CHAPTER 7

Organizational and Community Capacity Building

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OPENING EXERCISE

East Nashville teenagers and their families are angry. The local neighborhood public high school serving mostly low-income youth is not adequately preparing students for post-secondary education. Results of a recent student survey indicate that while 90% of students at the school aspire to post-secondary education, only about one third had met with a guidance counselor to make a plan for how to get there. Those that did meet with guidance counselors had, on average, only met with counselors between two and four times for about an hour total. Additionally, many students reported that they do not know how they would pay for college even if accepted. School administrators feel they are constrained by the limited funds and lack of support coming from the school district. Students and their parents just want a dedication to college readiness equal to that of schools in more affluent neighborhoods. One local organization—Community IMPACT (CI) Nashville—is determined to do something about this problem.

CI is a small, grassroots, neighborhood-based nonprofit organization that has a mission to engage marginalized young people in creating community change on the issues that affect their lives. Due to limited resources, CI has only a small staff of young community organizers and limited organizational capacity to affect change on this complex issue. While youth and families in the community want to play a role, CI has been unable to create and implement a strategy to meaningfully engage local youth in this issue in a sustainable way. Additionally, the East Nashville community has a high number of families living in poverty and many are disconnected from the discussions and decisions that affect their lives. Although they care about this issue, very few feel that they have the knowledge, skills, and support they need to take coordinated action.

Now imagine that you've been asked to help CI, the local high school, and the residents build capacity to be able to affect change on this issue. Where would you start? How would you go about building organizational and community capacity for change? What knowledge, skills, and attributes would *you* need to be able to work alongside them to build their capacity to get what they need on this issue? We'll explore answers to these questions in this chapter.

OVERVIEW

Organizational and community capacity are closely linked due to the fact that much action to improve communities occurs in, and through, organizations. Strong, effective organizations can play a significant role in building and supporting community capacity. For example, organizations are instrumental in building local capacity for community engagement in planning and governance, for the production of services such as housing or job training and placement, and for the capacity to inform, organize, and mobilize residents toward shared goals (Chaskin, 2001). Nonprofit, community-based organizations, with their community-oriented missions, can be particularly important to the development and maintenance of community capacity. Additionally, given the complexity of social and environmental problems and the unrelenting pressure to reduce the cost of creating and implementing solutions, interorganizational collaboration and working through networks offer ways to develop and share knowledge and weave together capacities that can achieve greater impact (Plastrik & Taylor, 2006; Scearce, Kasper, & Grant, 2009).

In this chapter we first introduce the concepts of *organizational capacity* and *organizational capacity building* and explore these in some detail. Then we explore the related concepts of *community capacity* and *community capacity building*. From there we highlight the specific practitioner knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the competency and identify the training, education, and other experiences that facilitate the development of these competencies. We end with a look at a real-world application of this competency and a discussion of future trends in organizational and community capacity building. While the ideas presented in this chapter can be applied to many different types of organizations in communities, we focus specifically on the organizational capacity of nonprofit organizations to provide effective services, build community capacity, and promote social change. Nonprofits are those community-based organizations that operate exclusively for charitable, community-building, advocacy, or educational purposes and are neither traditional for-profit businesses nor governmental agencies. Examples include many community organizations with which you frequently interact, such as social service agencies, religious organizations (e.g., churches and temples), or museums.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Organizational Capacity

What do we mean by, *organizational capacity?* Although there is not one commonly agreed upon definition, recognized leaders in the field generally focus on an organization's

ability to "do things"—to achieve, perform, or be effective in executing actions that support an organization's goals, mission, and sustainability. For instance, Dougherty & Mayer (2003) define **organizational capacity** as the "the combined influence of an organization's abilities to govern and manage itself, to develop assets and resources, to forge the right community linkages, and to deliver valued services—all combining to meaningfully address its mission." For Letts, Ryan, and Grossman (1999), organizational capacity is reflected in an organization's "ability to develop, sustain, and improve the delivery of a mission" (p. 4). Or Light (2004), who describes capacity as "everything an organization uses to achieve its mission, from desks and chairs to programs and people" (p. 14).

Conceptually, we think of organizational capacity as consisting of distinct domains that each represents an aspect of an organization such as governance, organizational culture, or technical abilities. While there is certainly overlap and interdependence among the various domains, segmenting organizational capacity can be helpful when assessing an organization's capacity and designing and implementing interventions to build capacity.

Researchers and practitioners have developed a number of frameworks to conceptualize organizational capacities that differ primarily in how the different aspects of an organization are emphasized and grouped into domains. With its focus on adaptation and leadership, the authors of this chapter have found Connolly and York's (2003) framework to be very relevant to organizational and community capacity building and simple to use in practice. Connolly and York describe four core domains of organizational capacity: adaptive capacity, leadership capacity, management capacity, and technical capacity. **Adaptive capacity** refers to "the ability of a nonprofit organization to monitor, assess, and respond to internal and external changes" (p. 20) through activities such as strategic planning, developing beneficial collaborations, scanning the environment, and assessing organizational performance. **Leadership capacity** is "the ability of all organizational leaders to inspire, prioritize, make decisions, provide direction and innovate, all in an effort to achieve the organizational mission" (p. 20) through activities such as promoting the organization within various stakeholder (i.e., constituent) communities, and setting and communicating organizational priorities. **Management capacity** refers to "the ability of a nonprofit organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of organizational resources" (p. 20) through, for example, effective personnel and volunteer policies. And finally, **technical capacity** is "the ability of a nonprofit organization to implement all of the key organizational and programmatic functions" (p. 20) such as delivery of programs and services, effectively managing organizational finances, conducting evaluation activities, and raising funds.

Organizational capacity is not static: It changes over time. To a significant extent, organizational capacity is developmental in the sense that it is, in part, a function of organizational age and size. As organizations mature and grow, their capacities and capabilities change, much as an individual's capacities and capabilities change over time. Organizations can also lose capabilities and capacities through, for example, staff turnover, lack of organizational learning systems, a reduction in resources, or the failure to update technology systems.

Organizational capacity also varies from organization to organization. There is not a universal standard—a single "right way"—by which all organizations should operate. Different organizations provide different types of services and face different circumstances and operating environments. For example, the Building Movement Project (www.buildingmovement.org)

has a specific framework for thinking about the organizational capacities, strategies, and structures needed to facilitate the process of building momentum toward social change. Thus, an organization's capacity *needs* at any particular moment will depend on a wide variety of factors (Sussman, 2008) in part because each organization's environment and circumstances are constantly changing—client and community needs and assets change, organizations grow and evolve, and economic and political conditions change. In order to survive, organizations must constantly adapt and build new capacities. This adaptive process of developing new capacities is called, *organizational capacity building*.

Organizational Capacity Building

Now that we have discussed organizational capacity and how, over time and with changing circumstances, organizations must develop new capacities, we can shift our focus to organizational capacity building. Backer (2001) writes that capacity building involves "strengthening nonprofits so they can better achieve their mission" (p. 38). Blumenthal (2003) defines capacity building as any "actions that improve nonprofit effectiveness" (p. 5). Typically, building organizational capacity is an ongoing, often complex developmental process: There is no final destination. At its most basic level, **organizational capacity building** is the process of *identifying* what organizational capacities to target for strengthening and *applying* targeted strategies most likely to build those capacities.

Identifying Organizational Targets for Capacity Building

The development of a plan for capacity building and the delivery of capacity building should always be preceded by a formal assessment of a nonprofit's needs and strengths. Assessing needs can help highlight organizational capacity targets for change. Identifying strengths can point to potential capacity-building strategies. This assessment should be conducted collaboratively with nonprofit staff and be utilized to develop an individualized capacity building plan (Backer, Bleeg, & Groves, 2004, 2010; Blumenthal, 2003; Innovation Network, 2001; Joffres et al., 2004). There are a number of organizational capacity assessment tools freely available for use, which can help identify organizational strengths and areas in need of attention (Marguerite Casey Foundation, 2005; Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2001). The Marguerite Casey Foundation (2005) recommends a two-step process of assessing organizational capacity that includes a first step having key personnel individually use the tool to rate the organization on different capacity dimensions. Upon completing the assessment on an individual basis, participants then gather to discuss their ratings and reach consensus on one set of ratings that best represents the organization. They believe that completing the assessment using a team approach both improves validity and reduces individual biases. This process also serves as a catalyst for key organizational stakeholders to engage in a rich dialogue about the organization.

Many capacity-building efforts focus on incremental change targeting technical or operational organizational components such as improving accounting systems or implementing program evaluation activities. It is often easier to obtain funding for this type of capacity-building effort and it can be completed in a relatively short timeframe—although

some question whether these incremental capacity-building projects have significant impact on overall organizational effectiveness. Many experts support capacity building that focuses on more fundamental or transformative change in culture, mission, strategies, and structures with particular attention paid to adaptive and leadership capacities (such as governance and strategy) in the belief that building these capacities is more likely to have long-term positive impact on an organization's effectiveness (Blumenthal, 2003; Connolly and York, 2003; Letts et al., 1999; Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2001).

One simple model for understanding different targets within an organization for capacity building and each target's potential effect on organizational effectiveness and impact is the "pyramid of organizational capacity building" that comes from St. Luke's Health Initiatives (2011). They suggest that it is helpful to conceptualize capacity building on three distinct levels. First is the *base level.* This level contains the basic strategic direction, management capacities, financial support, program execution, infrastructure, and relationships that all organizations need to function effectively in community settings and make progress toward their missions. Basic capacities and infrastructure at the base level are necessary for survival, but insufficient for creating social impact. Second is the *intermediate level.* This is where the adaptive capacities come into play. All organizations need to remain flexible and open to discovery, innovation, and learning. They need to adopt the best emerging practices that lead to high impact and foster a culture of innovation and adaptability to changing circumstances. Lastly, they stress the importance of building capacity at the *top level.* We know that community-based organizations are attempting to address complex, changing, and entrenched social problems. This requires that organizations participate in a network of stakeholders who are focused on higher-order systems change. Thus, organizations need to build collaborative capacity to engage effectively with other social change partners to build collective efforts that can really made a difference.

Strategies for Organizational Capacity Building

While the three levels described above help us identify *what* areas to target for change in organizations, *how* to go about building capacity is another question worth exploring. Whether focusing on incremental change or deeper transformative change, when people think of organizational capacity building, the activities that generally come to mind are training workshops and technical assistance. However, in practice, there is a wide range of actions that can be taken to build organizational capacity. In addition to the assessment of organizational needs, strengths, and readiness for change described above, capacity-building practices and processes can be grouped into two major categories: (1) technical assistance and organization development consultation (e.g., training, coaching, peer networking, provision of resource materials, and convening); and (2) direct financial support (Backer, Bleeg, & Groves, 2004). We'll discuss the former briefly below.

After assessing the organization to determine capacity-building needs, we can apply the activities or strategies most likely to affect the change needed. Given the diversity of capacity-building needs, a "one size fits all" approach is believed to be less effective. Thus, individualization, that is, customization of capacity building activities to align with organizational needs and circumstances, is important (Backer, et al., 2010; De Vita, Fleming, & Twombly, 2001; Innovation Network, 2001; Light, 2004; Sobeck, 2008). When developing

capacity-building efforts, capacity builders should take into account: identified nonprofit capacity-building needs and strengths; nonprofit staff members' learning styles; and nonprofit history, culture, life stage, and environment. This individualization should also include flexibility to alter an initial capacity-building plan as needed (Backer et al., 2010; Blumenthal, 2003).

Technical assistance and organization development consultation in the form of training, coaching, and peer networking are common capacity-building strategies. Often an assessment will reveal that an organization's capacity needs are interrelated, which means a combination of approaches may be warranted. For example, a consultant may be brought in to help an executive with board development and strategic planning while managers attend training on developing logic models and theories of change for programs. While narrowly defined strategies can work, the most impactful capacity-building activities include a comprehensive range of approaches (Backer, 2001).

Strategies that include opportunities for peer-to-peer learning have been cited as an important capacity building success factor (Backer et al., 2010; Connolly & Lukas, 2002; Innovation Network, 2001; Joffres et al., 2004). Peer-to-peer learning opportunities such as roundtables, communities of practice, or learning circles are seen to reduce isolation as well as promote collaboration and problem solving. St. Luke's Health Initiatives (2011) has found success with their "Learning Through Networks" approach to building organizational and community capacity. In their TAP (technical assistance partnerships) approach, nonprofits work together in small teams or "learning circles" to identify and implement solutions for common organizational and community development issues. Once they settle on needed capacities, teams are matched with consultants who help them work collaboratively through the challenges and opportunities. This collaborative capacity-building approach had its challenges, but they found that over time that: (1) participants acquire specific knowledge and skills to increase organizational and community capacity; (2) participants broaden their community connections; (3) participants are able to translate learning into plans and activities at their agencies and in their communities; and (4) organizational capacity and performance are improved.

Keys to Success in Organizational Capacity-Building Efforts

Several factors are thought to be important in the successful design and implementation of capacity building efforts. Those most consistently cited include (in no particular order): individualization of capacity building, capacity-builder qualifications, relationship quality, dosage of capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, and evaluation, and **organizational needs assessment,** which in the context of organizational capacity building, generally involves engaging staff, and often other stakeholders, in critically examining an organization's management and governance structures and processes. It is usually guided by an assessment tool and forms the basis for development of a capacity building plan,. Some of these are covered elsewhere in this chapter but we'll briefly discuss a few additional factors below.

Relationship quality. First, the quality of the relationship between the capacity builder and organizational staff is thought to be an important factor in capacity building. "Capacity builders" is the term commonly used in reference to those organizations and individuals

that deliver capacity building to nonprofits. They may include staff from the organization providing the funding for capacity building (e.g., foundation staff) but in most cases funders contract with intermediary organizations or consultants to provide capacity building to grantees/contractors (Blumenthal, 2003; Connolly & York, 2002). Organizations may also utilize their own staff to serve as internal capacity builders. The strongest relationships involve ongoing collaborations characterized by trust and mutual respect between a qualified capacity builder and an organization in need.

Dosage and duration. Second, the design of any capacity-building strategy must plan for a sufficient amount and duration of capacity building so that new practices can be learned, practiced, and implemented (Chinman et al., 2008; Leake et al., 2007; Mitchell, Florin, & Stevenson, 2002). For example, while a one-off training session can be useful to increase staff knowledge, it is unlikely to build capacity unless training sessions are coupled with additional skill building and supports that increase the likelihood that the knowledge gained will result in tangible organizational change. The amount of time over which capacity-building practices are provided (duration) is also important. Capacity building strategies delivered over time allow for the development of a high-quality relationship between the capacity builder and recipient and for new practices to be institutionalized (Backer, et al., 2010; Blumenthal, 2003; Innovation Network, 2001; Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2001).

Evaluation. And finally, conducting both process and outcome evaluations is also believed to be an important factor (Backer et al., 2010; Blumenthal, 2003; De Vita et al., 2001). A process evaluation generates valuable information about the implementation of the capacity-building effort and how it may be improved. An outcomes evaluation assesses the extent to which the capacity-building effort resulted in the desired outcomes, as well as can identify any unanticipated outcomes. Evaluations increase understanding of the dynamics of capacity building and document whether or not the desired changes have occurred. Process evaluations, in particular, can provide important ongoing data to improve capacity-building practices by learning from the successes, failures, and unanticipated outcomes in a program of capacity building. Process evaluations gather perceptions of those involved in the capacity-building effort to learn how things are going.

Community Capacity

Much of the interest in community and organizational capacity building has been in response to a professionalized model of community programming and research that over time has not produced the community well-being and development gains desired. In the 1990s evaluators realized community partners needed more training, resources, leadership, and "social capital," in the form of community participation and networks of information and influence, to effectively implement comprehensive substance abuse prevention and other health promotion programs and coalitions. Most definitions of community capacity focus on commitment, skills, resources, and problem-solving abilities of particular programs or institutions or community participation in a process of relationship building, community planning, decision making, and action (Goodman et al. 1998).

Fawcett et al (1995) defined community capacity as "the community's ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future" (p. 682) and suggested it is influenced by a variety of personal, group, and environmental factors, such as relationships with, and support and other resources from, all relevant sectors and agencies within the community, including educational, health, religious, and business organizations. Community capacity grew as a prominent phrase and focus in the academic literature starting in 2001 with publications by Robert Chaskin and others. Chaskin (2001) offers a definitional framework for community capacity based on the literature and case studies from a comprehensive community initiative. He defines **community capacity** as

> the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort. (p. 295)

Chavis, Speer, Resnick, and Zippay (1993) suggest that a community has the capacity to take action on social concerns if (1) the institutional and social relations are in place to reach all community members; (2) the institutions are accountable to their constituents (members, consumers, citizens); (3) the institutions, collectively and individually, have the ability to mobilize resources to respond to changing conditions; and (4) there is an enabling system (Chavis, Florin, & Felix, 1992) in place to develop and maintain community development and problem-solving initiatives.

While these definitions provide rich theoretical grounding for our understanding of community capacity, we appreciate the simplicity and clarity of the framework developed by The Aspen Institute (1996) that focuses on the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities. *Commitment* is the collective will to act, based on a shared awareness of problems, opportunities, and possible solutions. *Resources* are the financial, natural, and human assets and methods to deploy them intelligently and fairly. *Skills* are all the assets, talents, and expertise of individuals, organizations, and networks that can be marshaled to address problems and seize opportunities. Taking strategic action to build commitment, resources, and skills is called **community capacity building.**

Community Capacity Building

Community capacity building efforts can encompass a wide range of activities, from formal leadership development efforts to community-wide planning to a wide variety of less formal activities that build trust and social capital among citizens. The purpose of community capacity building is to create opportunities for people in a community to work together, develop a vision and strategies for the future, make collaborative decisions, and take action while building the individual skills and capabilities of a range of participants and organizations within the community (Aspen Institute, 1996). Community capacity-building efforts to improve marginalized communities face two related but different tasks: building common

purposes, useful relationships, and capacities within the community; and connecting the community to external resources and influence (Saegert, 2005). Building capacity in a community is about developing common purpose, relationships, resources, and skills. The challenge for those on the outside wanting to help is to partner appropriately to create the conditions for a community to grow in capacity (The Aspen Institute, 1996).

The Aspen Institute suggests there are eight outcomes to consider as goals for community capacity building: (1) Expanded diverse and inclusive citizen participation; (2) expanded leadership base; (3) strengthened individual skills; (4) widely shared understanding and vision; (5) strategic community agenda; (6) consistent, tangible progress toward goals; (7) more effective community organizations and institutions; and (8) better resource utilization by the community. Community capacity-building efforts can focus on one or more of these outcomes as part of any capacity-building initiative. Community capacity is realized through a combination of three levels of social agency: individuals, organizations, and networks (Chaskin, 2001). These levels are also interconnected points of entry for strategic capacity building interventions.

Strategies for Community Capacity Building

Community-building efforts tend to focus on some combination of four major strategies: leadership development, organizational development, community organizing, and fostering inter-organizational collaboration (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). While targeting one of these areas for change might bring some level of benefits, building community capacity is most effective when a comprehensive approach is taken. Because of the difficult nature of community change, community capacity building requires simultaneous attention to strengthening individuals, formal organizations, and the relational networks tying them to each other and to the broader systems of which they are a part (Chaskin, 2001).

Leadership development. Neighborhoods and communities need local leaders who are willing and able to assume some responsibility for community betterment by being out front to ignite and facilitate action (Chaskin et al., 2001). Building the capacity of local leaders involves enhancing the skills, knowledge, commitment, and access to information and resources of individual residents in the community and providing opportunities to increase their active participation in community-improving activities (Chaskin, 2001). The best leadership development initiative is not a stand-alone activity but rather embedded in the development of organizations and networks. Embedding leadership development in these activities provides practical opportunities for individuals to try out and hone various skills (Chaskin et al., 2001).

Chaskin and his colleagues make the distinction between formal training and on-the-job engagement strategies. *Training* refers to structured activities to convey information and to build confidence and skills for civic participation that includes instrumental skills (public speaking, writing, organizing, producing materials, and research), as well as process skills (negotiation, compromise, running meetings, problem solving, power analysis, and navigating community systems). *Engagement* provides opportunities for people to learn on the job while working on efforts to benefit the community. Leadership development in this case is a process of learning while doing, and reflection plays a key role. In the end, Chaskin and his colleagues recommend combining the two approaches to get the best of both worlds.

Additionally, there is great benefit to preparing groups of individuals in a community for leadership roles versus focusing on individual leaders. Leaders can then engage in the public sphere not as disconnected individuals but as embedded members of a connected community (Warren, 2001). Finally, Chaskin et al. (2001) remind us that whatever approach is utilized, developing individual leaders does not automatically translate into stronger community capacity. New leaders must be willing to use their skills to benefit others and the community at large and be committed to engaging others to play an active role in community betterment, gaining strength from solidarity.

Community organizing. The second strategy for community capacity building—organizational capacity building—was covered at length in the first part of this chapter, so we will not review it here. The third strategy for building community capacity is community organizing. Community organizing is "the process of bringing people together to solve community problems and address goals" (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 93). Community organizing seeks to alter the relations of power between the groups that have traditionally controlled decisions and the residents of marginalized communities. Community organizing involves putting relationship building, social capital development, and partnerships at the core of community building (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) and capitalizes on individual, organizational, and community strengths. Drawing again on the excellent book on this topic by Chaskin and his colleagues (2001), we know that employing a community organizing strategy for community capacity building forces us to confront several choices for how we go about it. We'll highlight two of these: (1) whether to use a conflict or consensus approach; and (2) whether to focus on single or multiple issues.

Conflict versus consensus strategies. Conflict approaches utilize oppositional tactics to bring about desired ends. Examples include marches, sit-ins, and mass protests or "actions." The rationale for using a conflict strategy is the understanding that powerful people and institutions will not work to reduce injustice unless direct pressure is applied (Chaskin et al., 2001). This method seeks to build social power capable of leveraging resources and negotiating improvements for a community (Speer, Hughey, Gensheimer, & Adams-Leavitt, 1995). Consensus-based strategies on the other hand do not presume that conflict is required to stimulate change. Rather, change is sought by promoting mutual respect and positive interaction among residents, organizations, and other stakeholders by focusing on opportunities for mutual benefit in order to get things done (Chaskin et al., 2001). Cooperation is the operating principle instead of confrontation. The current trend in community capacity building is to rely more on consensus strategies, as they are more useful in building the capacity of individuals, networks, and communities to seek common ground and develop solutions that benefit communities.

Single versus multiple issues. Community organizing efforts can focus on a single issue (e.g., vacant lots) through targeted strategies or take on a wider range of concerns over time. Single-issue strategies bring people together and promote unified action around a specific concern. Unfortunately, some single-issue campaigns can be highly targeted and short-lived. When the issue is resolved, the capacity generated may dissipate (Chaskin et al., 2001). However, single-issue efforts can also become a starting point for building capacity

for sustained efforts on multiple issues. Multiple-issue strategies attempt to build a membership base and local capacity to address issues of concern noted by residents over time. If done well, these actions provide the opportunity for enhancing collective problem-solving capacities while strengthening community bonds and commitment. The best organizing efforts are not just about winning one victory, they are about building power and winning in ways that enhance a community's capacities for winning again in the future. This means that how communities organize around particular issues is just as important as what they win.

Strengthening Organizational Collaboration and Networks

Community capacity building is an approach that emphasizes relationships, coalitions, and consensus building (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; McNeely, 1999). At the organizational or institutional level of community, building and strengthening inter-organizational partnerships and networks is a critical strategy for community capacity building. Networks, coalitions, alliances, and other forms of inter-organizational collaboration are seen as effective strategies for building power to affect the broader systems and policy change needed to benefit marginalized communities. They have been shown to build capacity of the community through strengthening organizations and institutions (Butterfoos, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1993; Chavis et al., 1993.) Bringing together organizations with similar missions, goals, and concerns makes better use of limited resources and increases the chances that a shared agenda can be achieved. Building this type of collaborative capacity in communities requires a focus on the relationships between organizations and the creation of a shared purpose, shared objectives, and collective power. Inter-organizational capacity building is about the creation and maintenance of spaces that provide the opportunity for a variety of community organizational actors to coordinate resources and action (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, & Fahrbach, 2001).

The "backbone" organization. Gray (1989) stresses the importance of a legitimate and skilled convener with process capacity that is given authority to have the role of convener. The recent literature on collective impact refers to this convening role as the "backbone" organization (Kania & Kramer, 2010). The backbone organization utilizes a dedicated staff that can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection, reporting, and handling logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly (Kania & Kramer, 2010). The need for a skilled convener with existing relationships within a community and strong process capacity is a persistent theme in the collaboration, network, and collective impact literatures. A convening agency must have sufficient organizational capacity, experience, commitment, leadership, and vision to form and build an effective coalition (Butterfoos & Kegler, 2009). McGuire (2002) characterizes lead organization activities as: identify and bring in the people, organizations, and resources needed (activation); generate agreement on network structure, operating rules, principles, and values (framing); induce and maintain commitment to the network (mobilizing); and facilitate relationships among participants and create an environment conducive to productive interaction (synthesizing).

Inter-Organizational Structure

Weaving a cohesive inter-organizational coalition or network with a shared purpose where there is none requires building relationships, skills, resources, and enabling structures to assemble and coordinate the specific elements necessary for collective learning and action. The establishment of an over-arching organizational structure and processes to guide coalition functioning in communication, decision making, and conflict resolution is an important factor in the success of collaborative entities (Kegler, Rigler, & Honeycutt, 2010). Maintaining inter-organizational relations and mobilizing members relies on the availability of resources to provide staff, maintain good communication, and support collective activities (Chaskin et al., 2001). Coalitions can promote communication through newsletters, television and community radio programs, conferences, and electronic discussion boards and social media. Community coalitions can also benefit from the help of an outside facilitator who can support the process and help connect the group to other allies and necessary resources.

Tools for Community Capacity Building

There are specific technologies that can be used to further the strategies mentioned above. For example, Internet-based resources, such as the *Community Tool Box* (http://ctb.ku.edu/), provide an effective means for transmitting skills, information, and other resources widely and inexpensively (Francisco et al., 2001). Community capacity-building efforts that can be enhanced through such web supports include community needs/assets assessment, resource development, project planning, community recruitment organizing and mobilization, intervention strategies, implementation and marketing, advocacy, and evaluation. *Community-based participatory research,* when done well, can also help build community capacity to engage with research as both consumers and participants. For example, Cashman et al. (2008) illustrate how the roles and skills of community and academic partners are complementary and that meaningfully involving community members in data analysis and interpretation, while it may lengthen project time, can strengthen community capacity in various ways as well as provide unique and valuable insights into the research results, which can lead to better outcomes for all. *Asset-based community development* (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) is another specific approach that starts with the capacities of the residents, organizations, local culture, and physical features of an area and engage in a process of connecting, organizing, and orchestrating instrumental links among them to build local definition, investment, creativity, hope, and control.

Keys to Success in Community Capacity-Building Efforts

Comprehensive community capacity-building efforts are complex, multifaceted, and depending on the context, may be limited in what they can accomplish. Three ingredients increase the likelihood that community capacity-building initiatives will be successful: community engagement, a relationship-driven approach, and linking strategies.

Community engagement. A core principle of community capacity building is that residents should be engaged in the work of improving their own communities (Kubisch, Auspos,

Photo 7.1 Community meetings create opportunities for members to come together to discuss their interests and concerns and can be an effective way to engage in community organizing.

Source: Photo courtesy Victory Heights Blog.

Dewar, & Taylor, 2013). Significant community improvement takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. Engaging community residents and other stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing needed changes and devising and implementing strategies to build capacity has long been a cornerstone of community-building work. Broad-scale mobilization of residents in community-building efforts is critical for building overall community capacity and key to the long-term success of these types of initiatives (Chaskin, 2001; Foster-Fishman et al., 2006). While outside assistance can be invaluable, community capacity is never built from the top down, or from the outside in. Meaningful community participation extends beyond physical involvement to include generation of ideas, contributions to decision making, and sharing of responsibility for action.

Relationship driven. A critical task for any community capacity-building effort is to constantly build and rebuild the relationships between and among local residents, local associa-

tions, and local institutions. Relationships provide the medium for collaborative work and facilitate access to needed resources, and promote commitment and satisfaction. The key is bridging differences and finding common ground, shared interests, and a sense of mutual self-benefit. Capacity builders can provide the supports that facilitate networking among residents and organizations in a community. They can use their resources to support community building and community organizing activities directly as well as by creating opportunities and spaces for residents to get to know each other and come together in collective action. It is in these face-to-face interactions that residents build trust and cooperation around a community-based agenda. In order for relationships to be developed and take root, there is a need for safe places for people to congregate to get to know each other, to discuss, to exchange, to argue, to debate. The existence of a "safe space" or a "system of safety" within communities is often cited as fundamental to promoting or inhibiting the growth or engagement of community capacity (Chaskin et al., 2001).

Linking strategies. As has been described in this chapter, community capacity building involves some combination of four strategies: leadership development, organizational development, community organizing, and inter-organizational collaboration. Working in an integrated fashion across these four major strategies increases the likelihood that efforts to build community capacity will endure and succeed (Chaskin et al., 2001). For example, productive inter-organizational collaborations require organizations with sufficient capacity. And the success of any community organizing effort requires capable leaders. In turn, organizational and community development activities provide opportunities for leadership development. Recognizing how these four strategies complement and depend on each other, and integrating these strategies for maximum benefit is a critical factor in community capacity-building efforts.

COMPETENCY AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT: ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Whether external or internal to organizations or communities, effective capacity builders demonstrate certain competencies. One of the most consistent shortcomings identified in the organizational capacity-building field is the lack of competent providers, especially in terms of their specialized knowledge of the nonprofit community (Backer, 2001). In this section, we'll highlight some of the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for organizational and community capacity building.

KNOWLEDGE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

The most frequently cited knowledge base and experience thought to support successful capacity building include expertise in change management, expertise in the subject area of the capacity-building effort, and relevant local knowledge (Backer et al., 2010;

Blumenthal, 2003; Kibbe et al., 2004). Competencies for organizational and community capacity building have been more broadly identified for community psychology practice through a collaborative process organized recently within the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) and published in draft form in the Fall 2012 issue of *The Community Psychologist* (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012). Those competencies include an understanding of foundational principles in the field (e.g., ecological perspectives, empowerment, cross-cultural competence, inclusion and partnership, ethical-reflective practice) as well as knowledge of specific aspects of community program development, community and organizational capacity building, community and social change, and applied (especially participatory) community research. "Practitioner" competencies relate to more technical knowledge and skills in the areas of communication, research, and community and organizational processes and interventions. "Specialist" competencies are knowledge and skills specific to practitioners' particular role and setting. Specialist knowledge may include an understanding of the larger institutional context beyond the practitioners' organizational setting, relevant regulatory and policy frameworks and players, and theoretical and research literature relevant to one's area of practice.

Skills and Abilities for Organizational and Community Capacity Building

In the category of skills and abilities particular to community and organizational capacity building, the following practice competencies were identified by SCRA: community leadership and mentoring, small and large group processes, resource development, and consultation and organizational development. *Leadership* in this context is defined as "the ability to enhance the capacity of individuals and groups to lead effectively, through a collaborative process of engaging, energizing and mobilizing those individuals and groups regarding an issue of shared importance" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 11). Competent capacity builders are able to establish trusting relationships, work with community partners and differing stakeholders to assess issues and priorities. They are able to work across diverse groups to find productive ways to address organizational and community concerns and they support the planning and implementation of specific actions to address an issue. *Mentoring* is defined as "the ability to assist community members to identify personal strengths and social and structural resources that they can develop further and use to enhance empowerment, community engagement, and leadership" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 11). Competent capacity builders advise and support organizational and community leaders and help them develop and utilize forms of collaborative leadership in their efforts. As part of the organizational and community capacity-building process, mentoring also includes the ability to model the practice of critical reflection in one's own work.

The ability to intervene effectively in *small and large group processes* was also seen as important skill "in order to facilitate the capacity of community groups to work together productively" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 11). Related skills are effective interpersonal communication, facilitation of meetings, group decision making, action planning, consensus building, and conflict analysis and resolution. One recent graduate of a community psychology program who is now running her own community consulting practice reported to us that her training in facilitation methods and the "technology of participation" through the Institute of Cultural

Affairs (http://ica-international.org/top/top-intro.htm) was invaluable, providing the tools she needed to help groups and organizations process experiences, plan together, make decisions, and build capacities. Often in our work with community groups we are using facilitation and workshop methods that can be modeled and taught to others to use in their own community efforts. One of the authors, Evans, often uses a process called "exploding the issue" with groups of staff in organizations to explore root causes of some of the problems their constituents face. Once organizations see and experience this group process it becomes part of their toolbox to use with each other and with community constituents.

Resource development is defined as the "ability to identify and integrate use of human and material resources, including community assets and social capital" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 11) and includes fundraising knowledge and skills. *Consultation and organizational development* is defined as "the ability to facilitate growth of an organization's capacity to attain its goals" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012; p. 12) and includes the ability to assess organizational capacity, issues, needs, and assets; create and sustain effective partnerships; and facilitate learning, problem-solving, and collaborative strategic planning of goals and actions. In organizations, capacity builders help determine an organization's capacity building needs through an assessment process. This process is often guided by a capacity-building assessment tool and may also involve quantitative and/or qualitative data collection such as surveys, interviews, document reviews, and observations from internal and external stakeholders. The goal is increased understanding of the organization's current and desired status, including its readiness to engage in capacity-building activities. Thus, capacity builders must have the ability to create and use tools for data collection and understand how to collect, manage, analyze, and report findings in formats that can be utilized by community and organizational partners. Capacity builders then work with organizations to develop an appropriate plan for building capacity that is based upon the results of the assessment process. The plan details the specific actions that the organization will undertake to address its capacity-building needs, the anticipated results, the timeline, and the resources needed. Capacity builders have the knowledge, skills, and tools to move organizations from assessment of developing capacity-building needs to the implementation of strategies to address those needs.

The importance of relationships. The quality of the relationship between the capacity builder and community partner is also thought to be an important factor in successful capacity building (Blumenthal, 2003; Innovation Network, 2001; Kegeles, Rebchook, & Tebbetts, 2005). One thing that we've learned in our years of working with and studying organizational and community processes is that relationships are fundamental. First and foremost, any effort to build capacity in community contexts is grounded in an enduring relationship of trust and mutual respect. Community psychologists have long espoused the importance of taking the time to establish long-term, caring, committed relationships with community partners in order to work in solidarity for social change (Kelly, 1979; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Rappaport, 1990; Trickett, 1984). As community researchers and practitioners, we often find ourselves connected with community partners long before and after a specific project. When we develop committed relationships with community partners that allow us to be seen as equals and as friends and companions in the process, we enable open and honest dialogue.

Evans (in press) suggests that those of us working in communities should be skilled at playing the role of "critical friend" to help community partners better work toward social justice objectives. In the context of an enduring relationship of trust and mutual respect, gentle critique of current practices can be a tool that can bring shared assumptions and beliefs into the foreground for examination. It's about working alongside individuals, organizations, and communities to reveal how the beliefs and attitudes that inform their action may help to preserve a social order that is antithetical to their collective experiences and goals (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). We can be outspoken critics of the status quo, as well as trusted friends with high expectations for organizational and community change.

Critical competencies. In a similar vein, Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, and Siddiquee (2011) add the following "critical" competencies, which are important for building capacity in many organizational and community contexts. *Critical analysis and reframing* is the ability to conduct social analysis of authority and power in communities and to examine the larger social and political forces at play. It is also the ability to reframe problems too often described in individual or family-level terms through the lens of deficiencies in systemic conditions. *Critical reflection* is the ability to critique and learn from our practice, and make sense of successes and failures alongside those with whom we make alliances. For critical theorists, critical reflection has no meaning unless it is accompanied by awareness of power relationships and sociopolitical realities (Reynolds, 1998). Another recent master's-level graduate in community psychology suggested to us that he considered reflective practice to be a key competency in his own consulting practice and something that was encouraged and cultivated through his academic program. Being able to critically self-reflect on experiences can help identify new insights as well as gaps for future learning. He's been continuing this practice through his consulting blog (www.strongrootsconsulting.ca/blog), which then has an additional capacity-building impact by sharing resources with a nonprofit audience, both locally and beyond. Lastly, *critical reflexivity* is the capacity to make positions of power and privilege (including one's own) transparent in change processes as well as the awareness of the assumptions, positions, and values we bring to the process. It's about questioning, examining, and becoming aware of personal assumptions and values as well as taken-for-granted dominant professional constructions influencing practice (Brechin, 2000).

Training, Education, and Experiences That Would Help Strengthen This Competency

Those wanting to build competencies in the area of organizational and community capacity building develop knowledge and skills through a combination of formal education, professional development training opportunities, and practical field experiences.

Formal Education

Seeking master's level training in community psychology and related fields is an excellent way to build a solid knowledge base, theoretical grounding, and practical skills for

organizational and community capacity building. Not to mention that obtaining a graduate degree brings with it credentials that, to some degree, help when building relationships with community partners. Programs in community psychology, community sociology, urban and regional planning, urban affairs, urban geography, applied anthropology, community (macro) social work, public health, or public administration all provide some emphasis on building knowledge and applied skills for this kind of work. Many of these programs can be completed in one year and some are now being offered online or through a hybrid model (some online, some face-to-face).

When exploring graduate programs that can offer solid training in capacity building, look for programs that have a strong experiential component built into their course plan. For example, many programs require students to complete a community-based practicum experience where they work alongside community partners to help them accomplish a goal while learning from the experience. This field experience is designed to integrate students' didactic learning with practical experience and translate community and organizational skill-building and leadership tools to a real-world environment. Additionally, look for key course offerings on the following topics:

- Organizational Development or Organizational Change
- Community Psychology or Community Development
- Community Organizing
- Action Research
- Applied Research
- Program Development and Evaluation
- Leadership
- Group Dynamics or Group Process
- Nonprofit Management
- Community consultation
- Diversity or Multiculturalism

Professional Development

In addition to formal coursework, there are also ways to build competencies through participation in specialized training events. As was mentioned earlier, training in group facilitation, action planning, and innovative participatory and self-organizing group processes such as Open Space Technology (Owen 2007, 2008), World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005), and Dynamic Facilitation (Rough, 2002) are process skills that can be applied to a host of organizational and community contexts and situations. Capacity building and philanthropic organizations in communities often offer training on a variety of topics and skills at an affordable price. For example, many of the United Way branches and local, state, and national nonprofit alliances either maintain or partner with a training center that provides public workshops, customized workshops tailored to specific needs, technical assistance, consulting, and other resources to build competencies in people and organizations. Additionally, national organizations like the Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC; /www.interactioninstitute.org), the Foundation Strategy Group (FSG; www.fsg.org), 4Good (https://4good.org), and Vibrant Communities Canada (http://vibrantcanada.ca) offer in-depth

training, webinars, podcasts, and online resources on important skill and topics. A sampling of learning opportunities recently offered by these organizations includes:

- Facilitative Leadership for Social Change
- Whole Measures: Transforming Communities by Measuring What Matters Most
- Community-Building Curriculum
- Strategic Drivers for Comprehensive Community Change
- Essential Facilitation
- Civic Leadership Lab
- Strategic Planning Part 1: Cultivation & Organizational Development
- Connecting Strategy, Evaluation, and Learning in Your Organization
- Diversity in the Collaborative Organization
- Strategic Drivers for Comprehensive Community Change
- Social Media for Social Good

These and other similar organizations maintain extensive resource libraries on their websites and can provide a wealth of useful information and strategies. A recent graduate of a community psychology graduate program who received training in "Facilitative Leadership for Social Change" from the Interaction Institute reported that she learned tangible skills that she can use to facilitate different groups of people and some specific techniques on how to set up and execute meetings. She felt that the training really complemented her master's degree.

Attending local, regional, and national conferences on issues and topics related to organizational and community capacity building is also a great way to learn new skills and strategies and can help build and expand your professional network. For example, The Alliance for Nonprofit Management's 2014 national conference is centered on the theme "Capacity Building for Collective Impact." Other national associations such as The Society for Research and Action (www.scra27.0rg), the American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org), Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (http://ccph.info), the Organizational Development Network (www.odnetwork.org), Independent Sector (www.independentsector.org/), and the Urban Affairs Association (http://urbanaffairsassociation.org) to name but a few, offer annual or bi-annual conferences with presentations and workshops by researchers, practitioners, and entrepreneurs from around the world.

Field Experience

While formal education and professional development are invaluable, direct experience in organizations and communities is perhaps the best training in the complexities and messiness that is organizational and community capacity building. Direct experience with organizational and community development, consultation, local policy development, administration, advocacy, and community organizing helps one become aware of the assets, needs, and challenges of capacity building and planned change in organizational and community contexts. Moreover, experience with applied research and evaluation—designing research, collecting, analyzing, and communicating data—helps the capacity builder learn the intricacies of utilizing research for organizational and community change. On-the-job training in the research philosophies and methodologies of needs assessment,

program evaluation, policy analysis, community surveys, interviewing, focus groups, accessing and analyzing social indicator data (census, education, crime, health), and basic qualitative and quantitative analysis could come through participating as a member of a research or evaluation team. Direct experiences of this nature can happen through internships, volunteering, or paid work experiences. Organizations and community groups would typically welcome volunteers or interns willing to contribute to the cause while learning valuable knowledge and skills.

APPLICATION

The Importance of the Competency to Community Practice

Community psychologists and other community practitioners engaged in organizational and community settings are consistently faced with the question: How do we help create change? Whether it's change related to reduction of negative community indicators such as levels of youth violence or positive change such as increasing civic engagement, this process ultimately requires people, programs, organizations, and communities with sufficient capacity to create and sustain change. Organizations without sufficient capacity in key domains will struggle and will be unable help their constituents or fulfill their missions. Communities with weak organizations and disengaged residents will be unable to determine their future or effectively address the critical needs and aspirations of the people who live there. Community practitioners with the core knowledge, skills, tools, and attributes described above can help organizations and communities build sufficient capacity to create the kind of change they need to promote well-being.

Although we've highlighted some ideas and key principles to help guide our thinking about this type of community practice, there is no single template for how to engage in capacity building in real-world settings. Often our capacity building efforts are less systematic and more opportunistic in that we are infusing capacity building in all of our engagements with community partners. Below we provide a brief example of this competency in practice in which Catherine describes the way that organizational capacity building often happens as part of consultation engagements not specifically focused on capacity building.

A Real-World Application of the Competency: Organizational Capacity Building

I (Catherine) am a consultant to nonprofit organizations and have a strong professional interest in strengthening our local nonprofit sector and the local community. As such, I am always on the lookout for how I can opportunistically infuse organizational capacity building into my consulting assignments (most often these are for program evaluation or strategic planning). In this way, the nonprofit benefits from increased staff and organizational capacity as a secondary outcome of the contract—at no additional out-of-pocket cost. As they walk hand-in-hand with me through the evaluation or strategic planning, we also talk about how they can internally manage the process in the future—with no, or reduced, external assistance.

In some cases when there is a small budget for the work, staff participation is imperative to stretch the budget and with some simple modifications to the contract design I can create learning experiences within the staff involvement. For example, in an evaluation, staff might participate in the design of the plan and measures, collecting and managing some of the data, and reflecting on the results and utilization of the data. In effect, staff builds capacity as they work with me to implement the contracted evaluation or strategic planning process. This type of capacity building is not about systematically assessing an organization and then developing and implementing a capacity-building plan. Rather, it is about looking for any opportunity that presents itself to build staff and organizational capacity. Evaluation theorists have long recognized the potential for participatory forms of organizational development and evaluation and capacity building to foster collective learning and development (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Patton, 1998; Preskill 1994; Preskill & Torres, 1999).

With some nonprofits, it has been relatively easy to do this whereas others have not been interested. Some clients really just want me to come in, do my thing, and leave. In other organizations, there might be interest but usually due to staff being "stretched too thin" the organization may be unable to participate. In my experience, leaders at small to medium nonprofits have been more interested in this participatory capacity-building approach but small organizations sometimes have the most difficulty participating due to lack of staff availability.

In reflecting on my work, I have identified a number of factors—both on my end, as the consultant, and on the client's end—that appear to impact the likelihood of success. These factors, discussed below, represent in-the-field applications of the content presented earlier in this chapter.

As the consultant, I must first determine to what extent, if any, my client is interested in adding a capacity-building component to my consulting contract. In cases where the client has a small budget, I introduce the idea as a way to get more "bang for the buck" since staff involvement reduces my work and thus my fee. For many, this argument is very persuasive. I must also assess to what extent the client has the internal capacity, or "readiness," to engage in capacity-building activities. Is the organizational leadership supportive? Does there appear to be an organizational culture of learning so that staff are accustomed to participating in learning processes? Are the staff who would be involved willing and do they have the time to participate? What relevant skills and experience do they have?

If the client is interested and appears to have the capacity to participate, I design the project to be very collaborative and participatory from the first through the final stages. The project scope is modified to encompass the stated purpose of the contract (e.g., evaluate a program, create a strategic plan) and the secondary purpose of building capacity. This type of design involves some changes in my roles such as: ceding some level of control over the process; effectively and efficiently engaging staff in meaningful activities; providing monitoring, oversight, and feedback to ensure quality; and being particularly sensitive to staff's ability and level of participations (e.g., time, skills, interest). Of most significance, in this approach, my role expands to include a training and coaching role. I have both academic training and professional experience in adult education and professional development so this is a role in which I am comfortable. Not all consultants would be.

Both evaluation and strategic planning involve data collection, management, analysis, and utilization so these skills and processes tend to be the focus of the capacity-building

work I do with organizations. Data collection and management activities may be shared activities while data analysis is most often done by me. Interpreting and utilizing the results is generally a shared activity.

A core staff group is created that works closely with me to design the project, including data collection tools. My experience indicates to me that engaging staff in the process right from the onset has many benefits. It increases staff learning outcomes and staff willingness to participate and also results in a better project design and analysis because the design and analysis reflect the knowledge of those who are actually engaged in the work.

In any consulting contract, communication is always important but when capacity building is added to the work scope, communication becomes a key success factor. In addition to periodic meetings for planning, training, and interpretation I create detailed written instructions and often provide training to prepare staff for their roles.

In closing these field-based reflections, a few concluding remarks are in order. Building capacity is a necessary, ongoing organizational process. However, there is less and less external funding available for "capacity-building projects" and some argue that these discrete projects often do not result in meaningful, enduring increases in capacity. Thus, an opportunistic approach to capacity building is a sustainable strategy—looking for opportunities to create capacity-building experiences within the ongoing, or periodic, activities of the organization. However, it "takes two to tango." No matter how skilled a capacity builder one is, the organization must be willing and able to engage in capacity-building activities. And finally, not all external consultants make good capacity builders. It requires a consultant who is willing and able to work collaboratively and can serve as a coach.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

An emerging view of capacity building places it within a broad theoretical framework that links organizational and community capacity building to a vital civil sector and a strong democratic society. Researchers and practitioners are moving to conceptualize capacity building in collective and holistic terms, recognizing the relationships among and between individual, group, organizational, and community development. In the nonprofit sector, there is a growing understanding that building communities and networks among practitioners strengthens the potential impact of the sector. Many funding agencies are recognizing that philanthropy needs to focus on developing learning systems across organizations and networks in communities in order to fully leverage their investments in social change. Thus, there is an increasing focus on building collaborative capacity (Himmelman, 2001)—the capacity of organizations and institutions to work together across sectors with communities to achieve results.

Capacity-building practitioners should also note the increasing importance of digital technologies and digital literacy. More and more, organizational and community change efforts are being informed and aided by technology, digital tools, and social media. Those of us working to build capacity of organizations, networks, and communities should be skilled at using new digital tools such as e-mail, blogs, wikis, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook that encourage conversations between people, and across people and organizations, to enlarge their efforts quickly, easily, and inexpensively (Kanter & Fine, 2010). In community

capacity-building efforts in particular, these technologies reduce the reliance on traditional organizations and contribute to the ease and speed with which individuals and groups can be mobilized for action (Shirky, 2008). The speed and strength of communication these tools facilitate enables organizations to both harness the power of their networks, and involve their community more fully.

SUMMARY

Organizational and community capacity building are key strategies for promoting community empowerment and well-being. Capable and effective organizations can play a leading role in building and supporting community capacity. Communities can better address community problems, build on community strengths, and seize opportunities when the necessary commitment, resources, and skills can be deployed. Contributing to the development of capacity in organizations and communities takes skilled and knowledgeable leadership acting in the context of relationships built on trust and mutual respect. In this chapter we provided definitions of organizational and community capacity and capacity building and attempted to highlight the individual practitioner competencies needed to fully engage with organizational and community partners in the capacity-building endeavor. We hope readers will make use of the material in this chapter as well as the resources provided at the end to further their exploration and develop their own talents as agents of change in organizations and communities.

Key Points

- Organizational and community capacity are linked because much action to improve communities occurs in the context of organizations.
- Organizational capacity is everything an organization uses to achieve its mission.
- An organization's capacity needs at any particular moment will depend on a wide variety of factors.
- Organizational capacity building is the process of identifying what organizational capacities to target for strengthening and applying targeted strategies most likely to build those capacities.
- Community capacity is the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities.
- Community capacity building is taking strategic action to build commitment, resources, and skills in community settings.
- Those wanting to increase their ability to lead capacity-building efforts can develop knowledge and skills through a combination of formal education, professional development training opportunities, and practical field experiences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The authors note that a "one size fits all" approach to organizational capacity building is believed to be less effective. However, given the limited funding for organizational capacity building, a "one size fits all" approach would most likely be more efficient and less expensive. Why would it be less effective?
- How might organizational capacity needs differ between a young organization and a mature organization? Between a small organization and a large organization? Between an organization providing mental health services and an organization working with constituents to advocate for policy change? Think about the needed capacities in each of these cases using Connolly and York's four capacity domains.
- What are the challenges of working to build capacity in a community as an outsider? Which of the competencies outlined in this chapter would be of particular importance in this situation? Why?
- How could one use social media when attempting to build community capacity through community organizing? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this strategy?

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Organizational capacity: The combined influence of an organization's abilities to govern and manage itself, to develop assets and resources, to forge the right community linkages, and to deliver valued services—all combining to meaningfully address its mission.

Organizational needs assessment: In the context of organizational capacity building this generally involves engaging staff, and often other stakeholders, in critically examining an organization's management and governance structures and processes. It is usually guided by an assessment tool and forms the basis for development of a capacity building plan.

Adaptive capacity: "The ability of a nonprofit organization to monitor, assess, and respond to internal and external changes" through activities such as strategic planning, developing beneficial collaborations, scanning the environment, and assessing organizational performance (Connolly & York, 2003, p. 20).

Organizational capacity building: The process of identifying what organizational capacities to target for strengthening and applying targeted strategies most likely to build those capacities.

Community capacity: The interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community.

Community capacity building: Taking strategic action to build commitment, resources, and skills in community settings.

Leadership capacity: "The ability of all organizational leaders to inspire, prioritize, make decisions, provide direction and innovate, all in an effort to achieve the organizational mission" (Connolly & York, 2003, p. 20).

Management capacity: "The ability of a nonprofit organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of organizational resources" through, for example, effective personnel and volunteer policies (Connolly & York, 2003, p. 20).

Technical capacity: "The ability of a nonprofit organization to implement all of the key organizational and programmatic functions" such as delivery of programs and services, effectively managing organizational finances, conducting evaluation activities, and raising funds (Connolly & York, 2003, p. 20).

RESOURCES

Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations: http://www.vppartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/assessment.pdf

The Aspen Institute—Community Building Publications: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/community-change/publications

The Aspen Institute. (2006). *Measuring community capacity building: A workbook in progress for rural communities*: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/csg/Measuring_Community_Capactiy_Building.pdf

The Foundation Center Capacity Building for Nonprofit Organizations: A Resource List: http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/capacity.html

The Alliance for Nonprofit Management: http://www.allianceonline.org

Recommended Reading

Blumenthal, B. (2003). *Investigating capacity building: A guide to high-impact approaches.* New York, NY: The Foundation Center.

Chaskin, R. J., Brown, P., Venkatesh, S., & Vidal, A. (2001). *Building community capacity.* New York, NY: A. de Gruyter.

Connolly, P., & Lukas, C. A. (2002). *Strengthening nonprofit performance: A funder's guide to capacity building.* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

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Recommended Websites

Community Toolbox chapter 3. Assessing Community Needs and Resources: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1003.aspx

Community Toolbox chapter 8: Improving Organizational Management and Development: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/improve-organizational-management-and-development

Free Management Library section on capacity building: http://managementhelp.org/organizationalperformance/nonprofits/capacity-building.htm

Capacity Building Resource List at The Foundation Center: http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/capacity.html

Other Recommended Materials

Building Movement Project—Tools http://buildingmovement.org/our_tools/entry/service_and_social_change

Suggested Activities for Further Competency Development

- Attend one of the conferences listed in the section above on Professional Development. Set goals ahead of time for what knowledge and skills you want to learn from the conference and preview the program before attending to map out your learning agenda.

- Practice assessing organizational capacity and use one of the assessment tools suggested below to conduct an organizational assessment of a nonprofit organization with which you are familiar. Based on your assessment of the organization, develop several capacity-building recommendations.

- Improve your group process skills by attending a training on facilitation skills. Alternatively (or additionally) shadow an experienced facilitator in the community from who you can learn new techniques and strategies.

Worksheets

The One Hour Organizational Assessment: https://www.ideaencore.com/item/one-hour-organizational-assessment/?utm_source = Consumer&utm_medium = newsletter&utm_campaign = 2013-03-12

Marguerite Casey Foundation Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool: http://caseygrants.org/resources/org-capacity-assessment/

McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid: http://www.vppartners.org/sites/default/files/reports/assessment.pdf

Social Venture Partners Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool: http://www.socialventurepartners.org/seattle/news-events/reports-and-tools/

Community Engagement Strategies Assessment Worksheet: http://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Community_Engagement_Assessment_Worksheet.pdf

For Self-Exploration or Self-Development

- Put yourself in the role of someone who is working in an organization or community and is seeking outside help with a capacity-building effort. What type of person would you want to engage? What characteristics would be important? Now reflect on your own attributes—how do they match with what you imagined in the role-play above? What characteristics make you capable to be a leader in capacity building? What things do you need to work on?

- Take in one of the many online trainings related to various aspects of organizational or community capacity building. Check out some of the offerings through the organizations listed in the Resources.

For Assessment of Knowledge, Skill, and Abilities Relating to the Competency

- Self-assess your ability to provide capacity building assistance to an organization or local community. In making this assessment, consider both the capacity builder qualifications discussed in the chapter and the case example. In what areas do your strengths lie? In what areas would you need to further develop your capacities and capabilities?
- Come up with several examples of organizational activities or functions for each domain within the Connolly and York organizational capacity framework.
- In what ways might the levels of nonprofit organizational capacity within a community be important to community capacity-building efforts?

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