ACAM Frequently Asked Questions

What is ACAM?

Established in 2004, ACAM is a 501(c)(3) public charity and management support organization (MSO) focusing on organizational development and sustainability through member services for Community Assistance Ministries (CAMs) in the Greater Houston area.

What is the mission of ACAM?

Our mission is to advance high-impact collaboration, service excellence and organizational development among community assistance ministries. ACAM envisions a community that is supported by a network of faith-based collaborative ministries that provide opportunities for families and individuals to meet and rise above their basic needs.

Why ACAM?

Ministries play a vital role as the social service safety net for the Greater Houston area, providing immediate assistance to the many families in need and helping them pursue self-sufficiency. Developing strategies to strengthen this sector's ability to meet the rising demands for services is crucial to alleviating poverty. ACAM proactively responds to the growing and changing needs of our members and the community, including the need to serve more people with a greater variety of services, the need to become outcome-focused in order to provide more effective service and appeal to the impact-minded donor and the need to become more sustainable by growing in the areas of board leadership, financial management, fund development, human resources, technology and more. Increased capacity leads to the increased ability to serve more people in need.

What is a community assistance ministry (CAM)?

Traditionally, a CAM is an organization supported in part by a collaboration of congregations (ecumenical, intra-denominational or interfaith) in order to provide critical services to members of their community.

What does ACAM provide to member ministries?

As a member services organization representing a unique constituency, ACAM member programs are customized and collaborative. Our role in the community is one of both an advocate and a catalyst. ACAM members are partners in their own organizational development. They develop plans within the structure of ACAM's organizational assessment tools but in an individualized way that fits their strategic goals. ACAM helps its members develop collaborations and service models to strengthen the community. Members have ownership of their networking groups and trainings to ensure that offerings meet their needs. To date, ACAM has awarded 276 grants valued at more than $5.3 million since 2004 in the areas of Organizational Development, Training and Networking, Collaborative Initiatives and Advocacy and Outreach.

*Organizational Development***:** ACAM promotes sound practices in nonprofit operations and programming. Organizational assessments inform members on areas of strength and weakness and are used to develop organizational development and capacity building plans. ACAM supports plan implementation through stipends for training and consulting and direct grants to develop organizational infrastructure.

*Networking and Training***:** ACAM promotes best practice knowledge, peer learning and information exchange for the following groups: executive directors, resource development managers, volunteer coordinators, client service managers and thrift store managers. Peer mentoring relationships are developed among executive directors. This program also helps to build relationships between ACAM members and funders.

Collaborative Initiatives: ACAM helps members use their collective strength to develop city-wide   service streams and models that address root causes of poverty. ACAM organizes member- and funder-driven initiatives to provide immediate response to member needs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is currently featuring ACAM's recent government-funded Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) on its website as "a great example of a community collaborative planning effort and tracking program outcomes."

*Advocacy and Outreach***:** ACAM reaches out to underserved parts of Greater Houston, raising the profile of ministries as service hubs in their communities and raising awareness around the issues affecting the people served by the ministries.

How does ACAM measure its success?

With the help of its member ministries, ACAM developed the Nine Elements Assessment Tool (NEAT©) designed specifically to address the unique challenges these organizations face. The elements are Board Leadership, Human Resources, Financial Management, Fund Development,   Program Strategies & Outcomes, Community   Relationships, Technology and Facilities. Each element has specific indicators that assess and identify goals for improving organizational capacity in the following development phases: Infrastructure, Growth, and Sustainability.   Between 2007 and 2010, ACAM members have increased their organizational capacity by 35%.