



Thanks for Reading!

This past year at Common Ground has been quite a ride! We've been engaged by a wide variety of new clients to conduct organizational restructuring, facilitate critical planning sessions, pilot our LEAD ModelSM in two new countries, and design bespoke 360-degree senior staff evaluations. In this update, we'll share a bit about what we're learning these days and share a few new resources.

75% of our engagements occur with existing clients and more than **90%** of all of our work comes from your direct referrals. For that, we are extremely grateful.

If we can help your organization manage systemic or structural issues, evaluate employee performance, manage strategic or annual planning, address equity issues, or provide training or retreat facilitation, [please contact us](#) to discuss your needs.



Culinary Diplomacy

We learned a long time ago that one of the best ways to understand and experience

U.S. Digital Service Retreat

It had been 18 months since the 170-member staff of USDS had been together and with a new



White House Administration coming in during that time, they really needed to meet and talk about changing priorities, recommit to their core values, and address a variety of structural and staffing issues. CGC talked one-on-one with staff about their expectations and worked closely with the senior leadership team to design a flexible retreat plan that could address the

the cultures of the world is through their food. We've also learned that building trust requires respect and that an easy way to show respect is to taste absolutely everything and fall in love with the traditional foods that people in the places where we work have been preparing and eating for generations.

More and more these days, we're also using food as a tool in our engagements. Sometimes it's as simple as talking through personnel issues over dishes that require sharing. Occasionally, we've designed mystery box cooking challenges (like on Food Network's TV show *Chopped*) as a team-building activity.

In many parts of the world, particularly in conflict areas, we're most known for our epic "Breaking Bread—Breaking Barriers DinnerSM." These events are part assessment, part team-building, part conflict-resolution, and always result in a delicious feast!

[*Click here to talk with us about using food to strengthen your team!*](#)

many issues facing this very unique government agency.

Our original request was for a facilitator at our 3 day offsite, but Craig and his team did much more than just show up for the event. They invested significant time learning and digesting the history and culture of our organization; helped our entire leadership team think through critical issues; spent hours and hours checking the temperature and getting feedback from the staff; they thoughtfully challenged us with insightful questions, and ultimately helped to narrow and clarify the issues. When the day of the offsite arrived, the CGC team were prepared with a robust agenda, but more importantly were willing and able to quickly adjust the schedule given the events of the first day. Overall, Craig and his team were an invaluable asset to both the leadership team and the staff.

Elaine Ho, Chief of Staff, U.S. Digital Service

[*Click here if you are you looking for help facilitating a critical meeting or a challenging group of personalities.*](#)

FEATURED INTERVENTION: Street Speaking

With anxiety and excitement running high, we walked together from our training room to the town's center square where we chose a bench in the most visible location. It was lunchtime and there were a lot of people—students from the university, families on holiday, business people, grandmothers. We gathered everyone around, took a few deep breaths together, introduced the activity to the crowd, and invited our participants to speak.

One by one they stood up, using the power of their voices to demand change, in this case, to bring attention to the AIDS pandemic among youth in Eastern Europe. They made people think. We had little kids and mothers, teenagers, and seniors all stopping, listening, asking questions. One of our students had turned himself into a human billboard, walking around inviting more people to come and hear what was happening. Some of the participants sang songs, others danced, some shared their poignant, personal stories.

The idea behind "Street SpeakingSM" is to prepare participants to find their voice and use their power by sharing deeply (and publicly) about the issues in the world that move them to action. The time in the square follows several workshop sessions that help participants uncover and discover their own passions and deeply held values. They're well-prepared, though that does little to quiet the fear of public speaking. Once we get started, however, all of that changes.

When we sit together later to debrief, we always hear participants talk about how powerfully this activity has affected them. People point out all kinds of new learning, new emotions, and the sense of power they felt. Participants talk about what it was like to step fully outside of their comfort zones and not only survive, but feel that comfort zone expanding in the moment.





Rapid Capacity Assessment

Common Ground has conducted our Rapid S.T.A.R.T.SM (Strategy, Action & Results) assessment methodology with dozens of organizations in countries around the world. We've designed the process to quickly help projects and their partner organizations identify and prioritize the areas where strategic capacity building help will make a difference.

We begin by administering a customized assessment tool (an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) for example). With that data, we bring leadership together and then delve into difficult issues quickly and with a focus on identifying practical solutions and actionable first steps. Our intention is not to address every issue an organization may be struggling with, but to pinpoint those problems that, when solved, will have the greatest positive impact in the shortest amount of time. This builds trust and allows us to tackle more challenging issues as we move forward together.

Cutting-Edge 360 Feedback

CGC has designed hundreds of process improvements for organizations around the world, working with thousands of civil society professionals. Our appreciative inquiry approach uncovers what people and organizations are doing well. The same is true with our approach to performance appraisals. Our goal is to help each employee understand their strengths, leveraging those assets in overcoming any deficits in skill or experience. We ensure that every performance appraisal we conduct provides employees with a clear understanding of what it will take to improve their performance and meet defined goals. Our unique partnership with Spidergap means we can use client-centered, state-of-the-art assessment and 360-degree evaluation tools that are fully-customizable and uniquely designed for each client.



[Click here if you would like a free copy of our facilitated self-assessment tool.](#)

[Click "SPIDERGAP" below and let us help you engage and evaluate your key staff.](#)





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360° Feedback Success Partner

I PROVIDE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



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A Program of **OJJDP**

Common Ground Capabilities

Click above to download our *(expanded)* 2018 corporate capabilities statement.

It frames our work, outlines our values, and offers examples of our projects and some of the strategies and tools we've developed over the past 11 years.

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