How do I answer the question about social change -- giving three examples of how my organization is promoting progressive social change?

You can tell us about examples of three programs or events that happened in the past year that show a) collective action, b) involvement of the people most affected by the problem you are addressing, and c) systemic or institutional change.

A few of the most frequently asked questions about this include:

- **What does "collective action" mean?** We define collective action as the action of more than one person working towards a goal. Of course, the greater the number of people taking action together, the more power they have and the more likely it is that they will win the changes that they want. Sometimes the work of an organization can also be connecting people who have the same problems with each other so they can then work together on their shared problem.

- **What if my organization is an environmental organization -- how to I show the people most affected by the problem working to fix it?** One of Community Shares’ values is that the people affected by an issue (or problem) help make the decisions about solutions and strategies. In question number 2, we asked you to tell us who is most affected by the problem you work on. In this question, we want to you to share with us how the people from question 2 are involved in your work. (We do not mean to dismiss work that protects animals or the environment, but every organization is made up of people and we want to know how those people are involved.) What we want to ensure is that organizations are including those most affected by a problem in determining the solution. There are several examples at the end of this document (one from an environmental organization) of how organizations answered this question last year.

- **What do you mean by "systemic or institutional change"?** We mean that the change that your organization brings about has to change the "system" that has created the injustice you are addressing, not just make things better for individuals. Another way to think about this is to ask yourself whether the change you are making will bring about justice for more than one person at a time -- will the next person in the same situation have to fight the same fight again, or have you fixed the problem for the next people?

- **My organization changes people and that will eventually change society, so isn't that social change?** Community Shares funds organizations whose primary work is social change. There are many organizations whose work make the world better and kinder. There is a parable or story about a community where babies were found floating in the river and drowning. Some people worked to pull out one baby at a time, but could never get them all. Other people walked upstream to try to see how the babies were getting in the river and then worked to stop the conditions that allowed the babies to get into the river. While everyone’s work is important and valuable, Community Shares chooses to have member groups who go "upstream" to stop the babies from getting in the river in the first place. Two different organizations can have the same issue focus, but one group might work in a way that helps individuals one person at a time, while another organization works to change the law or the rules that create the injustice they work to resolve.

Here are examples from two different organizations and how they answered this question last year:

**First example from Community Food Advocates in Nashville**

1) In 2010, Community Food Advocates Policy Advocacy focus was on the national Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, also referred to as Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR). The provisions of the 2010 CNR bill included an extension of the “Afterschool Meals” program, that would reimburse schools for programs centered around an afterschool meal, a new definition of eligibility for other school meal programs and new required standard for the nutritional quality of school meals. If it passed, the CNR bill would serve to ensure many more children who often receive the majority of their daily calories from school meal programs, would have a greater opportunity for food security.

While Community Food Advocates supported passage of the CNR bill, we were opposed to the proposed funding mechanism for new programs in the legislation – cuts to SNAP. Through our SNAP
Outreach and Advocacy work, Community Food Advocates met Angela, a mom who was wrongly denied SNAP benefits. Angela strongly believed the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) had made a mistake regarding her family’s SNAP application. Our Community Outreach Specialist researched the details of Angela’s SNAP case and successfully advocated for her family to receive the benefits they were due. Angela’s experience, which was similar to many of the people we served through SNAP Outreach and Advocacy, and her own advocacy skills and self-interest, lead us to invite her to join us in petitioning US Representative Jim Cooper around passage of the CNR bill.

Our Director of Hunger, Food Access and Policy programs, our Community Outreach Specialist and Angela visited with US Representative Jim Cooper to urge his support for the Child Nutrition bill. We also energized constituents with e-news regarding the legislation. Happily, due to nation-wide messaging and advocacy around Child Nutrition, the bill passed, though with the proposed cuts to SNAP. Community Food Advocates published an opinion piece in the local newspaper, The Tennessean, to celebrate passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, and to pressure readers and elected officials to seek alternative funding for the new programs. We will continue to align our work with national anti-hunger organizations in 2011, to focus on implementing new Child Nutrition programming and maintaining full funding for SNAP.

2) In 2010, Community Food Advocates’ Growing Healthy Kids (GHK) campaign made strides in affecting Nashville’s school food environment. Our GHK campaign works to improve the nutritional quality of food served to school children. Through GHK, Community Food Advocates is responding to what has become a national concern - the childhood obesity epidemic. We accomplish our work in GHK in three venues – “in the classroom” with a food system curriculum, “on the playground” by engaging students in creating and maintaining school gardens, and “in the cafeteria,” through our Healthy School Foods Leadership (HSFLI) Institute for parents and teachers.

Over a period of months, our GHK program director organized graduates of the HSFLI and simultaneously developed a relationship with the Director of Food Service with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS). The HSFLI graduates identified flavored milk as a lunch-line item that contributed to the poor health among MNPS students. Through a series of meetings with the MNPS Food Service Director and his staff, our HSFLI team and GHK program director resolved to address the problem of flavored milk. In particular, MNPS agreed to pilot test removing flavored milk from the lunch-line of three of its schools.

3) Another realm addressed by our organization is food access across all areas of our city. Re/Storing Nashville is a grassroots campaign, run by Community Food Advocates, to ensure that all Nashvillians have access to affordable healthy foods. We are working to reduce health risks, including obesity, facing residents of Nashville’s identified food deserts, including East Nashville/Cayce Place, Edgehill (South Nashville), and North Nashville/Charlotte Ave. Re/Storing Nashville has developed momentum, since its inception in December 2008, to engage the city in dialogue about the existence of food deserts in Nashville, the misconceptions about the onset of diet-related disease (as an individual vs. environment issue), and the reality of food desert residents’ interest in purchasing healthier food options than are currently available in the area.

Community Food Advocates believes that access to fresh, healthy foods should not be solely the privilege of the largely White, middle and upper-income earners, but is a right for everyone. However, for the lower-income, disproportionately African American residents of food desert neighborhoods, this is merely an ideal. Building on the principles of self-determination and equal access, Re/Storing Nashville uses a community organizing model, which builds leadership among residents of food desert areas. Re/Storing Nashville continues to engage community leaders and public officials in dialogue in an effort to remove the barriers of food deserts.
Second example from Cumberland River Compact

The Compact attempts to do these things in everything we do.

A. Our Watersheds Program: We work to do this by providing educational activities and using those activities to create the foundation for long lasting watershed organizations. We first did this in creating the Harpeth River Watershed Association over 10 years ago.

The Watersheds Program focuses on each of the fourteen watersheds in the Cumberland River Basin - watershed by watershed, one at a time. Our process involves holding geographical focus groups to find out what the issues are in each particular watershed. If the stakeholders are interested, we then hold a series of 6-8 educational meetings and bring in experts who can talk about those issues. At each meeting, attendees have the opportunity to work together in small groups and begin to form relationships and problem solve. Thus far, when we have finished the series of educational meetings in each of the watersheds, stakeholders have decided to form their own local watershed organizations.

Currently we are working to form watershed groups in the Collins River Watershed (Mcminnville, TN) and Lake Barkley Watershed (west of Clarksville, TN). So far there are seven watershed groups formed: Red River Watershed Association, Harpeth River Watershed Association, Mid-Cumberland Watershed Committee, Old Hickory Watershed Association, Stones River Watershed Association, Caney Fork Watershed Association, and South Fork Watershed Association. We continue to support the organizations in whatever ways that they decide such as partnering on grants, providing nonprofit management advice, and sharing information and contacts.

B. The Compact is currently working with minor crop and commodity farmers to develop a sustainable agriculture program that maximizes economic impacts for producers while limiting or eliminating chemical use through integrated pest management techniques. We have developed a committee, the Cumberland Basin Strategic Agriculture Initiative Committee (CBSAIC) and have been working to develop tools for farmers focused on high-risk, restricted use chemicals, sustainable Best Management Practices (BMPs) and reducing nonpoint source pollution to water resources. Today’s conventional farming techniques and the excess nutrients they provide to water have been shown to be a large cause of the hypoxic zone (“dead zone”) in the Gulf of Mexico.

C. Climate Solutions University: Forest and Water Strategies: The project works to empower rural, underserved communities to protect their forest and water resources and become resilient in the face of changing climate. The Compact partnered with the Model Forest Policy Program (www.mfpp.org) to create this project which is offered as a distance learning program with monthly webinars and coaching calls from Feb through Dec. We began as partners in the Cookeville, TN pilot community, which resulted in green infrastructure and climate change provisions in the Cookeville 2030 Comprehensive Plan. In 2010, we have worked with Sumner County, TN as one of six communities participating in the CSU Class of 2010. The others 5 communities are in NH, NM, CO, UT and WA. The participating communities are creating climate adaptation plans that protect their forest and water resources and create climate resilience to help offset the impacts of floods, droughts, fires, disease and invasive species.