measuring community capacity

Selected Resources on Community Capacity Building

Revised list will be posted on Horizons’ website: www.horizonscda.ca
“Community capacity” is the foundation for sustainable, long-term growth. It is the combined influence of a community’s commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and to address problems and opportunities. This book is designed for leaders and citizens who want to improve the ability of individuals, organizations, businesses and government in their community to come together, learn, and implement a development agenda. The book addresses the questions: What is capacity? Why should we care? How do we know it when we see it? How do we celebrate it? Included are dozens of actual measures to gauge progress.

Collaboration Framework: Addressing Community Capacity

This Framework is for people who want to learn to sustain community building through collaboration and make collaborations more effective, while realizing specific outcomes. It is for people who are invested in addressing an array of complex problems that resist “simple solution” fixes.

People can use the Framework to experiment with redesigning or changing the direction of an existing collaboration or address the beginnings of a new collaboration. In the process, users will recognize increased skills in communication, decision-making, and applying research. The Framework will guide collaboration members in dealing with daily problems and opportunities. It will help groups of people focus on investing in their capacity to develop new solutions while maximizing a range of resources to their fullest potential.

Respect for diversity lays the groundwork for a dynamic collaboration. The Framework foundation provides a purpose for collaborators to gather around. In sum, the Contextual Factors influence and are influenced by the Process Factors. The dynamic interaction among these factors determines the possibility of having a successful collaboration. In order to prepare for possible obstacles and pitfalls, the Contextual Factors (Connectedness, History of Working Together, Political Climate, Policies/Laws/Regulations, Resources, and Catalysts) can be evaluated before forming/developing a collaboration. Additionally, these factors can be used in ongoing evaluation of a collaboration.

The Framework itself can be used as a tool for communication, setting direction and focus, defining results, leveraging new resources or diagnosing problems. Although a few examples of applying the Framework follow, those using the Framework are encouraged to expand these examples and share with the Collaboration Network membership.

Capacity Building: Linking Community Experience to Public Policy

Capacity Building: Linking Community Experience to Public Policy is a resource designed to help people in both the public sector and the community understand how to include community experience in the policy-making process. It examines the current policy development process and looks at the opportunities and challenges facing both communities and systems as they attempt to create a more inclusive public policy process. This resource specifically considers three questions:

- How can public policy makers tap into community experience at all levels of the policy-making process?
- How can citizens and communities move beyond lobbying as special interest groups to become engaged as partners with government officials and policy makers in meaningful dialogue and problem solving?
- How can public policy processes help to build the capacities of all sectors to work together for more credible and inclusive policy making and governance?

The resource concludes by summarizing the challenges that will be encountered as communities, systems and policy makers work together to develop a more collaborative policy process.

Indicators to Help with Capacity Building in Health Promotion

This report describes a project commencing in 1995 that set out to capture an invisible side of health promotion, that is, the effort that health promotion workers put into capacity-building, or making their colleagues and partner organizations more interested in and more capable of engaging in effective health promotion practice.

The first part of the document provides background information and an overview of the project.

The main objectives of the project were to:

- Develop a set of indicators which would map the principal domains of capacity-building in organizations, groups and communities;
- Develop a set of indicators that could be used to define high quality practice; and
- Trial and develop indicators with field workers so as to be able to make recommendations about their implementation and diffusion throughout the NSW health promotion system.

The main methods of the project were:

- Literature review on the nature and meaning of capacity-building in health promotion;
- Focus groups with health promotion workers to understand more about how capacity-building is understood and operationalized in practice;
- Consultations and workshops with other health workers, planners, policy makers and managers;
- Document analysis, that is, review of planning and policy materials; and
- Field testing of indicators and reliability testing.

Part 2 of the document presents the indicators or checklists devised by the project. These represent a “smorgasbord” of indicators presented according to particular practice situations or scenarios.
Part 3 presents two abstracts of papers arising from the research. The first is for the main literature review, entitled *Multiplying health gains: the critical role of capacity-building in health promotion*. The paper appeared in the international journal, *Health Policy* in a special issue on health outcomes, and reviews the current literature in capacity-building. The second abstract is for the results of the focus groups with health workers and is entitled: *Working invisibly: health workers talk about capacity-building in health promotion*.

Part 4 of the document contains the results of the formal psychometric testing of the indicators, which was conducted with generous assistance from the NSW Health Promoting Hospitals Project, who provided access to a wide variety of program types across the health services (not just within hospitals).

Next a discussion follows about the issues raised, and their consequences for indicator development:

- What is the ultimate goal of capacity-building?
- Theory informed practice as a mark of quality: 1) using theory to identify appropriate strategies in capacity-building; 2) using theory to identify critical sequences among capacity-building strategies; 3) using theory to set limits on what can be achieved in particular contexts; and 4) using theory to identify key phenomena in capacity-building.
- Ethics and visibility

The report closes with concluding remarks and caveats.

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Yoward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets

Across the United States, many communities are in trouble. In our cities, economies sputter, social ties weaken, and political power fades. But everywhere, creative local leaders are fighting back, rebuilding the neighborhoods and communities. And they are succeeding by starting with what they have. In the face of diminished prospects for outside help, they are turning first of all to their neighbors and to the local citizens associations and institutions that lie at the heart of their community.

This guide to what the authors call “asset-based community development” summarizes lessons learned by studying successful community-building initiatives in hundreds of neighborhoods across the United States. It outlines in simple, “neighborhood-friendly” terms what local communities can do to start their own journey down the path of asset-based development.

This book will be helpful to local community leaders, leaders of local associations and institutions, government officials, and leaders in the philanthropic and business communities who wish to support effective community-building strategies.

Kretzman, J, & McKnight, J. (1993) Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research.

This book can be ordered online: http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/orderform.html

Community Tool Kit

As their mission statement “Promoting community health and development by connecting people, ideas and resources,” suggests, this group attempts to assist community-based development. This link is over 3000 pages and has 1135 sections of “how-to” materials” resources on community health, community and neighbourhood development, community leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, advocacy, grant writing and links to other resources.

KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. (2003), Community Tool Kit. Available at http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu
Community Building: What Makes it Work

This handbook reveals twenty-eight research-supported factors influencing the success of community building initiatives. It is the result of an examination of more than 525 studies on community building. The 28 factors in this report are grouped by: 1) characteristics of the community, 2) characteristics of the community building process, and 3) characteristics of community building organizers. Each of the twenty-eight factors includes an in-depth description, examples, and practical applications, helping community builders assess their work and diagnose what’s needed. The book also contains a glossary of community building terms, a list of resources and technical support for community builders, and an extensive bibliography listing over 75 studies cited in the book.

It is a helpful resource for:
- Finding out what community characteristics contribute to successful community building;
- Making sure key processes such as communications and technical assistance are in place;
- Determining whether community leaders or organizers have essential qualities such as a relationship of trust and flexibility; and

Evaluating the likely success of a proposed project or get a struggling effort back on track.

A Framework for Building Capacity to Improve Health

A Framework for Building Capacity to Improve Health is a revised edition of an earlier document, Capacity Building Framework. Its purpose is to guide the development of effective capacity building practice within health promotion. It has been developed in consultation with health promotion practitioners and other key stakeholders and it draws on capacity building work funded, or partly funded, by NSW Health.

The model that is presented reflects this pre-existing work, feedback from practitioners and the work of other researchers. It links the five key areas for strategy development (organizational development, workforce development, resource allocation, partnerships and leadership); to the three dimensions of capacity building identified by Hawe, King and Noort (infrastructure development, program sustainability and enhanced problem solving). In addition, the model highlights the importance of the ‘context’ within which capacity building happens and reinforces the message that all capacity building is context rich: that strategies and approaches need to take account of context at all times.

The intent of this document is to explain the model and guide the development of capacity building strategies across the key action areas. The first section of the document provides an overview of capacity building and the principles that underpin its practice, and introduces practitioners to some of the language of capacity building. The second section explains the components of the framework and lists suggested strategies for each area. The third section provides some suggestions for assessing and monitoring progress, and the final sections provide a list of useful resources to inform and support capacity building practice.

From the Ground Up:  
An Organizing Handbook for Healthy Communities

This is a handbook to guide individuals, groups and coalitions that are organizing to make a difference in their communities using a Healthy Community process. It was written by staff and volunteers of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, based on their knowledge and hands-on experience in developing and organizing Healthy Community initiatives. This handbook is not designed as a definitive, authoritative or comprehensive text. It is only a starting point to assist people to start or continue to organize a Healthy Community initiative.

The main part of this handbook is an introduction to the six main steps involved in developing an organization or coalition to create community change. Chapter Two, “Getting Started”, suggests some activities that are beneficial in preparation for organizing and some ideas for connecting with others around your area(s) of interest. Chapter Three “Getting Organized” provides information on how you might go about organizing your group, developing your plans, obtaining needed resources, and establishing governance and decision-making processes. Chapter Four, “Developing Skills”, gives some basic instructions and tips on how to be an effective facilitator and communicator. Chapter Five, “Taking Action”, explores various initiatives your group may consider undertaking to promote positive community change while Chapter Six “Evaluating Progress” review provides some basic evaluation methods to help you to assess whether your efforts have made really a difference. The final chapter “Sustaining Momentum”, looks at ways of maintaining momentum of the group during difficult phases, and also reflects on the winding down phase of group development, after the first project has been completed and the initial excitement wears off. While it is natural that some groups will have a limited life span, there may be ways of building on and extending the work that has been accomplished.

Capacity Building for Health Promotion: More than Bricks and Mortar

This is a short publication on capacity building in health promotion. This tip-sheet has been developed as part of our capacity-building project. Based on literature reviews, consultation and focus groups with other health promotion resource centres, this resource helps clarify the meaning of capacity building for health promotion and includes examples.


Blueprint for Building Community Capacity

This user-friendly resource describes the process of building community capacity from the ground up. It illustrates the process in the style of a colourful, fun blueprint for building a house. It is very useful for talking about community capacity building with community groups, and it is available in English and French.

Measuring Community Capacity – State of the Field Review and Recommendations for Future Research

The authors were funded by Health Canada, Health Policy Research Program, to conduct a year-long research project involving a comprehensive review of the literature on community capacity assessment and to develop recommendations for a future research agenda. The research team searched the published and grey literatures for relevant articles using the keywords “community capacity” and other closely related terms. Potentially relevant articles were screened using 5 criteria: Is it about community capacity? Does it describe actual attempts to measure capacity? Was the project community-based research? Did it offer practical guidance for decision-makers? Was it a rural setting?

Articles that met most of the criteria (or which had exemplary relevance) were assessed by the research team using a questionnaire that rated quality and relevance for informing policy. Key themes and significant gaps in the literature (from the practitioners’ point of view) were identified. Eleven practitioners and academics from across Canada and the US agreed to participate in 2 rounds of a Delphi consultation. They provided written feedback on the literature review findings and draft recommendations. Based on the literature, the Delphi responses, and the researchers’ own experience in attempting to measure community capacity, the authors propose a research agenda for Health Canada.

The John Snow International UK

The John Snow International UK website has information about community capacity building concepts and definitions, as well as information on measuring community capacity:

http://www.jsiuk.com/community_capacity.htm

The Organization of Hope: A Workbook for Rural Asset-Based Community Development

This is a Workbook of, by, and for rural community leaders trying to “use what we’ve got, to get what we want.” It is the latest in the ABCD series to follow up on the best-selling title in community development history: Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets, by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann.

How do you build your rural community from the inside out? How do you find and mobilize the assets of your small town and rural area? The Organization of Hope tells inspiring stories of rural communities from across the countryside, and draws common rural themes ranging from income patching and individual skill development to community organizing and rural ethnic diversity. The Workbook covers points for getting started (or restarted); strategies for turning assets and hope into action and new relationships; and practical examples of appropriate projects and methods to consider for your rural community.


This book can be ordered online:

http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/hopewp.html
Additional References

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