Guidelines for Assessing Cultural Competence

Experience or track record of involvement with the target population - The applicant organization should have a documented history of positive programmatic involvement with the population/community to be served; e.g., a history of involvement with the target population or community.

Training and staffing - The staff of the organization should have training in gender/age/cultural competence. Attention should be placed on staffing the initiative with people who are familiar with, or who are themselves members of, the population/community.

Language - If an organization is providing services to a multi-linguistic population, there should be multi-linguistic resources, including use of skilled bilingual and bicultural individuals whenever a significant percentage of the target population/community is more comfortable with a language other than English.

Materials - It should be demonstrated that material and products such as audio-visual materials, PSAs, training guides and print materials to be used in the project are gender/age/culturally appropriate or will be made consistent with the population/community to be served.

Evaluation - Program evaluation methods and instrument(s) should be appropriate to the population/community being served. There should be rationale for the use of the evaluation instrument(s) that are chosen, and the rationale should include a discussion of the validity of the instrument(s) in terms of the gender/age/culture of the group(s) targeted. The evaluators should be sensitized to the culture and familiar with the gender/age/culture whenever possible and practical.

Community representation - The population/community targeted to receive services should be a planned participant in all phases of program design. There should be an established mechanism to provide members, reflective of the target group to be served, with opportunities to influence and help shape the project's proposed activities and interventions. A community advisory council or board of directors of the organizations (with legitimate and working agreements) with decision-making authority should be established to affect the course and direction of the proposed project. Members of the targeted group should be represented on the council/board.

Implementation - There should be objective evidence/indicators in the application that the applicant organization understands the cultural aspects of the community that will contribute to the program's success and which will avoid pitfalls.