTS

There are lots of ways to communicate the results of your data. Some of the more common ways are:

- Formal reports
- Case studies or stories of impact
- Press releases
- Snapshots or postcards
- Visual aids
- Promotional videos

STEP 5 REFLECT, LEARN, AND REPEAT!

1. **Logic model.** Is your RCO's logic model accurate to what your group is working toward? Any missing inputs, outputs, or outcomes?
2. **Outcome measures.** Were the outcome measures actually achievable? Did they reflect what you intended?
3. **Data collection plan.** Were your tools practical? Did your data collectors understand what was asked and was the data significant? Can anything be improved? Was data collection timely? Was it reliable and accurate?
4. **Data analysis.** Who did your analysis? Do you have useful information? Did anything surprise you? Why or why not? Did the data make sense?
5. **Communication.** What form did your communication take and where did your results go? Did anything go better than expected? What might be improved?

SUMMARY

We hope this toolkit has given you practical information to help build relationships with the wonderfully diverse members of the recovery community. While there is not just one recipe for building an RCO, recovery organizations are springing up around the state and the country. We are an army of people with lived experience – individuals in recovery, family members in recovery, families who have lost someone to addiction, friends and other allies – ready, willing and able to provide the recovery infrastructure so desperately needed in our communities across the state.

Recovery infrastructure is developed through building a community responsive, peer driven support system in which there is a recovery hub able to provide recovery supports and services. The infrastructure is boots-on-the-ground, capable of helping to facilitate referrals, mobilize resources, and link individuals to community social supports that assist people sustaining recovery.

They and thousands of individuals and family members impacted by addiction need a committed, community investment to do so. Together, we will build a movement which demonstrates the power and promise of recovery – that there is a solution to the public health crisis of addiction – and that solution is recovery.



Treatment Works Recovery Rally - FOR Albany

FEEDBACK? QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

In our efforts to continually improve the service and support we provide to the Recovery Community in New York State, please share with us your feedback, questions, and suggestions. Contact us at **518-487-4395** or **info@for-ny.org**, or visit us online at **www.for-ny.org**.



Our Stories Have Power Recovery Community Messaging Training, Northern Tier Providers Conference, Lake Placid, NY

Appendix: RCO Tools and Resources

A1: SAMPLE AGENDA



COLUMBIA PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY

PO Box 486 Ghent, NY 12075

AGENDA

CPR COMMUNITY MEETING

Tuesday February 21st, 6PM


Chatham High School Library

1. Monthly Speaker Series
 - Guest Speaker - Joe Filippone from Project Safe Point
 - Topic – Harm Reduction Services
2. Committee Reports / Updates
3. Lending library update
4. Non-profit status update
5. “Dying In Vein” screening – Saturday March 4th 12pm
6. Chris Herren Event – Tuesday April 11th 7pm
7. Request for help for committees and upcoming events
8. Open discussion and updates

Next Community Meeting is Tuesday March 21st 6PM Chatham High School Library

A2: SAMPLE EVENT FLYER

SPONSORED BY:



Road To Recovery

RECOVERY TALKS:

Community Listening Forum on Addiction and Recovery

This is a series of local forums being held across New York State to provide community members the opportunity to share personal experiences in dealing with alcohol and drug addiction, loss of a family member or friend, as well as recovery from addiction.

The Listening Forums will engage the community in discussion with local leaders and result in a report titled, The State of Addiction Recovery in New York to better inform the public and policy makers.

Thursday, April 28, 2016
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm


Palisades Center Mall


Raso Community Room, 4th Floor
1000 Palisades Center Drive
West Nyack, NY 10994

To register email: scampbell@for-ny.org

To Speak Speaker's remarks will be limited to 3 minutes in order to allow as many people as possible to speak

CO-SPONSORED BY: Friends of Recovery – Rockland (FOR-Rockland) and Rockland Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (RCADD)





For more information contact:
Stephanie Campbell- Director of Policy – FOR-NY
518-788-3018
Email: scampbell@for-ny.org

A3: SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS – SOME EXAMPLES

WHAT IS FOR-DO'S MISSION?

Friends of Recovery of Delaware and Otsego Counties, Inc. (FOR-DO) is dedicated to promoting addiction recovery through every available means including advocacy, education and peer supports. We accomplish this mission by:

- Providing education and awareness activities in an effort to reduce stigma and discrimination related to addiction;
- Advocating for legislation and services that support recovery from addiction;
- Operating community recovery centers for those in recovery from addiction and their families, thereby improving quality of life, reducing the risk of relapse, and assisting in the development of a sustained recovery through the provision of peer-based support, life skills education and other programs, social activities, informational resources and a place for mutual support meetings.

WHAT IS FOR-NY'S MISSION?

Our mission is to demonstrate the power and promise of recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs and its value to individuals, families and communities throughout NYS and the nation. We actively seek to advance public policies and practices that promote and support recovery.

A3: SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS – SOME EXAMPLES *continued*

WHAT IS LONG ISLAND RECOVERY ASSOCIATION'S (LIRA) MISSION?

Founded in January 2000, the Long Island Recovery Association is a grassroots organization of people concerned about the rights of those in recovery from or seeking help for addiction related illnesses. We look to bring together individuals in recovery, along with all impacted families, friends and allies, to advocate for the rights and needs of those affected by addiction.

Through education and advocacy, we aim to eliminate the stigma around addiction, achieve genuine parity and treatment on demand for those seeking help to ensure that a compassionate, well-informed understanding of the nature of addiction becomes the norm, not the exception, among legislators, institutions, family members and society in general.

WHAT IS COLUMBIA PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY'S (CPR) MISSION?

We are a community committed toward building the many pathways to strategies and solutions for the addiction crisis in Columbia County, New York.

A4: MEETING SUMMARY TEMPLATE



TEMPLATE: MEETING SUMMARY
RCO GROUP NAME: MEETING SUMMARY

DATE _____
 Meeting Location _____

Present: List attendees by name

Guests: List by name and organization (if appropriate)

Meeting Called to Order: 5:34 pm by _____

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Meeting Summary & Agenda	Meeting Summary for December 12, 20?? and Agenda for January 14, 20?? meeting were distributed prior to the meeting and copies to all attendees.	Motion to approve _____, second-_____. Passed.
Treasurer's Report- (Name of Chair)	20?? Budget Update: _____ distributed a copy of the financial report, provided an update and answered all questions from members. Bank Account Update: _____ reported that we moved our checking account to _____ Bank. And, she reported that they made a \$1,000 donation.	Motion to approve by _____, seconded by _____. Motion Passed
Old Business	Newspaper Article: _____ reported that he was interviewed by The Daily Planet and distributed a copy to all attendees. Following some discussion it was suggested that we send a thank you note to the reporter and Editor	Motion _____, 2 nd _____. Motion Passed
Committee Reports	Policy/Advocacy: Chair- _____ Events: Chair- _____ Training: Chair- _____ Fund Raising: _____ Education: Chair- _____	
New Business	Invitation to Sponsor Community Forum: _____ reported that she had been contacted by someone about our interest in hosting a community forum at the Library and provided some background information re: date/time/topic.	Motion _____, 2 nd _____. Motion Passed
Next Meetings	List all upcoming meetings: Group: Day, Date and Time and Location	Unanimous approval of dates for next meetings

Meeting Summary prepared by: _____

A5: SAMPLE CONTACT CARD

FOR-NY:
The Power of Community
The Power of Recovery



CONNECT WITH US!

- ◆ [Facebook.com/RecoveryNY](https://www.facebook.com/RecoveryNY)
- ◆ [Twitter.com/Recovery_NY](https://twitter.com/Recovery_NY)
- ◆ [LinkedIn.com/company/FOR-NY](https://www.linkedin.com/company/FOR-NY)
- ◆ [YouTube.com: Friends of Recovery—New York](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)
- ◆ Email info@for-ny.org to join our mailing list
- ◆ FOR-NY.org

1529 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203
Phone: 518-487-4395
Email: info@FOR-NY.com

A: 7 – SOME TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING



FOR-NY: RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION (RCO) TOOLKIT

How to Have a Good RCO Meeting

Some Tips for Successful Meetings:

Meetings are an important part of the process of building an effective Recovery Community Organization (RCO). And, it is important that meetings have structure, organization and follow some basic rules. Following these steps will help to engage/support all attendees, develop plans, and monitor progress.

For each meeting, there should be an agenda and the groups should establish and follow some ground rules. These are important because you want to make progress and keep people involved and engaged. Don't forget that everyone is donating their time and talent and you don't want to lose their investment and commitment to moving forward together.

- 1). **Chair:** Always designate someone to chair the meeting, manage the agenda and discussion
- 2). **Meeting Agenda:** Always have a written agenda sent out to all participants before the meeting. At the start of the meeting, ask for any additions or changes to agenda
- 3). **Meeting Summary:** Ask someone to take notes and typed up as a meeting summary that can be sent to everyone before the next meeting. Meeting Summary is notes, not a word for word report. And, the Meeting Summary should be in the same order as the Meeting Agenda.
- 4). **Welcome and Introductions:** Ask everyone to introduce themselves- Who am I?; Where am I From?; Why Am I Here?- In recovery, family member, friend/ally.
- 5). **Sign-In List:** Ask everyone to sign-in so you can build your communications- ask for e-mail and phone- PLEASE PRINT
- 6). **Start on Time/End on Time:** Have a set amount of time for the meeting and agenda items.
- 7). **Summary at End of Meeting:** Chair reports on what happened in the meeting and who will take responsibility for next steps.

Some Basic Ground Rules

Some organizations establish ground rules (or working agreements) as one of their first orders of business. Here are some that have been used successfully:

- Respect each other
- Open to multiple pathways of recovery and different points of view
- One person speaks at a time
- Practice good listening skills
- Try to reach full agreement- if not, majority rules
- Confidentiality - What is said here, stays here
- Stay focused on the agenda when you speak
- Any other "ground rules" that the group feels are important.

A: 8 – SAMPLE SIGN IN SHEET

Event Name:		Friends of Recovery - New York Sign - In Sheet*			Event Time:	Event Location:
First Name	Last Name	E-Mail	County	ZipCode	Phone (Area Code First)	Organization
*By signing into this event, you are consenting to receive Friends of Recovery - New York's electronic communications, including but not limited to, newsletters, event announcements and advocacy emails. In each communication there will be an option to unsubscribe at anytime.					Friends of Recovery - New York 1529 Western Ave, Albany, NY 12206 familvrecovey@for-nv.org	www.twitter.com/recovery_ny www.facebook.com/recoveryny www.linkedin.com/company/forny

A:9 SAMPLE FOLLOW UP

A:9 Sample follow up

From:

Date:

Re:

Dear _____

Thank you for making the trip to _____ for a meeting of the _____ Committee.

As a follow-up to our discussions at the _____ Committee meeting:

1. Meeting Summary-
2. Updated -

And, _____, here are the things we agreed to follow-up with you on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Next Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Next Meeting: Time / Date / Location

If you have any questions, let me know.

All the best.

A:10 EVENT SUMMARY REPORT TEMPLATE



Event Summary Report

Event: _____ Date: _____
 Location: _____
 Activity: _____
 Coordinator: _____ Contact: _____

About Our Event Activity...

Executive Summary:		
Category	Public Policy	
Number of participants	Adults:	Children:
Purpose:	1.	
Satisfaction Summary Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent....	Overall ease of event:	1-5
	Overall satisfaction with outcome:	1-5
	Value to Recovery Community:	1-5
	Recommend Repeat of Event (Y/N)	Y/N

How We Did It...

PROGRAM AGENDA

What We Required...

Labor: _____
Materials Needed: _____

What we Discovered...

Highlights – Comments, Problems Encountered, Opportunities Identified
 •
Findings
 •
Recommendations
 •

A:11 RCO READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Are you genuinely interested in (and committed to) the recovery community?						
2. Do you know why you want to form a Recovery Community Organization? (<i>Check one or more</i>)						
a) Save lives						
b) Change community understanding of addiction and recovery						
c) Change community response to and support of addiction recovery						
d) Need to break down barriers to recovery for individuals and families						
e) Need RCO to meet funding requirements						
f) Need to recruit individuals from recovery community for a study						
g) Need credibility that may come from partnering with recovery people and family members						
h) Need resources that come from partnerships with outside community organizations						
i) Other (<i>write in</i>)						
3. Do your plans and priorities encourage and support the values of all pathways of recovery?						
4. Do you have a previous history of working with “the many pathways of recovery” community?						

A:11 RCO READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL *continued*

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Is this history a positive one?						
5. Do you know about the recovery resources in your community?						
6. Do you have existing relationships with the recovery community?						
a.) Are these relationships positive?						
7. Do you have the time needed to engage with the recovery community and create partnerships with allies?						
8. Do you have the necessary skills to begin and sustain an RCO? (Check one or more)						
a) Communication:						
1) Ability to provide and receive feedback						
2) Strong listening skills						
3) Ability to be a clear and effective verbal and nonverbal communicator						
b) Cultural competency / humility						
c) Ability to share power and control over decisions						
d) Group facilitation and interpersonal skills						
9. Can you contribute any of the following to the RCO?						

A:11 RCO READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL *continued*

Please Check Yes, No, or Unknown for the Following Questions	YOU			RCO		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
a) Staff and/or volunteers						
b) In-kind resources (e.g. meeting space, technology, distribution network)						
c) Connections to key community leaders and resources						
d) Knowledge of the issues/topics to be addressed						
e) Training and technical assistance						
f) Other: (e.g. financial resources)						

PLEASE WRITE YOUR RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

10. What are the potential benefits of an RCO for the recovery community in our county?

11. What are the potential benefits for our RCO in partnering with the outside community?

12. What concerns might you have about starting an RCO in your county?

A: 12 RCO PARTNER INVENTORY FORM

List possible recovery community members / allies

Sector	Name	Organization	Address	Phone	Email
Prevention					
Treatment					
Family / Youth					
Older Adults					
Health & Human Services					
Community Organizations					
Education					
Faith-Based					
Government					
Advocacy					
Business					
Law Enforcement					
Other					

A: 13 RCO MEETING TASK LIST

RCO MEETING PLANNING TASK LIST

- Prepare a list of recovery community members and allied partners.
- Arrange an in-person meeting with core group to discuss the objectives of the meeting.
- Set a date and location for the meeting that is a “neutral” public meeting space.
- Prepare an agenda.
- Send an email invitation stating the purpose of the meeting and enclose agenda.
- Prepare educational recovery materials to distribute at the meeting.
- Arrange for food/snacks and water/soft drinks at the meeting – appoint some greeters to welcome people to the meeting.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Send a follow—up email summary and gather feedback from meeting participants. Enclose a meeting summary with date and time of next meeting.

A:14 RCO BYLAWS

Use this checklist as a guide. You can adapt or expand it as needed

- Name and Jurisdiction**
Defines the official name of your RCO and who your group represents
- Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives**
Defines your RCO's purpose
- Membership**
Explains membership criteria and member rights and responsibilities
- Governing Structure**
Explains the governing bodies and the process for making decisions. You may also want to cover:
 - Election of steering committee
 - Establishment of Board of Directors
 - Roles and responsibilities of committees
 - Voting procedures
 - Resignation process
 - Length of term of elected positions
 - Amendment process
- Meetings**
Defines the criteria for the meetings. You may also want to cover:
 - How often will the RCO Board and committees meet?
 - Who will facilitate the meetings?
 - Who will keep minutes of the meetings?
- Staff**
Explains procedures for hiring staff. You may also want to cover:
 - Reasons and procedures to terminate staff
 - Who determines staff qualifications
- Funds Management**
Explains management of funds and budget. You may also want to cover:
 - Who is responsible for distributing funds
 - How to submit a request to receive funds
 - Fiscal year
 - Financial reporting process

RESOURCES

NEW YORK STATE

- **New York Council of NonProfits (NYCON)** - www.nycon.org - NYCON is a statewide association of over 3,100 charities and provides products, services, information and advocacy designed to strengthen nonprofits and the communities they serve. Services include group purchasing and insurance or benefit options, governance and management training and technical assistance, and community planning. NYCON has offices in Albany, NYC, Poughkeepsie, Buffalo, Rochester and Oneonta. NYCON's website contains information concerning membership and resources for nonprofits.
- **New York State Society of CPAs, The (NYSSCPAs)** - www.nysscpa.org - NYSSCPA is a membership association of certified public accountants. It has resources available to answer technical inquiries, offer training in financial and tax areas and provides referrals for audit and tax services.
- **Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York (NPCC)** - www.npcny.org - NPCC is a nonprofit membership corporation of exempt organizations. Its goal is to protect and help the city's nonprofit sector by offering management services to its members. It also monitors governmental actions on the city, state and federal level to promote the needs of nonprofit organizations. It holds workshops and roundtables on managerial and organizational issues and posts publications of interest to nonprofits.
- **New York State Department of State (Secretary of State's Office)** - <http://www.dos.ny.gov/> - Organizations that want to incorporate must submit a Certificate of Incorporation to the Department of State.
- **New York State Department of Taxation and Finance** - <http://www.tax.ny.gov/> - Organizations seeking sales tax exemption should contact the Department of Taxation and Finance.
- **New York State Racing and Wagering Board** - <http://www.gaming.ny.gov/> - Charities planning to conduct raffles must apply to this agency for authority to do so.
- **New York State Commission On Public Integrity (NYS Lobbying Registration)** <http://www.jcope.ny.gov/>
- **New York City Lobbying Bureau (NYC Lobbying registration)** - <http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/>

NATIONAL

- **Alliance for Justice** - <http://bolderadvocacy.org/> The Alliance for Justice's Bolder Advocacy site offers information on federal regulations affecting nonprofits, as well as workshops, examples of documents and technical assistance.
- **Alliance for Nonprofit Management** - www.allianceonline.org/ - The Alliance for Nonprofit Management is a professional association of individuals and organizations whose mission is improve the management and governance capacity of nonprofits. Its web site includes information about resources available to not-for-profit organizations.
- **American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)** - www.aicpa.org - The AICPA's web site has extensive information on accounting standards and procedures. It is a valuable source of a wide variety of information on accounting issues for board members.

- **Boardnet USA** - www.boardnetUSA.org - Boardnet USA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to strengthen the governing and management capability of nonprofit boards of directors by bringing qualified leadership into service as board members. Boardnet assists boards in defining their board recruitment objectives and then conducting a targeted search for business, professional and community leaders with the desired expertise, diversity of perspective and resources. Its web site is a resource designed to enable potential board members--and nonprofit boards needing leadership--to find each other.
- **BoardSource, Inc.** - www.boardsource.org - has a wide range of material designed to assist board members in carrying out their duties. Its nine pamphlet Governance Series, beginning with TEN BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF NONPROFIT BOARDS, is a source of basic information for board members and includes other suggested resources.
- **charitySTRONG** - www.charitystrong.org - charitySTRONG is a New York not-for-profit corporation designed to assist nonprofit organizations in achieving the highest standards of board leadership, governance and oversight. charitySTRONG will help nonprofits build strong and diverse boards of directors through an innovative recruitment program and easily accessible director training. charitySTRONG encourages nonprofit board service, while educating nonprofit boards of directors on their responsibilities.
- **CompassPoint** - www.compasspoint.org - CompassPoint is an electronic newsletter for members of nonprofit boards of directors. Board Café offers a menu of ideas, information, opinion, news, and resources to help board members in carrying out the responsibilities of their board service.
- **Council on Foundations** - www.cof.org - The Council on Foundations is a membership organization of more than 2,000 grant making foundations and giving programs worldwide. It provides leadership expertise, legal services and networking opportunities, among other services, to its members and to the general public. Its web site contains information of interest to not-for-profit boards.
- **Foundation Center, The** - www.foundationcenter.org - The Foundation Center's mission is to strengthen the nonprofit sector by advancing knowledge about U.S. philanthropy. It collects, organizes and communicates information on U.S. philanthropy, conducts and facilitates research on trends in the field, provides education and training on the grant seeking process and promotes public access to information and services through its web site and print and electronic publications and five library/learning centers.
- **Governance Matters** - www.governancematters.org - Governance Matters is an organization whose purpose is to encourage and promote good governance in the nonprofit sector. Its web site posts information on good governance, links to other sites of interest to not-for-profit boards and information about courses and conferences for nonprofit board members.
- **The Grantsmanship Center** <http://www.tgci.com> The Grantsmanship Center offers training and low-cost publications to non-profit organization
- **GuideStar** - <http://www.guidestar.org> - GuideStar provides a searchable database to educate donors, funders, researchers, educators, professional service providers, governing agencies, and the media about their work. Organizations can update their GuideStar report for free, including their mission, programs, leaders, goals, accomplishments, and needs.
- **Independent Sector (IS)** - www.independentsector.org - is a national coalition of nonprofit organizations of all sizes as well as Fortune 500 corporations with commitments to community involvement. IS advocates on behalf of and provides educational services to the nonprofit sector.
- **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** - <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits> - provides tax information for charities and not-for-profits.

- **Mental Health America Centers for Technical Assistance Resource Library** <http://ncstac.org/> Mental Health America's Centers for Technical Assistance maintains an online resource library with free downloadable publications, many of which are of interest to non-profit organizations and their leaders. These include: Guide to Funding and Financial Management, Guide to Proposal Writing, How to File for 501(c)3 Status, Working with Volunteers, and How to Work with the Media.
- **National Association of State Charity Officials** - www.nasconet.org. This site is maintained by the National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO). NASCO members are employees of state agencies that regulate not-for-profit organizations and their fund raisers. The site provides information concerning the registration and reporting requirements applicable to not-for-profits that conduct activities and/or raise funds in the various states.
- **National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA)** <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/> NCNA is an umbrella organization of state nonprofit councils that provide support, resources, and management services for nonprofit organizations.
- **Urban Institute, The** - www.urban.org - The Urban Institute is a nonprofit nonpartisan policy research and educational organization established to examine the social, economic, and governance problems facing the nation. It provides information and analysis to public and private decision makers to help them address these challenges. It maintains extensive databases of information on the not-for-profit sector.
- **Unified Registration Statement** - <http://www.multistatefiling.org/> - This site posts the registration that is accepted in most states that require registration of charitable organizations. It also contains information concerning the registration and reporting requirements of the states.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR NONPROFITS

- **Lawyers Alliance of New York (LANY)** - www.lany.org - LANY is a not-for-profit corporation whose staff attorneys and 650 volunteer lawyers from private firms and corporations provide PRO BONO legal services to nonprofit organizations. LANY's publications provide guidance for organizations in drafting by-laws, applying for tax exempt status, securing fiscal management and other aspects of nonprofit governance.
- **Legal Aid Society Community Development Project** www.legal-aid.org/en/civil/civilpractice/communitydevelopmentproject.aspx
- **The Community Development Project (CDP)** provides support for three client groups: low-income not-for-profit organizations, low-income entrepreneurs, and low-income housing cooperatives.
- **New York City Bar Justice Center** - The Public Service Network - <http://www.nycbar.org> <http://www.nycbar.org/citybarjusticecenter/city-bar-public-service-network> - The Public Service Network, a program offered through the City Bar Justice Center, matches attorneys with legal and non-legal volunteer opportunities in the not-for-profit sector.

WATCHDOG ORGANIZATIONS/INFORMATION FOR DONORS

- **American Institute of Philanthropy** - www.charitywatch.org
- **Better Business Bureau Metro New York** - www.newyork.bbb.org



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Glossary

WORDS USED IN THE TOOLKIT (ALPHABETICALLY)

ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY means that RCOs are independent, nonprofit 501-C(3) organizations with autonomy to members, and maintain relationships and partnerships with external recovery allies – most often community prevention coalitions and treatment or diversion programs in the health or court systems. This is all to say that RCOs are not influenced by clinical or legal entities, but rather speak with the authentic voice of the recovery community.

ACTIVITIES are what your RCO will do, or what products or services it will provide. Other activities include the methods you will use to deliver your product or service, and the areas to which you will provide those services.

ADVOCACY ON LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS inspires activism around the slogan “nothing about us without us” – so that representatives of the recovery community are at the table for all major discussions and decisions regarding policies that impact their community.

AUTHENTIC VOICE means that the interests of the community are represented by organizations that draw their leadership from members of the recovery community. In other words, the majority of board members, staff, and volunteers are members drawn from the local recovery community. This safeguards against competing interests and ensures that the voice of the RCO is valid.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS will need to include a percentage (generally 50% or more) of people from the recovery community. You'll also need to appoint a Board Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as specific committees (i.e. Fundraising, Policy, Communications).

BUSINESS PLAN establishes a budget and bookkeeping system for keeping financial records, as well as a template for developing reports to funding agencies. The business plan should include guidelines for the development of informational materials and resources, setting up an office, web site, communications and other systems.

BYLAWS are a set of rules your RCO agrees will guide its work. By-Laws state the mission, purpose, goals, and rules of your organization. They also establish the roles and responsibilities of members, define the organizational and operational structure, and establish meeting rules.

COMMUNICATION measurements look at what forms your communications take and what results they generate. Did anything go better than expected? What might be improved?

CULTURAL COMPETENCY looks at the abilities of individuals and organizations to work effectively with people of different backgrounds. In advocacy work, we appreciate and respect diversity, understand the cultural context of the individuals and families we work with, and have the willingness and skills to work within this context. In short, this means appreciating community-based values, traditions, and customs, and working with knowledgeable people from the community to plan, implement, and evaluate inclusive activities.

CULTURAL HUMILITY is a daily practice of self-examination to acknowledge and amend power imbalances among individuals and to commit to working effectively across cultures and diverse populations.

DATA ANALYSIS is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical technique to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data.

DATA COLLECTION PLAN look to see if your measurement tools are practical. Did your data collectors understand what was asked and was the data significant? Can anything be improved? Was data collection timely? Was it reliable and accurate?

DEVELOPING SYSTEMS FOR DECISION MAKING / Applying R-A-P-I-D (an acronym for the roles that your members can play in the decision-making process). Each letter stands for a specific role and members can have more than one role assigned to them, depending on the context of the decision and the size of the group. The order of the letters is not important, but the acronym “R-A-P-I-D” is a device to remember these roles.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS target legislators, policymakers, service providers, public agencies, and the general public about addiction, recovery, the multiple pathways of recovery, recovery support services, etc.. Education about addiction and recovery will help to eliminate stigma and break down barriers to recovery.

FUNDING can come from numerous sources and will be necessary to support events, open an office, hire staff, and cover other expenses. Some RCOs have benefitted from large grants that allowed for substantial budgets in their early years and the ability to develop strong infrastructure. Others have grown with business plans that had no initial investment in paid staff or office space, but secured funding after demonstrating an ability to carry out their agenda.

FUNDRAISING AND MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO that helps grow and sustain RCO programs and services. RCOs must invite and encourage public and private charitable donations for community-based recovery supports; cultivate volunteer involvement, and engage friends and other allies in recovery efforts within the local community.

GOALS are specific, action-oriented items that the RCO strives to achieve. These should include what the RCO wants to accomplish, and a sense of when they will be achieved

INCORPORATION is used to secure a 501(c)(3) designation, if your RCO want to pursue not-for-profit status.

INDICATORS are deliverables that can be tracked and can include: information-referrals; community training workshops; recovery events; website and social media traffic; surveys; conferences; legislative education; advocacy; newsletter distribution; outreach and engagement; links to recovery community; monitoring and supporting contacts; and recovery materials disseminated.

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO that engages advocates in the act of influencing policy that will increase access to recovery supports and services, build recovery capital in communities across New York State and the nation, and eliminate discriminatory practices and stigma.

INPUTS/RESOURCES are the inputs or ingredients you need to operate your RCO. Examples include how many staff and volunteers you will need, and how large your budget will need to be.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS are assessments made person-to-person or over the phone.

KEY STANDARDS (Faces and Voices of Recovery) to building RCOs include the **VISION/MISSION**: Taking time to develop a shared vision and mission; **ORGANIZATION**: Maintaining organizational independence, ownership, and control; **FUNDING**: Diversifying funding streams; **ADVOCACY**: Making advocacy a part of a recovery community organization’s agenda; **RECOVERY**: Maintaining a focus on recovery; **DIVERSITY**: Recognizing and embracing diversity within the recovery community; **MULTIPLE PATHWAYS**: Valuing and respecting diverse pathways to recovery; **LEADERSHIP**: Empowering existing leaders and developing new ones; **RCO NETWORK**: Building relationships with local, national and international recovery community organizations; **ALLIES**: Building alliances with like-minded organizations and movements; **PROGRESS**: Organizing and building a recovery community organization is a process, not an event; **MEMBERS**: Developing membership structures that fit your organization’s needs; and **HUMANIZING**: Educating the public by putting a face and a voice on recovery.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT is needed for individuals and family members in recovery, as well as friends and other allies of recovery, to develop a collective voice, skills, responsibilities, and community partnerships.

LOGIC MODELS also known as a logical framework, theory of change, or program matrix, is a tool used by funders, managers, and evaluators of programs to evaluate the effectiveness of a program. They can also be used during planning and implementation.

MISSION STATEMENT describes the RCO's reason for existence. It supports the vision statement and addresses what the RCO is going to do and why. Mission statements serve as an orientation for the RCO and serve as a gauge to measure if your group is moving in the right direction. Mission statements are concise and outcome-oriented. No project should be undertaken without first confirming that it aligns with the organization's mission statement.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT includes the implementation of surveys and other forms of valid and reliable assessment tools which help to improve the adequacy and quality of local recovery support services (which may include health and human services).

OBJECTIVES are measurable strategies and tasks that will be used by the RCO to achieve its goals. Objectives should be **S.M.A.R.T.** (**S** = Specific, **M** = Measureable, **A** = Achievable, **R** = Realistic, **T** = Timed (has a deadline or timetable attached to it)).

OBSERVATIONS are assessments done at recovery events, trainings, and community meetings.

OUTCOME MEASURES examine if your RCOs objectives are achievable, and if they reflect what you intended.

OUTCOMES look at the impact your work will have on the people you serve; and what might be reasonable to expect in the way of change. Positive outcomes help increase community access to recovery supports and services.

OUTPUTS are the tangible products of your service; ie: how many groups/individuals will receive education and training, how many policy guidelines or advocacy papers you will produce, how many events you will hold, how many hours of services you will provide, or how many people you will help.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL NON-PROFITS are important. RCOs should seek to partner with community-based organization like a local council (CANYS member) to extend reach and impact. As a partner, you benefit from their tax-exempt status for purchasing and tax deductible donations.

PEER-BASED RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES (P-BRSS) refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO that is transforming the way communities build and sustain recovery by delivering an assortment of peer recovery support services. These include recovery coaches, family support navigators, phone and web recovery support services, all-recovery meetings, SMART-Recovery, wellness programs (mindfulness, meditation, yoga, etc.), and faith-based recovery meetings, in addition to a host of other services organized and delivered by trained volunteers and / or paid staff.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO that is used to foster recovery- focused values in communities and advance the organization's mission.

RECORD REVIEW are assessments through internal or external organizational records.

RECOVERY CAPITAL is the breadth and depth of internal and external resources that can be drawn upon to initiate and sustain recovery from severe alcohol and other drug problems. Recovery capital provides the potential antidote for problems that have long plagued recovery efforts: insufficient motivation to change alcohol and drug use, emotional distress, pressure to use within intimate and social relationships, interpersonal conflict, and other situations that pose risks for relapse.

RECOVERY COMMUNITY consists of more than 23 million Americans currently living in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, as well as their families, friends and other allies – all of whom wish to engage in the process of healing from addiction.

RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (RCOS) help bridge the gap between professional treatment and building healthy and successful lives in long-term recovery. They increase the visibility and influence of the recovery community and engage in one or more of four core strategies: (1) Educating the public about the reality of recovery; (2) Advocating on behalf of the recovery community; (3) Delivering peer recovery support services; (4) Providing / Developing a Social Recovery Support Network

RECOVERY RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT includes strategies for sustainable recovery and peer supports. Members of the recovery community must participate in the research process. Researchers should work side-by-side with individuals and family members to identify a problem and develop and implement a plan to learn more about it. Upon evaluation, results and recommendations are presented to the larger community and a plan of action is developed to address the problem

RECOVERY VISION focuses on the solution to the addiction problem, which is recovery. An RCO's primary goal should be to enhance the supports and services available to people seeking and sustaining (or "living in") long-term recovery from addiction. This includes embracing an "all pathways approach" to recovery.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT includes taking continual inventories of strengths, assets and other resources that might be beneficial to the recovery community.

SOCIAL RECOVERY SUPPORT NETWORK refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO which includes connecting with the growing network of Recovery Community and Outreach Centers (RCOCs) – also known as Recovery Community Centers (RCCs), or Youth Clubhouses (YCH) - which provide a centralized hub for community-wide safe and sober social activities, workshops, meetings, and resource connections for individuals, family members, friends and other allies of the recovery community.

SURVEYS are assessments in the form of standard written instruments that can be administered by mail, email, or in person.

SYSTEMATICAL ADVOCACY refers to one of the core strategies of an RCO that engages advocates in influencing change through the New York Assembly, Senate and Governor for legislative packages that mandate prevention, treatment and recovery supports and services

VISION STATEMENT offers hope for the future. It's the end point of what the RCO hopes to achieve and reflects the RCOs' worldview of what will happen if the problem of addiction is addressed with the solution of recovery. It's inspiring, easily understood and shared by members of the recovery community, and broad enough to respect diverse perspectives within the various pathways of recovery.

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