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# THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

## A TOOL TO BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Written by  
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for Human Resources Development Canada

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Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

Copies of this handbook, as well as the related *Community Development Facilitator's Guide*,  
in both French and English, are available from the HRDC Internet website at  
<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/community>

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to understand community development it is important to understand that it means different things to different people in different places — and that our understanding about what constitutes effective or appropriate community development has expanded considerably in the past few years. What we do know is that it is founded on voluntary and healthy interdependence, mutual benefit and shared responsibility. In recent years, more often than not, community development has involved local people seeking and taking advantage of opportunities or working together to solve problems.

Our interest in community development is not new but something to which we are returning. And returning to it we are, with interest being generated in all sectors and by a wide variety of people in each sector. Along with this increased interest comes some confusion about what community development is and what it is not. While different approaches and a variety of ideas exist about community development, there remains an underlying assumption that it is familiar to us and that we have a part to play in it.

The fact is that, just as individual people vary, communities differ and no one approach will work in all situations. Therefore, a flexible process and general information are being offered in this handbook to be adapted to your own situation.

### Why this handbook was developed

This handbook has been created by the Labor Market Learning and Development Unit at Human Resources Development Canada to support the understanding and effective application of community development. Community development is one of several vital tools used in the building of the capacity in communities across Canada.

Community capacity is an important consideration in community development as the process of community development itself often results in increased capacity. Therefore, the two are interrelated but distinct. Combined or separate, they both have a great deal to do with developing potential and enhancing community living. This handbook was designed to look at community development, realizing that capacity building and other processes often get confused with it.

### Who this handbook is for

This introductory handbook is not designed to be a textbook for practitioners, but as an introductory guide to community development and capacity building. It is designed primarily for those who have an interest in community development but who may not have an in-depth understanding of the concept, the process or the resources available across Canada.

For those already possessing knowledge about the topic and/or experience in the field, this handbook provides a resource for exploring and initiating community development and reviewing the basics of the community development process.

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## What this handbook will do

This handbook is designed to spark, rekindle and reaffirm your interest in community development. To do this, information and tools are offered to assist in building common understanding and appropriate approaches.

By reading this book, you should be able to:

- define the terms "community development" and "community capacity building" and explain the link between the two,
- explain the community development process,
- explain the skills and knowledge needed to be effective,
- identify the most common problems experienced in community development and
- explain how experience tells us these problems may be overcome.

## What this handbook will not do

This handbook cannot and does not provide you with all that you need to know to pursue community development in your own community. Reading it, and answering all of the questions posed, will not turn you into a fully-qualified community developer. Neither will it answer all of your questions. It is simply one resource that is available to you. If you are interested in learning more about these subject areas you will need to undertake further exploration by seeking out other resources and talking to individuals who have been active in the community development process.

## Contents of the handbook

This handbook is designed to provide information, tips and questions about the basics of community development, which can then be applied to your own circumstances. Throughout, there are sections labeled "Lessons from Experience" and "Points to Ponder".

"Lessons from Experience" provides quick points about various aspects of each section. The comments are from consultants, community service workers and others with extensive experience in community development.

"Points to Ponder" offers questions based on the information that has been provided in each section. The questions are designed to help generate thoughts about what has been read and how it might apply to your own situation. These can also be used to initiate discussion.

In addition, throughout this handbook, you will find stories that are based upon community development experiences across Canada. They are snapshots of different situations and are intended to be brief and to the point. In order to keep them short and simple, there is very little contextual background or detail provided. These types of situations happen every day in most communities and provide concrete examples of the many ways the community development process can be applied — as well as creating real-life stories upon which we can draw.

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The content of the handbook is as follows:

- [Section I](#) focuses on defining community development and capacity building;
- [Section II](#) identifies the conditions that support community development;
- [Section III](#) outlines the community development process and how to apply it;
- [Section IV](#) explores the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to develop the capacity needed to effectively undertake a community development initiative; and
- [Section V](#) examines common issues and concerns as well as providing some possible solutions.

The handbook has been reviewed and validated by respected community development practitioners. A listing of their names can be found on the Acknowledgements page.

A Facilitator's Guide has also been developed and is available through Human Resources Development Canada. It is designed to help facilitate learning and discussions about community development based on the contents of this handbook. A copy may be obtained as per the inside cover of this book.

## A Word About Words

We have defined the term "community development" to mean the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental and cultural). It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (see [Section I](#) for further elaboration).

Other similar terms, such as community economic development and community-based economic development, are being used within communities and, often, they are used without a clear understanding of their meaning. There is a great deal of confusion about these terms because they may mean something slightly different to each person using them.

There are no absolute definitions and rarely does everyone agree on the precise wording of terms that are commonly used. There may be different and even better definitions than the ones provided, and they too may change over time. That's the nature of working in the community with people and learning better ways of expressing ourselves.



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## SECTION I - UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS

Although very closely related, community development and community capacity building are not the same thing. Some might argue that you can't have one without the other or that one is a result of, or leads to the other — and they would probably be correct. It's much like the chicken and the egg. There is an obvious relationship between the two, but there is also confusion about which is which and what is involved in each one.

The primary focus of this handbook is on community development. The handbook will outline a community development process that builds upon and results in increased community capacity. Both community development and community capacity building are being viewed and discussed as community-based and participatory. In actual fact, community development does not have to be driven by community members and, in many instances, it isn't — but when it is not, very little community capacity building occurs.

An example of this could happen when government and industry are in control of the economic and social development of a community. Jobs are created, programs and services are provided and yet the local residents often have little input. In this situation, the community's economic wealth may be improved (and some might consider its capacity increased) but sacrifices are made in the community's ability to manage itself, make decisions, sustain long-term well-being or prepare for a future that might not include that particular industry.

The result is that the community's overall capacity is not built, although the community appears to be developing.

Another example where capacity is built but community development may not occur (or at least not right away) is in marginalized communities. Some are in social and economic paralysis and are dependent on outside expertise and assistance. Sometimes communities remain damaged and unhealthy for a very long time. They need to heal, become safe and build personal and community wellness. Opportunities may be present, but the community is unable to identify or take advantage of them. Leadership is required, long-range thinking and strategic plans are needed, skills must be developed, attitudes often have to change and resources must be acquired. It is important that capacity be built before community development can take place.

Most communities, however, experience a healthy relationship between community development and capacity building and, as a result, it is useful and practical to consider them together as complimentary processes.

### Principles and Values

Principles and values are a key part of both community development and capacity building, particularly when they are being considered as participatory or inclusive processes.

They should be based on respecting people, improving the quality of living, appreciating and supporting cultural differences and being good stewards of the land, water and wildlife.

What we do now in communities has an impact on future generations. In order to honor one of the overriding values in community development, which is to leave a positive legacy, care must be taken to add value to everything that is done. The desire is to build capacity and develop communities in a way that enhances all aspects of the community (the total ecology) and is appropriate for today as well as for tomorrow.

### What is Community Development?

Community development is the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental and cultural). It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. The scope of community development can vary from small initiatives within a small group, to large initiatives that involve the whole community. Regardless of the scope of the activity, effective community development should be:

- a long-term endeavor,
- well planned,
- inclusive and equitable,
- holistic and integrated into the bigger picture,
- initiated and supported by community members,
- of benefit to the community, and
- grounded in experience that leads to best practice.

#### *What Is Community Development?*

*It is a "grassroots" process by which communities:*

- become more responsible;*
- organize and plan together;*
- develop healthy options;*
- empower themselves;*
- reduce ignorance, poverty and suffering;*
- create employment and economic opportunities; and*
- achieve social, economic, cultural and environment goals.*

The primary outcome of community development is improved quality of life. Effective community development results in mutual benefit and shared responsibility among community members and recognizes:

- the connection between social, cultural, environmental and economic matters;
- the diversity of interests within a community; and
- its relationship to building capacity.

Community development requires and helps to build community capacity to address issues and to take advantage of opportunities, to find common ground and to balance competing interests. It does not just happen — it requires both a conscious and a conscientious effort to do something (or many things) to improve the community.

Let's consider some of the assumptions about the words "community" and "development".

#### Community

Often when we think of the term community, we think in geographic terms. Our community is the location (i.e. city, town or village) where we live.

When community is defined through physical location, it can be defined by precise boundaries that are readily understood and accepted by others.

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Defining communities in terms of geography, however, is only one way of looking at them. Communities can also be defined by common cultural heritage, language, and beliefs or shared interests. These are sometimes called communities of interest.

Even when community does refer to a geographic location, it does not always include everyone within the area. For example, many Aboriginal communities are part of a larger non-Aboriginal geography. In larger urban centres, communities are often defined in terms of particular neighbourhoods.

Most of us belong to more than one community, whether we are aware of it or not. For example, an individual can be part of a neighbourhood community, a religious community and a community of shared interests all at the same time. Relationships, whether with people or the land, define a community for each individual.

### Development

The term development often carries with it an assumption of growth and expansion. During the industrial era, development was strongly connected to increased speed, volume and size. Many are currently questioning the concept of growth for numerous reasons. There is a realization that more is not always better. Increasingly, there is respect for reducing outside dependencies and lowering levels of consumerism. The term development, therefore, may not always mean growth; it does, however, always imply change.

The community development process takes charge of the conditions and factors that influence a community and changes the quality of life of its members. Community development is a tool for managing change and, therefore, is not:

- a quick fix or a short-term response to a specific issue within a community,
- a process that seeks to exclude community members from participating, or
- an initiative that occurs in isolation from other related community activity.

Community development is about community building as such, with the process as important as the results. One of the primary challenges of community development is to balance the need for long-term solutions with the day-to-day realities that require immediate decision and short-term action.

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## Community Development Resources

The term resources is used in many contexts. It is often understood to mean money; however, in the context of community development it can mean far more than that. Community development includes natural, human, financial and infrastructure resources.

Natural resources are all the things that nature provides. Oftentimes, community development focuses on the natural resource industry that extracts the natural resource, creating jobs and wealth but, if not managed properly, may not be sustainable over time. Part of effective community development is to be good stewards of the land and maintain a healthy balance between the environmental, economic and social undertakings in the community.

Natural resources include things such as:

- land, air and water;
- minerals and surface/subsurface metals and ores;
- oil, gas and petroleum;
- trees and other plants;
- wildlife; and
- the standards, legislation and policies relating to the above.

Human resources are about people. People are at the heart of all community matters and, as such, they are critical to success. But just having people involved is not enough. In community development, it is important to have the right people in the right jobs with the right skills, knowledge and abilities. This is not an easy matter

as often we are not sure who should be doing what, what the required skills are, or where to get the necessary skills if they are missing. Placing people into the right roles and building skills or developing human capacity is called human resource development. Occasionally it is referred to as building or increasing social capital. Either way, it acknowledges the value of people and their talents and recognizes that this type of development is as important as natural resource development. Unlike many of the natural resources on the planet, people are renewable and should be treated as the most valuable resource in a community.

Human resources include things such as:

- healthy families and lifestyles;
- skills building, education and training;
- career planning and employment;
- effective and legal hiring practices;
- workers compensation and pensions; and
- human rights and labour laws.

The term financial resources is well understood. We know that it means money and it often implies having the ability to acquire it. What gets complicated is how to locate and successfully attract the type and amount of financial resources to community development initiatives. Just like having the right people doing the right jobs, it is important to have the right money at the right time. Traditionally, community development is funded (in part or in total) through economic development channels, taxes or government grants. This leaves little power or control in the hands of the people who want or need to do things that are not on the government or private

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sector agenda. Fundraising and the seeking of grants have become full-time jobs for many organizations and groups involved in community service and development. Financial resources include things such as:

- fundraising and grant-seeking;
- banks and other financial institutions;
- community loan funds and lending circles;
- access to capital and investment funding;
- government loans and program funds;
- cooperatives and other forms of investment; and
- policies and guidelines related to finance lending and reporting.

Infrastructure is part of the resources needed to be effective in community development and includes such obvious things as:

- physical buildings and structures;
- transportation and access;
- communication systems; and
- electrical, hydro, sewage, garbage and heating.

However, infrastructure also refers to the political systems and leadership needed to support a community, as well as the policies, standards and laws established in the community. Without infrastructure there would be no physical community. When considering resourcing a community development initiative it is important to consider what infrastructure is required, what the relationship is to what currently exists and whether or not there are policies or existing support systems to which contact or adherence are required.

A community development undertaking often has its own infrastructure, such as leadership or a physical building, but it should exist within a healthy relationship to that which exists.

### Lessons from Experience

Experience tells us the following:

- There are many ways to define community.
- We may belong to more than one community.
- Community development follows a planned process that is long-term and integrated.
- Community development is not a quick fix for the day-to-day operations of the community.
- Planning the resources for community development includes considering all the resources — people, money, infrastructure and the environment — in which it will operate.
- Community development is a way to enhance the resources of a community and often has sustainability and increased quality of life as its primary focus.
- Developing an understanding of and acquiring access to resources is often difficult and requires specific skills. Community development helps to build them.

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### Points to Ponder

- How do I define my community?
- Do I belong to more than one community and, if so, what is the relationship between my different communities?
- What sort of development is going on in my community?
- What sort of development would I like to see in my community?
- How does or might this development improve quality of life?

### What Is Community Capacity Building?

All people and communities have a certain amount of capacity. No one is without capacity but often we need to develop it. What is important to realize is that the heart of capacity building is people. Healthy communities are made up of healthy people and families. The creation of healthy environments will encourage healthy economies and sustainable development. It takes capacity to do this as well as good leadership, a viable plan, motivation and the support of the community. Basically, it takes capacity to build capacity, and it takes a well-thought-out process to start both capacity building and effective community development.

Capacity is simply the ways and means needed to do what has to be done. It is much broader than simply skills, people and plans. It includes commitment, resources and all that is brought to bear on a process to make it successful. Most often, capacity is referred to as including the following components:

- people who are willing to be involved;
  - skills, knowledge and abilities;
  - wellness and community health;
  - ability to identify and access opportunities;
  - motivation and the wherewithal to carry out initiatives;
  - infrastructure, supportive institutions and physical resources;
  - leadership and the structures needed for participation;
  - economic and financial resources; and
  - enabling policies and systems.
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Community capacity building is based on the premise that community sustainability can be improved over time. Capacity, or the lack of it, is reflected in the people, economy, environment, culture, attitude and appearance of the community.

### Community Assets and Capacity Assessment

The following are assets in a community and should be assessed when considering a community's assets and capacity:

- human assets and liabilities;
- environmental resources;
- economic opportunities and limitations;
- cultural and recreational facilities, programs and services;
- financial, political and security systems;
- infrastructure in existence and needed; and
- communication processes.

### The Impact of Building Capacity

When communities are building capacity, there is a significant impact on many aspects of community life. Capacity building places the emphasis on existing strengths and abilities, rather than being overwhelmed by problems or feelings of powerlessness. An indication that capacity is developing within a community is that people are active, interested and participating in what is going on. They may also be questioning, challenging and debating — but they will be debating what should be done, not complaining that nothing will ever change.

More and more people will be getting involved, identifying key issues and taking action. Results are becoming obvious and the abilities, esteem and resources of many communities are improving as capacity grows.

It takes leadership, time and effort to build capacity. It may also require the support of individuals with expertise and/or money for training. Increased capacity is a direct result of effective community development and, as such, is critical to everyone, whether they are aware that a community development process is underway or not.

### Lessons from Experience

Experience tells us that the results of building or increasing capacity can be measured. The following are some examples of the outcomes of capacity building:

- stronger community relationships: healthier people, caring families and safer, welcoming communities;
- an increased number of community-based opportunities identified;
- the enhanced ability of community members to share their ideas on a course of action;
- increased competency in setting and realizing common goals;
- expanded intuition in sensing what to do, when to do it and when to quit;

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- an enhanced respect for limited resources, including people, so that shortages, duplication or waste are minimized;
  - an increased awareness of the importance of protecting, advocating for and improving the conditions for vulnerable people, distinct cultures, floundering economies and environments;
  - skilled leadership;
  - an increased interest from young people to become future leaders; and
  - an increased ability to handle disappointment, threats and hazards to community pride and well-being.

#### Points to Ponder

- Do you think that community development may be a useful approach for your community to tap into and build upon its capacity?
  - What is the capacity in your community that you can build upon?
  - What areas of community capacity need to be developed or strengthened in your community?
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## SECTION II - WHEN DOES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HAPPEN?

Community development is a planned process that requires certain prerequisites. Effective community development most often happens when:

- a challenge or opportunity presents itself, and the community responds;
- community members are aware of their power to act together to benefit their community;
- there is a desire to build on diversity and to find common ground; and/or
- change is taking place and community development is understood to be a positive approach to manage this change.

Each of these situations is described below. At the end of this section is a set of questions that will help determine whether or not your community has the resources in place that will support community development.

### Responding to a Challenge or Opportunity

A crisis which threatens the viability of the community or an opportunity to enhance the quality of life in the community is often the driving force for community-based action. Community members perceive that action must be taken. A multitude of circumstances could occur that cause a community to respond.

Examples of negative circumstances that can motivate communities to consider a community development approach are:

- closure of a primary industry upon which many of the community members are dependent,
- a community facing significant social problems but with little that can be achieved until issues of community health and well-being are addressed,
- too many young people leaving the community,
- withdrawal of government funding for an initiative upon which the community is highly dependent, or
- frustration about the results of previous efforts and the desire to use a different approach.

Community development is not solely pursued as a response to negative circumstances or a crisis. Increasingly, community development is viewed as a way to build upon strengths (capacity) and take advantage of opportunities. Some communities view the community development process as a way to tap into the multitude of strengths, skills and abilities of community members.

Examples of positive circumstances that can result in community development are:

- the desire to build stronger connections between community members;
- an interest in creating grassroots initiatives to respond to interests or talents within the community (i.e. bartering, co-operatives, arts festivals);
- the potential to diversify economic activity within the community;
- the need to help community members help themselves (community gardens, collective kitchens, cooperative housing); or
- the opportunity to create programs or facilities for children, seniors or others in the community.

Regardless of whether the community is responding to a perceived threat or an opportunity, the motivation to pursue a community development approach stems from a belief that the community itself not only has the solutions but the ability to translate their ideas into action.

**Responding to an Opportunity**

*A group of friends on welfare talked about the idea of creating a community business. They knew that they had to become more self-reliant and their social workers had provided information about community loan funds for new businesses. They asked others to join them in the creation of a community-based economic development project. Because they had experience in both cooking and customer service, the group decided to open a restaurant. Their goal was to create jobs for themselves and others. It took effort, planning and the development of community trust to start the business, but there was an opportunity to do something and they took it. Today a successful restaurant is in place. The restaurant remains committed to hiring disadvantaged people.*

**Lessons from Experience**

- A community is a group of individuals wanting to achieve something collectively rather than separately.

- Regardless of how big or small the action, the feature that distinguishes community development from anything else is the collective approach to decision-making.
- Any number of things can trigger an interest in community development, so it is important to understand the need or problem as well as the possible solutions.

**Points to Ponder**

- Is there a threat or opportunity facing your community?
- Do you think community development could be a useful approach to responding to this threat or opportunity?

## Community Awareness — The Power to Act

Community development stems from the belief that the community itself has or is able to develop solutions to the issues and opportunities within the community. Rather than waiting for someone else, community members believe in their own ability to take action.

Some people may need to be convinced that they do in fact have the power to act and that the contribution they could make is of value. Too often we see outside experts or professionals as the ones with the answers and defer to them. Community development requires awareness by members that they too have expertise about their community. Although outside assistance may be needed, it should only be as a tool to develop community-driven responses in a way which responds to the community.

Discussion in the community may be needed to create the awareness that:

- community members are the experts with respect to the needs, hopes and dreams of their community;
- it can be beneficial to act together to achieve results; and
- all community members have skills, knowledge and abilities to contribute.

### *The Power to Act*

*Community members in a small rural community were disturbed by the fact that many of their young people were going to larger centres to find work. As a result of this concern and, after much work, a number of business people sponsored a small local sawmill. The mill is a success and other business opportunities are being considered to help create additional jobs in the community. Having seen one venture succeed, it is easier to plan others.*

Without the awareness and belief that community members have the power to act and to bring about positive change there will be little motivation for community development. Motivation is not the only requirement for successful community development but it is a foundation.

### Lessons from Experience

- Creating awareness and motivating community members to take responsibility for the future of their community can be a challenge. The best approach may be to use real examples of inclusive community development approaches as a powerful tool for creating awareness of the potential of this approach.
- Practical and small projects can be a great experience that demonstrates the power of collective community development. Starting small and building on strengths is a good strategy for building awareness and motivation.

- 
- ❑ Community development does not work well if members see the answer to the threat or opportunity as being outside of themselves (believing, for example, that government should act on their behalf or that one large private-sector investor can turn the economy around and make the community a better place to live).

#### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Do individuals in your community believe they have the power to bring about change?
- ❑ If community members do not believe they have the power to act, how can you create this awareness?
- ❑ If they do have this awareness, how can you build upon it and sustain it?

### The Desire to Build on Diversity and Find Common Ground

Communities are made up of individuals with a variety of cultural backgrounds, beliefs, interests and concerns. One of greatest challenges is to find the common ground out of the diversity. Success requires that a good cross-section of community members participate.

Inclusive processes are those that:

- are open and participatory in nature;
- respect differences and value all contributions;
- ask questions rather than impose answers;
- look for solutions and areas of agreement;
- break down barriers to communication such as the use of jargon and stereotypes; and
- provide a variety of opportunities for participation.

Examples of the way communities include a variety of people in community development processes are:

- town-hall meetings,
  - focus groups,
  - coffee gatherings and potluck suppers,
  - discussion papers that provide an opportunity for response,
  - questionnaires about community matters,
  - surveys that identify the skills and abilities of community members,
  - local media reports,
  - e-mail and chat rooms,
  - planning workshops, and
-

- interviewing individuals in leadership roles.

Acknowledge this and get some experienced help if it becomes a problem.

Failure to involve a cross-section of community members and interests will weaken your community development effort. To be effective, all sectors must be involved. Invite community leaders to participate, and design strategies to bring together individuals who do not normally participate in community processes. Make sure that it is the right time and that there is enough interest to proceed.

Community development is not one set of interests within a community imposing a solution or action on others. Community development is a democratic process and involves the active participation of a variety of people.

The strength of community development is that it is an approach that brings individuals of diverse interests together to achieve a common purpose.

### Lessons from Experience

- Inclusion must be intentional. Identify the variety of interests in your community and develop strategies for involvement.
- Inclusion of a wide spectrum of interests can push people out of their comfort zones.

#### *Finding Common Ground*

*Two non-profit agencies were frustrated by the fact that very few job opportunities existed in their community for mental health survivors. There were mixed feelings and much ignorance about the abilities of the survivors and many doubts about supporting anything that could create a financial dependency. These two agencies acted as the catalyst to bringing together community people to increase awareness, consider options and develop innovative and community-based solutions to the problems. They discovered that everyone was interested in sustainable and meaningful employment, regardless of other differences, so they proceeded to create a cooperative that was run by and for the mental health survivors. This helped improve understanding and enhanced community relations.*

- The process is as important as the results. A process that fails to be inclusive is not good community development, regardless of the results.
- If certain people or stakeholders in your community are skeptical or don't wish to participate, keep them informed and continue to invite their participation. An inclusive process keeps the door open.
- To be inclusive, keep asking the questions "who else needs to be involved?" and "are we unintentionally excluding someone from the process because they are not connected to a group or organization in our community?"
- Don't just include the official or regular leaders. There is a lot of talent and energy in those less recognized in community activities.



**Points to Ponder**

- ❑ Which individuals or organizations should be involved in a community development process?
- ❑ Think of other community processes with which you are familiar. Who was left out of these processes? How could they have been included?
- ❑ What challenges can you identify in designing an inclusive community development process in your community?

***Sometimes It Doesn't Work***

*A rural town was trying to organize a formal community development initiative with other groups and agencies in the community. Some felt there was an urgency related to funding cuts while others seemed content to share information about current and future events. They held several meetings that were well-attended, but didn't seem to be getting anywhere. For the fourth meeting, they hired an outside facilitator who tried to find a place from which to begin. As it turned out, there was no common need or issue beyond the sharing of information and networking. They decided that, for the time being, that was a good enough goal and that a community plan or shared initiative was not that important at that time.*

**Understanding Change**

Community development involves change. The community must understand that community development will bring about changes as well as address issues that have already taken place. Some of the changes will be anticipated, but others will occur as part of the process and may not be foreseen.

Community development can bring about significant transformations in the community. These can involve restructuring, shifting of power, new relationships, and new economic or community activities.

Even positive change can be stressful and needs to be managed. How we respond to, cope with, or handle change is known as managing transition and is a part of the community development process.

Community development is usually initiated by individuals who have passion and vision. If, however, community-based structures are not put into place to support this, even the best efforts can fail.

Structures to support change can vary depending on the size and complexity of the endeavor. The following structures are examples:

- a community development plan,
- a communication strategy, and
- a hub of individuals or organizations established as a focal point for community development.

Community development is often supported by more formal organizational structures such as community development offices, community development corporations or not-for-profit organizations. A formal structure may not be needed every time. It is best to wait to determine what is most appropriate for the situation. The key thing to keep in mind is that support structures are necessary to manage the community development process as well as the change it creates. As this is an ongoing process, the structures will not be static.

They will change and adapt as the community moves forward. Make sure that you see the structures you create as mechanisms to support your action, not as ends in themselves.

### Lessons from Experience

- Make community members aware that change will occur and may be stressful. Do not minimize the stress that can be caused by change. Develop strategies for managing change and transition.

#### Understanding Change

*A Community Development Corporation (CDC) had been receiving base funding to create jobs in an isolated area. The jobs were part of the fishing industry economy that was slowly collapsing. Over a three-year period, new economic activities began to be created in eco-tourism and the CDC had to re-think its services. They shifted from being employment-focused to facilitating business start-ups and seeking community financing for joint ventures and partnerships. As the financial agencies had not moved as quickly to cope with the changes, the CDC also became an advocate for policy and program changes that reflected the new priorities and opportunities.*

- Community development requires a balance between process and action. This can often be difficult to achieve. Take time to develop an effective plan, communication approach and focal point for your activity. These structures will be beneficial in the long run.

#### Points to Ponder

- What changes may result from community development activity?
- How will community members react to this change?
- What actions can you and your community take to offset the impact of change?

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## Checking the Readiness of Your Community

Before initiating a community development process, you need to determine if the conditions just described in the previous section are in place within your own community. To determine if your community is ready, gather sufficient information so that you can answer the following questions:

- Is there a common issue or challenge facing your community?
- Are community members aware of their power to act together to benefit the community?
- Can you think of examples where community members have acted together to achieve a common purpose?
- Is there potential for a community development process to be inclusive?
- Do you believe there is willingness in your community to identify common ground rather than focus on differences?
- Is community development understood as a process that will bring about change?

If the answer is "yes" to all the questions above, then your community is in a strong position to consider a community development initiative.

If, however, the answer to some or all of these questions is "no", you must seriously consider whether the timing for community development is right. Communities are dynamic and the current situation will change over time. Think through what action is needed. Ask yourself if you can take an active role in creating some of these conditions. The following are some of the indicators that your community may not be in a strong position to initiate a community development approach:

- the community has already adopted a different approach or process for resolving the issues that are of primary concern, and there is no interest in community development approaches;
- anger and conflict characterize the relationships that exist between community interests;
- community members are resisting or do not accept the need for change;
- community leaders and volunteers are involved in other projects and cannot make a commitment to a community development process; and/or
- community capacity is very limited due to issues of well-being or health, and these issues must be addressed prior to launching a community development process.

Readiness is a key issue. The power of community development is that it is a long-term approach. It is important to start a community development process with a strong foundation. It takes time to build the conditions that support community development. Don't set yourself up for failure. Start where your community is at and build on its strengths.

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### Lessons from Experience

- ❑ If you do not believe that community development is viable in your community, try to apply the approach to one or two smaller initiatives such as the development of a community garden or a playground for children. Providing opportunities for community members to achieve positive results together is an excellent way to create the conditions needed for community development.
- ❑ When communities are in conflict, or there is a lack of clarity about direction, seek advice from those who have experienced similar situations and have attained successful outcomes.

### Points to Ponder

- ❑ What information do you need in order to determine if the conditions for community development are present?
- ❑ How would you go about obtaining this information?
- ❑ What can you do to create the conditions that will support a community development approach?
- ❑ How could you get others to become interested in community development?

### The Need for a Catalyst

Many communities appear to have the characteristics that support community development and yet there is no community development initiative or plan in place. The reason for this is that the conditions that support community development are not, in and of themselves, enough to initiate community development. A spark or catalyst is needed. A catalyst for community development is an individual or group who believes change is possible and is willing to take the first steps that are needed to create interest and support.

Community development catalysts create a vision of what is possible. They ask questions and promote discussion among community members. By creating interest, energy and motivation for action, the catalyst makes community development come alive.

### Who Are Likely Catalysts?

Likely catalysts are:

- people holding jobs that have a community development mandate or regulatory function — municipal staff, Chief and Councils, staff of a non-profit-organization, etc.;
- business leaders — Chambers of Commerce, business clubs;
- staff, volunteers or boards of directors of community agencies — not-for-profits, recreation associations, service clubs, social agencies, labour councils, women's groups;

- community development practitioners and consultants providing technical assistance; and/or
- community members with a specific interest or concern or who just want action.

The issue of who will take on the role of catalyst is usually determined by the nature of the community development activity, by the stage of evolution in the process or by the resources that are available. Organizations and individuals can take on the role of community development catalyst as either volunteers or as part of their paid role or mandate. Some communities often find the resources to hire an individual with community development expertise to help them design and initiate the process.

Effective community development catalysts have:

- credibility within and knowledge of the community;
- a long-term vision, or recognition that one is needed, and awareness that the vision can be created by the community itself;
- a belief in the ability of the community to act;
- the ability to communicate and an openness to the ideas of others;
- the ability to motivate others and share power;

- the energy to initiate and sustain action;
- an openness to learning; and
- the ability to identify and connect with other related activities.

**Catalyst**

*Sarah has ten years of experience in the community development field. As a resident of her community, which is an inner city neighbourhood, she was asked to facilitate the development of a community development plan. She acted as a catalyst by:*

- *bringing people in the neighbourhood together,*
- *creating an interest in community development,*
- *leading a visioning process, and*
- *drawing upon a number of tools and techniques that assisted community members to develop a community plan.*

*Sarah helped to start the process and, with other community members, created the vision and the community development plan. There is now a larger group of community members who are implementing the plan.*

**Can You Take on the Role of Community Catalyst?**

Taking on the role of community development catalyst is important and requires careful thought. Do not begin the role if you are not going to be able to follow through with it.

As an individual you need to think through the following questions:

- Are your personal values, beliefs and attitudes compatible with the characteristics of community development?
- Do you have a vision for your community that you want to share with others?
- Are there other individuals currently carrying out this role with whom you could work?
- Can you motivate people and express ideas well?

- Will your acting as a catalyst result in a real or perceived conflict of interest situation?
- Are you able to balance the role of community catalyst with your other personal and work responsibilities?
- Do you have the flexibility and time to participate in meetings that may fall outside of standard business hours?
- Are you aware that community development takes time and that you may not see instant results?
- Do you believe you have credibility within your community?

If you are going to pursue the catalyst role on behalf of an organization, you should also think through the following questions:

- Are the values and culture of your organization compatible with the characteristics of community development?
- Does your organization have a vision for the community that it wants to share with others?
- Are there other organizations currently carrying out this role or that might work well in a partnership?

#### *Catalyst*

*Robert was concerned about the safety of his and other children as they went to and from school. He acted as a catalyst to bring parents, community members and teachers together to eliminate safety problems for children in the community. He knew that it would take time but decided it was worth while to get it started and see it through to a satisfactory solution.*

*His first step was to hold a meeting to explore his concerns with others. The interest in the issue of safety was strong. Robert was able to provide the leadership needed to mobilize community members to do something about it.*

- Will your organization value your role as a catalyst and provide you with the time and resources needed to carry it out effectively?

- Will your organization acting as a catalyst result in a real or perceived conflict of interest situation?
- Does your organization understand the flexibility that will be required in terms of hours of work?
- What are the expectations of the organization in terms of results? Is there an understanding that community development takes time and that you may not see immediate results?
- Do you believe your organization has credibility within the community?
- Is the organization willing to promote and support a process where they will share power and decision-making with a cross-section of individuals?

You may not be able to answer all these questions on your own, or you may want to confirm your answers with others in your organization before continuing.

The catalyst is a leader. Community members often make their initial commitment to community development because of the credibility and vision of the catalyst.

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If you are not prepared to sustain what you have started, respond to the unexpected and do some of the hard groundwork required to begin, it is best not to take on the role of catalyst. However, from the beginning of the process, it is important that other community members understand that a leader's role does not involve doing everything by herself/himself.

If you are prepared to assume this role, the process described in the next section will be useful.

### Lessons from Experience

- ❑ Building support for community development takes time. A catalyst may need to do groundwork and communicate with others to build a common vision for action.
- ❑ Catalysts do not have to be the source of all knowledge, skills and abilities. They do, however, have to know how to take the first steps and be open to the ideas and talents of others.
- ❑ The leadership role in community development may change over time, but it is important that community members themselves take some ownership for the community development activity.
- ❑ Letting go as community interest, energy and awareness is generated can be difficult for a successful catalyst. Make sure that community development action belongs to the whole community, not to just one individual or organization.

### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Can you or your organization take on the role of the community development catalyst in your community?
  - ❑ Are there others in the community who could work with you or take on this role?
  - ❑ What strengths do you and others bring to the role?
  - ❑ What challenges may be faced in carrying out this responsibility, and how can you respond to them?
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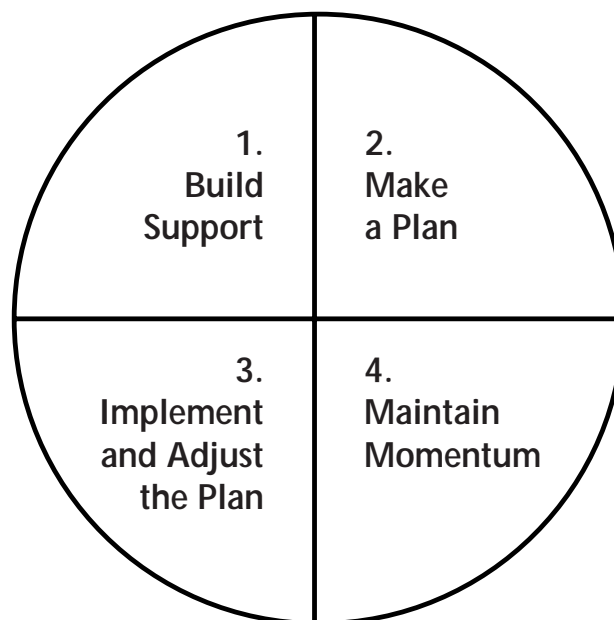
## SECTION III - DEVELOPING A PROCESS

As community development is dynamic, a fixed blueprint for the perfect community development process is unrealistic. It is better to plan a framework that provides guidance and adapt it as the situation evolves.

This handbook does not and can not identify all the questions, nor does it supply all the answers, since each community situation is different and much is learned from the doing. In fact, we are all learning as the field of community development evolves.

The following framework provides broad-based direction and identifies key process issues. This framework is based on the real-life experience of community development practitioners and communities themselves. The main components of the community development framework are outlined in the following four sections:

- Building Support
- Making A Plan
- Implementing and Adjusting the Plan
- Maintaining Momentum



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## 1 Building Support

Fundamental to community development are community enhancement and capacity building. Both are processes that involve learning and inclusion and, in most instances, the process is as meaningful as the results. To begin with, all communities have a history that it is important to understand and honour. For many of us, our excitement and enthusiasm for community development can make us impulsive. We want to rush into action and see results. It is, however, better to take stock of what has been done, acknowledge and recognize the contributions of others, build on previous community success, and involve a wide range of members and interests.

The first step is to create awareness, understanding and support for the community development process. To build support for community development in your community, you should know the answers to the following questions:

- Why do you believe a community development approach should be initiated?
- What are the benefits that will result from this approach?
- What first steps need to be taken?
- Who are the key people and/or organizations that should be taking a leadership role?
- What are the longer-term implications of the initiative?

You may think that finding answers to the above questions will be time-consuming and difficult but, as the example on the next page illustrates, this is not the case.

Commitment to any long-term process or action should not be made without understanding what is to be done, why it is being done, the anticipated benefits and who will be involved. Community development is a broad concept, so people may have difficulty knowing where to start and what is expected of them. This is why identifying the first steps in the process is very important. When interest is created, you want an immediate way to turn this interest into further exploration and commitment. Building support for a community development initiative is an on-going task.

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### **One Community's Response**

*The following is an example of how one community answered the questions that need to be considered in order to build support.*

Why do you believe a community development approach should be initiated?

- Our community is facing many challenges with respect to economic development, social issues such as youth crime and the need to upgrade community infrastructure. We do not want someone else's solutions or answers. We have the ability within our community to develop and implement long-term responses.*

What benefits will result from this approach?

- community-based economic development activities*
- an ability to tap into the skills and abilities of community members*
- improved quality of life within the community*
- community responsibility rather than waiting for someone else to do it*
- the opportunity to address challenges in a planned and holistic way*

What are the first steps that need to be taken?

- make informal contact with key organizations and leaders in the community to determine their interest*
- hold a public forum to talk about community issues and community development*
- determine the readiness of the community for a community development process*
- work at creating the needed conditions for a successful community development approach*
- create a leadership team (made up of a cross-section of community interests) to start the process*

Who are the key people/organizations that should be taking a leadership role?

- Chamber of Commerce*
- municipal staff (responsible for community infrastructure)*
- school principals*
- local economic development authority*
- youth agencies*
- young people from the community*
- community members with a desire to be involved*
- church leaders*

What are the longer-term issues you will need to consider?

- building support, interest and involvement over time*
- development of a community plan*
- community capacity (knowledge, skills and abilities of community members)*
- money to fund and maintain action*
- long-term commitment to sustaining what is started*
- eventual need for an organizational structure  
(new or existing organization could take on this responsibility as part of its mandate)*

### Who Should Be Involved?

Community development is an inclusive process. Community members with a shared vision and a sense of belonging to their community usually initiate the community development process. It is important, however, that the process be expanded to include the wide range of interests (i.e. economic, social, environmental) and organizations (i.e. government, labour, business, social services) that are part of the community. Don't make assumptions about traditional roles and responsibilities or levels of interests. For example, many private sector businesses have become increasingly interested in social development issues and some government agencies are now entering into partnerships with community organizations to provide effective programs and services covering a wide range of interests.

The individual make-up of a community influences who needs to be involved and what activities will be viewed as legitimate. Ensuring that different cultures and interests are respected and involved (in a meaningful way) is important. For example, respecting cultural traditions and religious holidays, being aware of different styles of communication and ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate fully are all ways that you can build credibility and support.

### Who's Involved In The Process?



The following are a few common mistakes made when a wide cross-section of interests are present:

- misunderstanding silence or the tone of voice in both presentations and responses;
- presenting ideas instead of asking for input;
- assuming needs instead of investigating and/or clarifying them;
- treating interactions as competitions instead of learning opportunities;
- developing frameworks that do not include appropriate examples or thinking patterns;
- judging or stereotyping people by their gender, appearance or past; and
- giving more credence and attention to officially recognized leaders.

As well as the diversity that community members themselves bring to the table, political interests, organizational mandates and existing structures are factors that must be recognized and built into the community development process. If you are not sure how to include these interests in your community development activity, ask them how they would like to become involved.

#### **Seeing Beyond the Surface — Valuing Diversity**

*A community-owned loan fund was approached by two street bottle pickers for a loan to formalize their activities. Although other financial institutions might have refused them, due to their appearance and lack of permanent addresses, this loan fund supported them. They recognized the assets or equity the two men brought in their knowledge of the market, the geography and their skills. By lending them a small amount of money, they were able to establish a more sophisticated approach to their business and help others do the same. Four years later, a cooperative exists that generates enough revenue for the now seven people involved to live on. The loan was repaid in full and on time.*

#### **Lessons from Experience**

- Roles and relationships are not always clear-cut at the beginning of the process but, as you develop a plan, these roles and relationships will become clearer.
- Use your network to identify the interests, individuals and organizations that need to be part of the community development process.
- Don't let the past govern the future. Acknowledge where differences and difficulties have existed in the past but focus on common ground and the future of your community.

#### **Points to Ponder**

- Is there respect, cooperation and a history of collaboration between the different interests and organizations within your community?
- If not, how might the results of past history be overcome?
- Is there a desire among the various interests and organization within your community to work together for the benefit of the community?

## Creating a Valued Local Process

To create a unique and valued community development process draw upon your understanding of your community. This will allow you to develop a process that will respond to your own circumstances. You cannot simply take a process that worked well in another place and apply it to your own community. You should take the knowledge, experience and advice of others and make it your own by adjusting and changing it to meet the specific needs of your community at this particular time.

Designing a local community development process involves:

- understanding your community;
- learning from other community development success stories;
- learning from past efforts that have not worked well;
- recognizing the efforts, knowledge, skills and abilities of all involved; and
- being responsive and flexible so that the process can evolve.

As a community development approach will work only if community members see it as a legitimate process within existing activities and priorities, the approach must:

- be valued by the community,
- involve community members,
- have credible leadership, and
- produce results that suit the community.

When building community support, identify individuals and organizations that are both supportive and non-supportive. The following are some suggestions about how you might do that.

Approach those organizations/individuals where you believe you will find support. You might want to begin a conversation about their interest in the community development initiative and build on it. Invite interested people to take a leadership role and to become active in the creation of the community development plan.

As a second step, approach organizations that may not seem to be very interested or supportive. Remember that community development brings change, shifts power and results in new relationships. Some people may not be receptive to the concept of community development or may feel threatened by it, so try to anticipate why they might resist or not be supportive. Maybe you could provide information or an explanation that will respond to their concerns. Community development is an open process. Keep those who are not interested well-informed and continue to invite them to participate in the process. Look for shared interests rather than factors that cause division or discord.

Building support provides the foundation for the community development process. You are creating a core of interest and base of commitment within your community that will continue to grow. It takes time, particularly if the community has no experience with this type of collective or participatory community development.

Community development is a living process. Many communities start out strong but fail to sustain the participatory nature of the process. To maintain interest and support over time, inclusion and local participation should be built into the very nature of the process and must be maintained throughout.

This can be done by:

- thinking through and planning the process in advance;
- evaluating the process as it is implemented and making adaptations as needed;
- communicating clearly;
- challenging yourself to be successful by focusing on common ground;
- developing an informal network by talking to people about the community development plan and the benefits it will produce;
- holding town hall meetings at regular intervals to keep the community informed and to create an opportunity for conversation;
- asking individuals or organizations known to be strong supporters of community development to spread the word and promote your initiative;

#### **Valued Support**

*A group of community members in a downtown urban center asked why women who want to leave the life of prostitution often fail. They decided to consult women who had successfully made the transition. They asked what was needed and invited input into designing an initiative that would really work. Many were very skeptical about who would listen to or fund such an initiative. Most people wanted the prostitutes out of the neighbourhood but didn't have much interest in helping to create other options. The new initiative was presented by a respected person whose support was greatly appreciated. It was presented in a way that was understood and realistic because it was based on experience with what works and what doesn't. It was also validated and highly valued by those who were going to use it. Today a transition program developed by these women is operating successfully in the neighbourhood that wanted to just make the problem disappear. It has active community support and acceptance.*

- identifying individuals or organizations that may not be strong supporters of community development — listen to their concerns and invite them to participate;
- assigning concrete tasks and roles that individuals and organizations can pursue or become involved with; and
- recognizing the contributions of individuals and organizations and celebrating success.

#### **Developing Buy-In**

Community development initiatives can fail because of a lack of support or buy-in from community members and organizations. When a participatory process is sincerely desired, and individuals and organizations believe they are being listened to and included, you will have gone a long way to building community ownership, support and legitimacy. Although there is no doubt that developing this support or buy-in can be time-intensive and involve hard work, developing and maintaining community interest and involvement is an integral part of the process.

Common mistakes that can be made are:

- the failure to take the up-front time needed to develop support for community development;
- imposing a vision on community members;
- failing to involve all the interests and sectors of the community in the visioning process;
- designing processes that are not inclusive or open and that fail to build momentum;
- starting out strong but then failing to inform and involve community members and organizations in an on-going and meaningful manner;
- leaders who take control and fail to build community ownership; and
- volunteers and/or paid staff taking an active role and seeing the action or initiative as belonging to them rather than to the community.

#### Lessons from Experience

- Take time to build an understanding of and appreciation for community development.
- Identify the next steps. Think through how you can turn interest into commitment.

- It takes time to build commitment and support. Do not get discouraged if results are not immediate. Start where interest exists, and build upon this foundation.

#### *Ten Keys to Getting "Buy In"*

- 1 Effective communication and appreciation*
- 2 Common vision and goals*
- 3 A comprehensive, clear plan*
- 4 Appropriate leadership*
- 5 Community and political support*
- 6 Adequate information and resources*
- 7 Professional advice and technical assistance*
- 8 Flexibility and the ability to compromise*
- 9 Participation from many different groups*
- 10 Willingness to work with change and diversity*

- Understand the community development history of your community. Consider what has worked well in the past and what has not.

#### Points to Ponder

- Can you explain why you want to pursue a community development approach in your community and the benefits that will result from such actions?
- Is there a core group in place to provide on-going leadership?
- Can you identify supportive individuals and organizations in your community?

- Who are the individuals or organizations that you think may not be supportive of community development? How will you respond to their concerns?



## 2 Making A Plan

Developing a community plan involves systematically assessing alternatives and making choices in the context of a defined community vision. Planning is a process that assists community members in translating knowledge, concerns and hopes into action.

A community plan is a written document created by community members.

It outlines the following things:

- where you are now (community strengths, weaknesses, resources);
- where you want to be (the ideal future for your community);
- the general direction you want to take to close the gap between where you are now and where you want to be;
- the specific actions within each general direction required to close the gap;
- the resource and capacity issues that need to be addressed; and
- what success will look like, and how to tell when you have been successful.

### Community Planning

*The Chief and Council of a northern community knew that they had to negotiate with three other Aboriginal communities on matters related to economic development. A large company was playing one community against the other in a bid to develop a lumber mill. Everyone wanted jobs but they also had responsibility to look after the forest and land for future generations. Moreover, they had to start working together and help each other by sharing opportunities and resources. All of the leaders agreed to hold a General Assembly where everyone could talk about all of these concerns. They came up with a comprehensive plan to satisfy all of their needs, everyone understood the situation better and they received complete community support for the plan. This plan is what they now use to guide all their community decisions.*

Community plans are developed based on the logic and structures of the strategic planning process. The logic of this process takes you from a broad-based vision to specific actions and action plans. The process links vision, goals, objectives and action into a logical and inter-related structure.

The development of a community plan requires resources and dedicated leadership. It is important to determine whether you have what it takes to put a plan in place before you actually begin. To start the process and fail to complete it can harm your community and undermine the commitment of community members to future development approaches.

Community development planning is useful for a number of different things, such as bringing a community together and finding solutions. The plan and the process should be:

- integrated,
- inclusive,
- realistic,
- appropriate,
- results-based,
- community-based and
- easy to understand.

Not all community development initiatives require formal plans. Many valuable outcomes have been obtained through ad hoc or less structured processes. On the other hand, many potentially successful initiatives have failed because there was either no plan or a very poor one in place. Depending on the complexity of the situation and the resources involved, the need for a formal plan will vary. Regardless of the formality of the planning process community development action is not possible without a common vision and purpose.

#### **Common Purpose**

*A community developer decided to host a workshop in her neighborhood to create interest and awareness in community development. Twelve community members attended the workshop. All agreed it would be great to build stronger relationships and connections within their community. Through general discussion and brainstorming it was discovered that the history of the neighbourhood struck a chord with those in attendance. The group began to hold Sunday gatherings — inviting community members to share stories and information about the community. Young and old were connected by their common interest. A walking tour of the neighbourhood and a community celebration are now held on an annual basis. The local school, businesses and others are participating in these events and good community connections and partnerships are developing. There isn't now and never was a formal plan put into place. There was, however, a strong sense of purpose and interest that motivated community members to come together.*

## **The Benefits of a Community Plan**

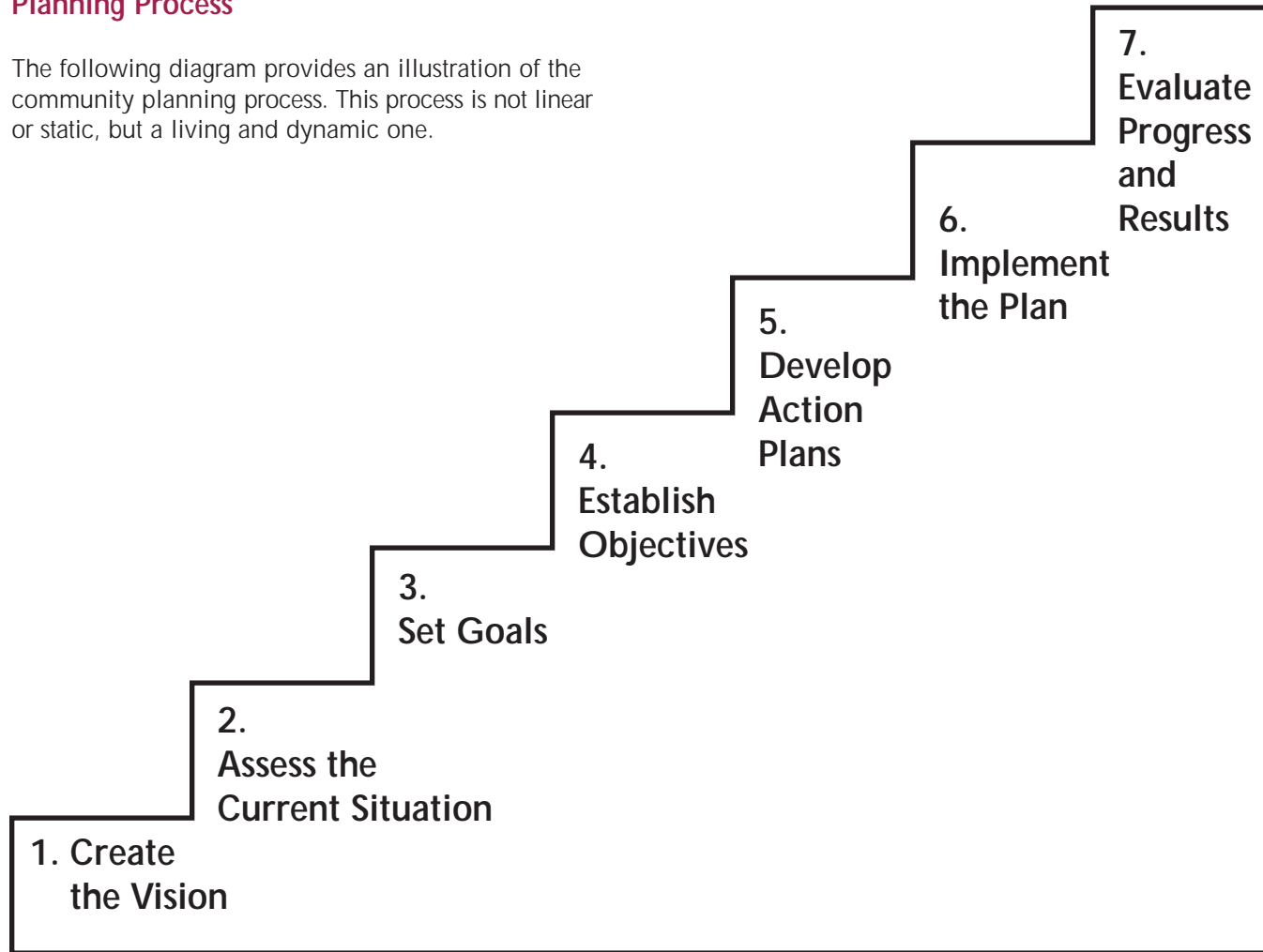
The benefits of a community plan are that it:

- creates a long-term framework for decision-making and action;
- provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to community development;
- enhances the community's ability to make informed decisions about its development;
- provides a valuable resource for communicating vision and actions to individuals inside and out of the community;
- identifies objectives and actions that can be measured over time; and
- integrates the perspectives of various community members.

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## The Seven Steps in a Community Planning Process

The following diagram provides an illustration of the community planning process. This process is not linear or static, but a living and dynamic one.



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The planning process involves the following seven steps:

- 1 Create a Community Vision** — which will help create a picture of where you want to be.

A community vision describes what is hoped for and valued by the community by creating a picture of the ideal future. Choose a visioning process in which all ages and abilities can participate, as the vision will build support and ongoing interest.

- 2 Assess the Current Situation** — which will tell you where you are now and determine existing community capacity.

Assessing the current situation involves factors outside the community as well as factors within. This process involves identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Build on past efforts and strengths as the basis of the assessment.

- 3 Set Goals** — which are broad directions for closing the gap between where you are now and where you want to be.

Goals outline the means by which you will reach your vision. If you think of the vision as a destination, the goals are the pathways to reach the destination. They should be clear and easy to understand.

- 4 Establish Objectives** — which are specifics that outline how goals will be reached.

Objectives are specific, measurable and inter-connected statements of the action needed to achieve goals. Usually several objectives are necessary to reach a goal. When we consider goals as the pathway to reaching the vision, objectives are the stepping stones used to create these pathways.

- 5 Develop Action Plans** — which are the who, what, when and how around the plan.

Action plans provide the concrete steps required to fulfil each objective. They outline the individuals who are responsible for the action, the time frame for implementation and the resources that are required.

- 6 Implement Action Plans**

Implementation involves undertaking the commitments and activities outlined within your action plans. A plan is just a plan until it is implemented — then it is community development.

- 7 Evaluate Progress and Results** — which is a way to ensure you are on track and reaching the goals.

Evaluation is the assessment of progress and results which helps to determine if you are moving toward your objectives, goals and vision. It is important to think about what success will look like and what outcomes are desired in advance as well as during the activities.

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## Factors That Contribute to Successful Planning

The following are needed to ensure the successful development of a community plan:

- a shared vision;
- long-term commitment;
- leadership;
- resources — financial, physical and human;
- support — community and political;
- a realistic appraisal of the current situation;
- a desire to build on the accomplishments and efforts of the past;
- an inclusive process and the ability to work as a team;
- a strong commitment and the discipline to take the time needed to work through the logic of a planning process;
- a push beyond traditional approaches and that which is comfortable in order to identify innovative possibilities and options for consideration; and
- a commitment to use the plan as a tool and to modify and make adjustments as needed.

### Successful Planning

*In one small city the leaders of the non-profit sector appeared to be in competition with one another. Each was trying to organize the same group of agencies to do similar things. There was a lot of energy and community support but it was being fragmented. One leader noticed this problem and suggested that a community-based strategic planning workshop be held so that they could identify a common purpose and work together. After a weekend planning session, all involved agreed that basically they were all working to reduce poverty in the city. They developed a set of common goals and measures for success. Each organization agreed to measure part of their organizational and agency success based on the poverty reduction measures they developed collectively. From then on they had a shared purpose and leadership within the non-profit sector.*

As you develop your community development plan and begin to make decisions about activities and resources, there will be differences of opinion. The vision will help to ground and direct these difficult decisions, and the goals will help you stay on track and focused on the results you are trying to achieve.

### Lessons from Experience

- Remember that planning is a tool, but it is people and their commitment to action that make a plan come alive and make it work.
- Don't start the planning process if you are not going to follow through and act on the plan that is developed.
- An outside facilitator, either paid or volunteer, may be needed to help get things started.
- Acknowledging the contribution that community members make to the planning process is important.
- Follow the logic of the strategic planning process, but adapt and change the language and the approach to meet your local needs.

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- ❑ Challenge the stereotypes that exist in your community. Don't assume to know what people or organizations think. Look for common ground.
  - ❑ Continual learning and being open to ideas is critical. Don't fall into the trap of thinking you know all there is to know about your community.
  - ❑ Disagreement and conflict are part of any dynamic and participatory process. Don't be afraid of it. Develop agreed-upon processes for managing disagreement and conflict at the beginning of the process.
  - ❑ Don't get bogged down on elaborate organizational structures. Remember that form should follow function.

#### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Do you believe there is the commitment within your community to create and implement a community development plan?
  - ❑ What is needed to prepare for a community development plan?
  - ❑ What do past community development success stories and failures say about your community? How can you apply this learning?
  - ❑ What strategies can be put in place to ensure the community development process is inclusive?
  - ❑ How will you motivate people to become and stay involved?
-

### 3 Implementing and Adjusting the Plan

Creating an inclusive community development plan can be a time-consuming process. The pay-off for investing this time and energy comes as you begin to implement the plan. Implementation, however, has its own challenges. The implementation process must be well-planned and well-managed if it is to be successful. Implementation challenges include:

- integrating and coordinating a variety of tasks and activities,
- being a good steward of resources,
- helping individuals keep focused on the big picture,
- remaining positive and not getting discouraged by the unexpected or by the fact that things may not be working out as envisioned,
- identifying and building on community capacity,
- making hard decisions when resources are limited,
- timing actions so they build upon rather than compete with the actions of others,
- keeping community members motivated and connected,
- ensuring community ownership remains strong, and
- communicating and celebrating results.

Successfully managing the activities listed above requires strong leadership and a structure to support implementation. When you started the community development process, you may have found that there was a core of individuals who were very active in almost all the activities being undertaken. As a small group, informal communication and organizational arrangements were probably all that

were needed to work together effectively. As you move to implementation of the community development plan, the level and the nature of your activities may no longer make this casual approach possible. A structure or organization that supports your efforts could be necessary.

Failing to have a solid structure can lead to:

- burnout of your community leaders,
- wasted effort,
- confusion,
- conflict and/or
- loss of credibility and legitimacy.

#### Possible Roles

Effective implementation requires a structure and process with clear roles and responsibilities. It is important to note that there is more than one role that a community development organization can undertake. Some examples of these roles are:

- the prime implementers who are responsible for the design and implementation of the community development activities;
- the facilitator or coordinator who brings together and coordinates the community organizations and resources that are needed to plan and implement a community development initiative;
- a partner who is one of several organizations that have formed a community partnership to design and implement community development activities;

- the promoter who promotes and supports community development activity with knowledge, expertise, energy and enthusiasm; and
- the funding agencies which fund community development activities.

Key questions to consider as an organizational structure is created to support your efforts are:

- Who should be involved?
- What is the primary role of the organizational structure being developed?
- What other roles should it serve?
- How formal does it need to be?
- What resources can be used to ensure the successful implementation of the plan and to support the organizational structure?
- Are there partnerships that could be developed to support the implementation of the community development process?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Generally, however, the larger and more comprehensive your community development effort, the greater the probability that you will need a formal organizational structure to be effective.

## Sharing the Load

As in many other aspects of community development, it is very important to be clear about the nature of the project to ensure that community members understand what is being done and how they might be involved. It is difficult to invite participation if the goals, tasks and expectations are not clear. Partnerships are a very useful vehicle for sharing the load, for implementing community development plans and for carrying out some of the possible roles. An overview of what partnerships involve and their benefits can be found in the next section of this handbook under "Maintaining Momentum".

Remember to use your community development plan to ground activities and encourage participation. Too often communities create a community development plan, launch into an activity and then lose track of the vision and goals they want to achieve. When this happens, it is difficult to get others interested.

### *Many Hands*

*A Native Friendship Centre was running employability programs sponsored by the government to help inner-city residents become more self-sufficient. They realized that a big problem was that existing policies provided little to no incentives for people to get jobs. When local social workers agreed with them, they arranged for several agencies to work together in a partnership that would challenge the policies and funding program guidelines. Together they assessed the current situation and developed alternatives to present to government officials. As a result, changes were made and there was more respect for community agencies in having a voice in social change. The Friendship Centre and other agencies involved have become known as community advocates and been invited to participate in many other matters related to community development.*



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### Lessons from Experience

- ❑ The community development plan is a guide, not a detailed blue print. When implementing action in an environment of change, stay true to the principles, values and purpose of the plan, but make adaptations as required.
- ❑ Although it is difficult to move from the informal groups to a more formal structure to define the governing, management and administrative functions, failure to do so could put all your efforts in jeopardy. Sustainability requires a firm structure based on common understanding rather than informality.
- ❑ Make sure the community's plan and implementation activities are connected in a way that all involved understand. Too often people lose sight of why they are doing what they are doing and how their actions contribute to the big picture.

- ❑ Implementation of community development takes time. Don't set up unrealistic time frames or expectations. Listen to community members. Sometimes our assumptions about what is possible or desirable need to change.
- ❑ Community development is a long-term approach. Action that sustains interest and motivation, such as acknowledging contributions and staying focused on a shared vision, is important.

### Points to Ponder

- ❑ What do you think will be the biggest challenges for your community as it implements its community development plan?
- ❑ What type of structure or organization will you create to manage the implementation process?
- ❑ How will the workload be shared?

## 4 Maintaining Momentum

Creating a firm foundation for community development and taking the first steps in a long-term process is exciting. Equally exciting, but more challenging, is building and maintaining momentum. This section outlines seven key areas that require careful thought when developing an approach to maintaining momentum for your community development efforts. These key areas are:

- leadership,
- partnerships,
- building on community capacity,
- funding,
- reviewing and adapting the community development plan,
- communication and
- using technical support and expertise.

### Leadership

Consistent and skilled leadership is essential for effective community development. The role of the community development leader(s) is to build community capacity over time that is open to change and adaptation.

The goal of the leader is to encourage empowerment of the community, not control over it. It is the leader who:

- effectively communicates the vision of the community,
- focuses energy on results and inclusion,

- motivates individuals and organizations to act together for a common purpose, and
- develops effective processes to work through issues of concern and conflict.

As a community development leader, you must consciously build and maintain relationships in the community. If community members perceive that you represent a particular set of interests or have a hidden agenda, they will not view your efforts as legitimate.

Openness is a key ingredient for community development leadership. This means that you and your organization must be visible and accessible to community members. They must know who you are, where you can be contacted, and understand your motivation for wanting to take on a community development leadership role. New processes and relationships are built on trust. Who you are, your values and beliefs, and the values and beliefs of your organization will be judged. To be successful, you must not only communicate the values of the community development process, you must live them. For the process to work, you must "walk the talk".

To ensure your community development initiative has strong leadership the following should be considered:

- identify the leadership skills that you require and seek out individuals who have these skills and abilities;
- ensure that those in leadership roles have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what can be delegated to others;
- work to ensure that community expectations are in line with what can be reasonably accomplished;

- support leaders with good processes, appropriate organizational structures and skill development — form sub-committees where appropriate;
- ensure the vision, goals and objectives of the community development plan are clear and well-understood;
- provide constructive feedback to those in leadership roles;
- acknowledge successes and discuss what may not have worked out and why;
- develop ongoing leadership capacity in your community; and
- do not expect those in leadership roles to do it all.

Lack of leadership or poor leadership can put the whole community development process into jeopardy and can occur for several reasons, such as:

- burn-out,
- lack of skills and abilities,
- lack of support,
- changing circumstance of the leader and/or the community,
- lack of clarity with respect to vision and goals,
- lack of continuity, and
- people volunteering or being selected for the wrong reasons (i.e. favoritism, because the individual needs work, or the individual has volunteered and no one knows how to say no).

#### Leadership

*Many inner-city community residents found that their income made it hard to make ends meet and to feed their families properly. They wanted to do something for themselves rather than depend on handouts. One person had heard about community gardens and thought this was a good idea. She called a meeting at the community hall. She invited local churches, businesses and community members. A small core group agreed to take a leadership role. A business owner donated a vacant lot. Those who had skills and tools brought them to the initiative. A small community development grant was obtained from a foundation to buy the seeds and other needed equipment. The community garden is now in its third year of operation, and the younger community members are involved and learning how to run it.*

Leaders must take care of themselves. Community development can be an intense process and much is expected of the leaders. To be effective, ensure that:

- expectations are realistic;
- you have the support and resources needed;
- you do not take personal ownership for the process, but build community ownership; and
- you develop potential leaders for the future.

#### Lessons from Experience

- Community development leaders usually have a dream or vision for their community which they are able to express effectively to others. They believe in the principles of community development and develop processes that ensure action is taken by the people and for the people.
- Leaders need support. Community development cannot occur without strong leadership, but leadership in and of itself is not enough for community development.

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- ❑ Dependency on one individual or a group of individuals over a long period of time is not healthy. Building leadership skills among a variety of community members is an important part of the community development process.

#### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Are you and/or your organization able to take on the community development leadership role in a sustained fashion?
- ❑ Are there some skills that you need to further develop your leadership abilities? What are these skills?
- ❑ What strategies can be put in place to ensure future leaders?

## Partnerships

Partnerships are a good vehicle for building effective community development processes and structures. A partnership is defined as a relationship where two or more parties with compatible goals form an agreement to share the work, risk and results or proceeds. Partnerships can be formed for a wide variety of reasons, but they are consistent in that they:

- share authority,
- have joint investment of resources,
- result in mutual benefits, and
- share risk, responsibility and accountability.

A partnership is not a process where:

- there is simply a gathering of people who want to do things;
  - there is hidden motivation;
  - there is no trust or need for the partnership;
  - there is no sharing of risk, responsibility, accountability and benefits;
  - one person has all the power and/or drives the process; or
  - communities or groups are told to work together to acquire funding.
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### The Benefits of Partnerships

There are many benefits to developing strong partnerships. Partnerships:

- are a means for finding solutions to complex issues;
- combine efforts to share opportunities;
- enable groups to do more with less by sharing costs, resources and skills;
- eliminate overlap and duplication of effort;
- integrate ideas, activities and goals with others; and
- make good use of shared knowledge and ideas.

### Community-Based Partnerships

We call a partnership a "community-based partnership" when it occurs in a community, involves community members and directly impacts or benefits the community. Basically, community development partnerships exist when they:

- insist on local participation and empowerment;
- have planned inclusion and leadership;
- enhance local and collective skills;
- support local entrepreneurs and business;
- are for the community by the community; and
- often integrate several areas of development (social, economic, environmental and cultural).

The members of a community-based partnership give consideration not only to their own involvement and contribution but also ask these questions:

- Who else needs to be involved?
- When should the others be involved?
- How should this happen?
- What do those who are not in the partnership expect from those who are?
- How do you keep community members informed about partnership activities?

### Steps for building strong partnerships

Strong viable partnerships don't just happen. Skills, knowledge and experience are required when we bring people together to form useful and productive partnerships. To have an effective partnership you must:

- know what you want to do as partners,
- decide who will do what,
- make a plan and follow it, and
- evaluate the results and make adaptations as you go along.

The logic and skills used in the community planning process are similar to the logic and skills used to build and maintain effective partnerships. The more effort you put into the front-end development of the partnership, the stronger the partnership will be.

Key questions to be asked are:

- What is our vision and what are the common goals we want to achieve?
- What will each party contribute to the partnership?
- How will we make decisions in our partnership?
- What processes will we use to resolve disagreements or conflicts?
- How are we going to share the benefits or proceeds of the partnership?

Organizations or groups entering into partnerships usually have their own identity and work in addition to what they undertake as part of a partnership. As a result, not all partners need to be involved to the same extent in the partnership. The key is that the role and responsibilities of each partner are identified, understood and agreed to, in advance.

### Factors for Successful Partnerships

Successful partnerships have the following characteristics:

- a shared vision, goals and objectives for the partnership,
- clearly-defined membership with roles and responsibilities,
- strong commitment to the vision and goals,
- detailed action plans,
- effective communication processes,
- adequate resources and
- a commitment to evaluation and adaptation.

Additional information about partnerships is available in the Partnership Handbook, Tool Box and Facilitator's Guide available through Human Resources Development Canada. These handbooks are available via the HRDC website: <http://www.hrdcdrhc.gc.ca/common/partnr.shtml>, by phoning (819) 953-7370 or by faxing (819) 997- 5163.

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### Lessons from Experience

- ❑ Effective partnerships are built upon a clear understanding and respect for one another.
- ❑ Partnerships change and grow over time. Make sure each partner is comfortable with participating in and growing with the partnership, and that the group stays inclusive and flexible.
- ❑ Having a clear and common understanding of roles and responsibilities, the way decisions are made, and the way decisions are communicated to others can make your partnership. Lack of any of these can break your partnership.
- ❑ Ask for help and assistance when you need it. An objective third party can often see the heart of the concern or issue far more easily than those at the centre of the partnership.

### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Are there potential community development partnerships that you could pursue in your community?
- ❑ What would be the purpose of creating these partnerships?
- ❑ Can you describe what you hope these partnerships would accomplish?

### Building Community Capacity

Community capacity building involves many aspects and considerations. There is no clear agreement about what should or should not be included when discussing capacity building. Most often it refers to skills, knowledge and ability but can also include things such as access, leadership, infrastructure, time, commitment and resources.

Developing community capacity means taking risks, improving things and sharing control. It involves change, training and increased power for those who have previously not had it. This is the power and wonder of both the community development and the community capacity building processes. Give people time to express themselves, to adapt to change and to learn. This is best done when the community members have a voice and are in charge of the process.

Community development is a capacity-building process with the following keys to success:

- assess everything required to carry out the plan, role or action;
- understand the skills and knowledge required for the various roles or action;
- identify the gaps;
- develop strategies for filling in the gaps; and
- develop strategies to support individuals while they learn to apply new skills and knowledge.

Commonly used strategies for the development of skills and knowledge are:

- training workshops,
- accessing training opportunities offered within your community,
- mentoring and coaching,
- self-directed learning, and
- training on the job.

Think about capacity building differently for those in paid community development roles and for those in volunteer roles. Capacity development for volunteers is primarily motivated by the interest of the volunteer. Always try to use community members and organizations as a resource for skill development. You may be surprised at the range of skills, knowledge and abilities that individuals and organizations possess.

Failing to build on the strengths, skills, abilities and knowledge will most likely place your community development initiative at risk. Community development cannot be sustained without the active and on-going participation of community members. People do not participate if their contributions are not valued and recognized, or if the participation does not improve their particular situation. Don't ask for the involvement and help of community members if you are not willing to give them a meaningful role or address their interests and needs.

#### *Building Community Capacity*

*An Inuit community had too many people setting up the same kind of businesses for the size of the market place. There was a lot of tension building and bad feeling being created. Instead of telling people what to do or how to operate their businesses, local leaders brought in a course on Marketing and Small Business Management. After learning about competitive advantages, complementary services and market sharing, several businesses changed their focus and all are now doing very well. This type of capacity building was beneficial to all.*

#### Lessons from Experience

- Recognize that all community members have skills they can contribute. The challenge is to organize and support individuals so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the community development process.
- To increase capacity, you must first understand what capacity currently exists in your community. There are many methods you can use to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities within your community and the knowledge, skills and abilities that are needed to undertake your community development plan. Pick the approach that works best for you.
- Sometimes we fail to identify and build on capacity because, initially, it seems to be a daunting and somewhat complex task. Be sure to take a developmental approach to capacity building and link it to the goals and objectives of your community development plan.



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- ❑ Community development provides a powerful process for the support and development of young people and those who are marginalized. For example, some young people may have skills but little work experience. Find ways to let these individuals become involved in the process and gain this needed experience.

#### Points to Ponder

- ❑ What support or help might you need to identify your current community capacity?
- ❑ How can you build upon the knowledge, skills and abilities within your community?
- ❑ What capacity considerations are there other than skills and abilities?

### Funding Community Development

Obtaining financial resources can be a major challenge for a community development initiative. This is particularly true when you are beginning the process. As you move to concrete action it usually becomes easier to find and secure funding from local financial institutions, investors, government programs, foundations and private sector sponsors, or from community members themselves. The key to finding financial support is to be able to clearly identify what you want to do, why you want to do it, and the benefits that will result from your action.

Fund-raising is increasingly becoming an area of valued experience and expertise. Many organizations have an individual on staff or a volunteer with this expertise. Approach any of these individuals, tell them what you want to do, and see if they have some ideas or suggestions that will benefit your situation.

In some regions, municipal governments provide funding for community development initiatives. Some provincial and federal government departments have created community development services and/or economic development boards that manage resources to benefit community development. Most often these services consist of technical expertise that communities can access to support their activities.

In-kind donations and contributions are another possibility to explore. Libraries, churches and other community organizations are often quite willing to provide meeting space at little or no cost. Community members themselves are usually willing to contribute specific skills or expertise.

There is no doubt that starting a grass-roots community development activity can be a challenge. Remember that the first steps of the community development process do not need to be cost-intensive. What they do require is a committed and creative group of community members, or organizations, to get things started. If your community development group is informal, it will be important to find an organization within the community that will agree to act as your sponsor for funding requests. Many funders, due to their regulations or tax laws, are unable to give funds to a group of individuals that is not formally organized.

Finding financial support is only the beginning of the resource issue. Good financial management is also essential to maintaining the credibility of your community development effort. You not only want to manage the money wisely, but you also want to get the maximum value or benefit from the resources that are available. Take care to:

- make sound financial decisions,
- meet funding agencies' requirements for record-keeping,
- undertake a monthly assessment of your financial situation, and
- be open about the resources you have and how you are using them.

### Being Prepared to Seek Funding

The following steps are provided so that your group is better prepared to seek funding or to request financial support. Funding could come from any number of sources including, but not limited to, the following: a traditional lending institution such as a bank or credit union; fundraising or donations; charitable organizations, churches or foundations; government programs; or through partnerships or investor strategies.

Regardless of the funding source(s), or the approach you take, the following steps will help to guide your progress:

- Ensure that there is a legal structure in place, with a board of directors, or an objective group to accept responsibility and accountability.
- Develop a plan. Show how the plan connects to other initiatives in the community.
- Demonstrate support for the plan from those who will benefit from it, as well as those who have decision-making authority or influence in the community.
- Determine what the strengths and assets are of the community and/or the initiative and be realistic about any limitations.
- Outline what the needs are and what the gap is between assets and needs.

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- Determine what the rationale might be for funding this particular initiative in order to obtain support, interest and financial buy-in.
  - Set priorities and develop a reasonable budget and timeline. As well, describe who will undertake the work and do the things that must be done, and explain the expertise that they will bring to the task.
  - Develop a funding package, business plan or request for financial assistance and make it as comprehensive, factual and realistic as possible.
  - Prepare a funding plan and assign skilled people to the task of identifying and securing funds. Coordinate activities and keep communication open to ensure continuity.
  - Where possible, find a champion or a well-respected person who will publicly support the proposal or endorse the organization.
  - Make sure that the funding process is handled by the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic people, who will be able to answer questions and generate interest.

### Different Funding Models

Financing a community development initiative occasionally involves a variety of financial vehicles or sources of funds. Some groups require less money and can cover the costs through traditional fundraising. Others are of a larger scale and may require bank loans, government grants or some sort of external funding assistance.

Community development often reaches a point where generating ongoing revenue or creating a sustainable resource fund becomes important or even a necessity. It can also happen that, as a result of a community development initiative, revenue or resources are generated and this, in and of itself, is the community development activity. Either way, financial sources and processes that might be considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- shareholder and local investment,
- equity and capital funds to assist with access to loans,
- profit or revenue sharing from local industry agreements,
- lending circles and local currency,
- worker cooperatives or new generation cooperatives, and
- community economic development — profit-making and sharing.

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Each of the above is worthy of a handbook of its own to better provide appropriate insight into this area. Most often, however, in a community development initiative, the funding component is tailored to the exact circumstances of the particular community and each one is different. As a significant amount of community development is about establishing new or alternative financial models and approaches, this area is rapidly becoming of great interest to many people. The best way to learn about different financial options is to ask a local community development specialist or a financial institution.

#### Lessons from Experience

- Prepare your funding package/request in a professional and well-thought-out manner.
  - Ensure that legal responsibilities are well understood and that all involved are clear about the liabilities and accountability that is necessary.
  - Recognize all contributions (time, experience, space, equipment and knowledge) and document them to be included as assets or donations to the initiative.
  - Current financial policies and government program guidelines require input to encourage change. It is difficult to be both an advocate for change and a recipient of funds, but both have to occur.
- Explore a variety of funding and financing options and learn about what is working in other places.
  - There are no limitations to the type of financial approach or model for any given community.

#### Points to Ponder

- Is there a funding strategy in place or the ability to put one together? If not, how will funding be handled?
  - What are the special or unique qualities of your community development initiative that might attract interest or financial support?
  - Who will manage the funding process and the financial responsibilities of the initiative and do they have the skills required?
  - What will be done if there isn't enough money to do everything that is desired?
  - Are there some alternative approaches or models that might be useful for your situation? Where can you get more information about the options?
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## Reviewing and Adapting the Community Development Plan

A community development plan is an ongoing activity which is designed to provide structure and guidance for the community development activities. Once a year, a review of the process should be undertaken. This review needs to be open and inclusive. It is an ideal time to celebrate successes and accomplishments as well as to make adjustments and changes.

Key questions to be considered as part of the review process are:

- What has been achieved over the last year?
- Are we closing the gap between where we were when we developed our plan and where we want to be?
- What changes have occurred in the last year, and can our community development plan effectively respond to them?
- What are the strengths we should continue to build upon?
- What are the challenges to which we need to respond?
- Are our goals and objectives still meaningful?

- Are there new actions we should take to reach our vision and goals?
- What additional skills and resources do we need to be effective?

As a community development plan is only as meaningful as the time it reflects and the people who create it, it should be adapted to capture major changes that take place within the community. An annual review of the plan brings communities and organizations together to reinforce the vision they have for the community and to see how well all the pieces are fitting together.

### Motivation and Commitment

Any long-term endeavor has periods of intense energy and action as well as slower periods when individuals or organizations re-group, decide on the next step and prepare for it. It is important to understand and acknowledge this fact. It is also important to know that on-going motivation and commitment to the process will not just happen; it needs to be nurtured.

Individuals or organizations are motivated to support the community development process when they:

- believe the action is important and will result in benefits to the community,
- are valued and respected,
- believe they are making a contribution, and
- see that their contribution is recognized and appreciated.

The best ways to keep individuals and organizations motivated are to:

- involve them as much as is possible;
- acknowledge contributions;
- celebrate success;
- encourage new people and organizations to become involved — expand your energy pool;
- share the load — don't ask the same people to do everything; and
- create opportunities for individuals and organizations to recommit, take a break or take on a new role within the process.

To maintain motivation you must avoid relying on the same small group of individuals and organizations. They may burn out and no longer be able or willing to make a contribution. Involving new individuals and organizations is a very important way to maintain motivation. Equally important is creating opportunities for individuals or organizations to change roles or to take a break from the process. This allows them to renew their commitment and contribute as their time permits.

If motivation and commitment are not present, you have been unsuccessful. You will need to re-assess the timing of the action or process you are trying to undertake.

In community development, ownership rests with the community. No one person or organization can simply wish ideas into action. If there is no ownership or commitment to a course of action, the best decision may be to back off. Occasionally, you may have to point out that community development will not occur without the active interest and involvement of the community.

#### **Not Adapting the Plan**

*A rural community prepared a beautiful community plan that everyone liked and had a hand in preparing. Unfortunately, it had been prepared ten years earlier and never subsequently reviewed. There was constant tension over what appeared to be needed and what the plan stated as a priority. Two of the significant changes were that a processing plant opened not far away creating much-needed jobs for the community people and the young people, who had required a playground ten years earlier, now needed a teen center. By not adapting the plan as the community situation changed, local needs were not met and opportunities missed to take part in some of the economic spin-offs of the new plant.*

#### **Lessons from Experience**

- Take the opportunity to review your community development plan. Ensure your activities support the goals and vision of the community.
- Celebrate all success, whether small or large.
- Be open to suggestions and feedback. Let community members take ownership for the process and the results.

#### **Points to Ponder**

- How might you design a process to review the community development plan in your community?
- What information would you require to undertake this process effectively?
- What will be done to maintain commitment and motivation?

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## Communication

Communication is essential to maintaining the momentum of a community development process; however, like so many other aspects of the process, effective communication takes time and effort. Communication is a two-way process that involves the exchange, transfer and understanding of information. Although the advent of electronic communication vehicles means we can communicate across the globe instantly, effective communication depends on more than technology. It requires:

- an understanding of the people and groups with whom we wish to communicate;
- clarity of thought and word;
- the creation of opportunities for input, and our willingness to hear and respond to this input; and
- the selection of an appropriate mix of communication vehicles.

Communication is a primary mechanism for building continued support for community development. It demonstrates clearly that the process is open. Encourage community members to become involved and to ask questions. Never assume everyone knows what is going on or that communication is unnecessary. Time spent on communication is never wasted. Remember to use a variety of communication modes to be as clear and as straightforward as possible.

Communication is an important tool to:

- create awareness of community development and encourage participation;
- develop support and momentum for the activities;
- enable community members to contribute their knowledge, skills and abilities;
- advocate for a particular option or decision;
- receive information and feedback; and
- avoid and resolve conflict.

If you find that the community's perceptions about your actions and results differ from yours or are misunderstood, this is a clear signal that your communication is not effective. Usually a lot of energy is put into communication during the initial stages as support is built and a plan developed. Often, however, as implementation takes up more and more energy, the emphasis placed on communication decreases. Failure to sustain good communication throughout the course of the community development initiative is a common mistake. A mistake that if not corrected can undermine your community development efforts.

Effective communication requires that you have the ability to:

- listen,
- be aware of non-verbal ways of communication,
- speak and write effectively,
- facilitate conversation or discussion, and
- be open and respond to feedback.

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These skills in and of themselves, however, are not enough. For an effective communication process you must know the answers to the following questions:

- With whom do you wish to communicate?
- Why are you communicating?
- What do you wish to communicate?
- How will you create an open process so that others can be involved?

As in so many other aspects of the community development process, you must think through the answers to these questions in advance and develop a strategy for communication. Many communities identify the need for effective communication and develop a strategy as part of their community development plan.

Equally beneficial are informal channels of communication, usually called networks. All too frequently we convince ourselves that we are too busy to have a cup of coffee, make a phone call to ask someone what they think, attend an open house or participate in a celebration. However, your participation in these types of activities provides you with opportunities for conversations with other community members about issues that are important to both of you.

### Lessons from Experience

- Communication that is confusing can undermine your credibility within the community. Think carefully about what you want to communicate and the best method to use.
  - Build an understanding of your community to ensure that you are effectively communicating to all parts of it.
  - Clear and simple communication requires work. Take the time to be clear about what you are saying and then say it simply.
  - Listen to and respect the opinions of others.
  - Always build feedback loops into your communication processes.
  - There is a need to balance formal and informal methods of communication.
  - Communication is a two-way dialogue, not just a downloading of information.
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### Points to Ponder

- ❑ What communication approach or strategy are you currently using within your community?
- ❑ How can this approach be improved?
- ❑ Does your approach include both formal and informal methods of communication?

### Using Technical Support and Expertise

The design and implementation of an effective community development plan requires a wide range of skills and abilities. Many of these skills can be found within your community. It is very important to invite community members and organizations to contribute their skills and abilities to the community development process and to make use of them in new ways.

There may, however, be situations where you want to draw upon technical support or outside expertise to enhance and support the community development process. Examples of these circumstances are:

- the skills and abilities you require are specialized and not fully developed within the community;
- you are clear about what needs to be done but require assistance in identifying and applying the tools and techniques that will be most effective;
- community members are already working full-out and do not have the time to contribute their skills; and/or
- you want to get something going over a short period of time and require concentrated resources to kick-start the process.

Whatever the reason, bringing in technical support and expertise can be a very helpful way to build and maintain momentum. The key to using technical support and expertise effectively is to use them in supporting your efforts rather than directing or controlling them. The community plan and community expertise should shape how and why technical expertise is used.

There are many technical skills and resource people who can be accessed for support. If you are hiring outside expertise, be sure that:

- you can communicate what you want, why you want it and the anticipated results effectively to the technical expert; and
- you see the technical expert as a resource and manage this resource carefully ensuring that you research best value and best skills.

If you are hiring an individual or organization to undertake some work for the community, be sure to develop a formal selection process. This involves:

- developing a description of what you need to have done;
- asking for proposals from individuals or organizations that you believe are able to undertake the work;
- developing criteria for the review of proposals and assessing them against this criteria;
- meeting the person that you feel can do the job and making sure you have a common understanding of the work; and
- developing a letter of understanding or contract that outlines what will be done, the products or results that will be expected, and the payments that will be made.

#### *Using Technical Assistance*

*Municipal planners were concerned that poverty, crime and homelessness characterized a particular neighbourhood. It was determined that a special initiative was required. A community developer was hired to work with the neighbourhood to respond to these issues. Slowly, relationships and community/organizational connections were made and a community development plan evolved. Additional funds were given to the neighbourhood to implement the community plan. A community advisory group was created to manage and direct the implementation process. Housing, youth crime, neighbourhood safety and other issues are now being addressed. This may not have happened without the specialized help of the community developer in the beginning.*

Although the process takes time, it will stand you in good stead. It is an objective process that community members can easily understand. In addition, if any issues arise

during the provision of the technical service, you can refer back to the letter of understanding that outlines what was agreed to and the results that are to be produced. A community member with personnel or human resource management experience can help develop a selection process that will work effectively.

If you know that you need to hire technical expertise but are not sure who might have the needed skill, the best solution is to network. Ask community members and others who have done similar work if they are aware of anyone who can provide the assistance required.

#### **Lessons from Experience**

- Make sure the values and philosophy of the technical expert you hire are consistent with those of the community development process and your community.
- Technical expertise is often used to facilitate processes that enable all community members to participate. For example, an expert facilitator might be used to help the community plan workshops or work through a project plan, especially where diverse opinions and points of view exist.

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**Points to Ponder**

- Are there areas of your community development activity where the hiring of technical expertise might assist you? Why?
- What process will you develop to identify potential technical experts and to hire the technical expertise to assist you?
- Where will the funding come from to hire outside help?



## SECTION IV - ATTITUDE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Basic skills and knowledge are needed along with a positive mind-set or attitude in order to effectively implement the community development process.

One way to think about attitude, knowledge and skills is to think about what you need to believe and feel (attitude), what you need to know (knowledge) and what you must be able to do (skills) to successfully undertake a community development initiative. Not every individual involved needs to possess all the skills or have all of the knowledge, but having a common and positive attitude really helps the process move along.

As part of the planning process, it is a good idea to assess the knowledge, skills and attitudes of community members, identify gaps and create a training plan to respond to the gaps. By doing so you will be able to build both individual and group capacity.

The primary attitudes, knowledge and skills that are needed to undertake the community development process are summarized below.

### Attitude

Attitude is the preference of an individual or organization towards or away from things, events or people. It is the spirit and perspective from which an individual, group or organization approaches community development. Your attitude shapes all your decisions and actions. Attitude is very difficult to define with precision as it consists of

qualities and beliefs that are non-tangible. We are used to talking about the attitude of individuals, but it is important to recognize that organizations also have attitude. Usually, however, when we talk about an organization's attitude we use the term "organizational culture".

The following are key qualities and beliefs that experience tells us determine whether or not an individual, group or organization has the attitude needed to successfully lead or actively participate in a community development initiative:

- respect for the individual, group and community;
- strong sense of responsibility and commitment;
- empathy (understanding where others are coming from);
- openness to look at alternate solutions, new opportunities and ways to improve;
- patience, perseverance and endurance;
- creativity, innovation and intuition;
- willingness to participate without always having to lead;
- trust in others; and
- self-confidence.

It is very easy to look at the list above and say "Of course I have the attitudinal characteristics that are needed for community development"; however, consistently demonstrating these in the processes you design and the actions you take can be quite difficult. It is important for both individuals and organizations to take stock from time to time of how well their attitude is reflected in their actions.

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## Knowledge

Community development requires a broad base of knowledge on many subjects. Knowledge is the data and information and the models or theories you use to work with this information and data. Any community development team needs knowledge of:

- the community;
- social, economic and environmental development;
- partnerships;
- group process and dynamics (vested interests, political linkages and turf protection);
- team-building;
- problem-solving and decision-making processes;
- project management;
- financial management and fund-raising;
- training and skill development methods and opportunities; and
- organizational development and design.

Remember that, although no one individual has to have this complete knowledge base, you do need to know if your community development team has this knowledge collectively and how you can fill any gaps that exist. Remember that, as community development is a dynamic and evolutionary process, you must always be open to new information and understanding about your community and the community development process.

Knowledge by itself, however, is not enough to successfully initiate and maintain a community development effort. Applying this knowledge is of equal importance.

## Skills

Skills move you from theory and knowledge to action. Skills involve the performance of mental or physical tasks. To be skilled you must be able to undertake a task competently; it is not about luck or a one-time effort. Skills are learned and repeatable.

There are many ways to describe the skills needed to undertake the community development process. The approach taken here is to cluster the needed skills into five primary areas:

- communication, facilitation and team-building skills;
- research, planning and evaluation skills;
- problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills;
- management skills; and
- organizational design and development skills.

The descriptions below provide a brief summary of the skills in each cluster. All these skills do not need to be well-developed at the beginning of the community development process but, as your efforts move from planning to implementing and sustaining action, all these skills will be required.

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## Communication, Facilitation and Team Building Skills

Community development requires the creation of strong relationships, trust and the identification of common ground. Strong communication, team-building and group facilitation skills are needed as a foundation for all community development activity. There is no absolute approach to applying these skills. A wide range of techniques is available that can and should be used. You must use your skill to create processes that are responsive and effective for your particular situation.

Team-building is inclusive and makes people feel comfortable. The more experience you have in working with groups, the better your skills will be in this area. Being able to "read" the group, or knowing what is going on without being told, is a skill that comes with experience and is essential to building a successful community development initiative.

The skills to organize and run effective meetings are also essential. These skills help to ensure that you use your time effectively and that team members are productive.

### Poor Meeting Skills

*One government worker attended so many meetings in a month that she became very good at figuring out how meetings should be run. One of the tasks she took on with several community groups was to train them in conducting good meetings. At one session, a participant said that if she hadn't come along when she did to "fix" the group's meeting skills he would have quit. He too attended many meetings and had no time for ones that were poorly managed.*

## Research, Planning and Evaluation Skills

Research and planning skills are needed throughout the community development process. These are the skills you will use to undertake an assessment of your community, develop a plan and implement it. They can also assist in managing and directing change. They help move the community from general intent to actual action.

Research skills are needed to help gather and interpret information about your community.

Planning occurs at many levels in the community development process, right from creating the vision to evaluating success. There are many different types of planning. For example, long-range planning, as in visioning, is sometimes called strategic planning. Turning goals into action and deciding what you are going to do is operational planning.

As evaluation is an important aspect of all community development efforts, knowing how to do it well is important. Evaluation determines what success should look like, what information is required to measure it, what process is needed to collect and analyze information, and how to present it in a useful way. Evaluation requires strong research, analytical and technical skills as well as the ability to synthesize information. Even if you are not responsible for the formal evaluation, having these skills will help to ask key questions about the progress being made and to participate in structuring the evaluation when it occurs.

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## Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution Skills

When diverse groups or interests come together to decide on common goals and processes and to take action together, problem-solving skills are essential. Community members who perceive that they have been forced to concede, or who feel that they have not been listened to, generally do not support the community development effort over time. To be effective in problem-solving you must have the ability to:

- identify the issue or problem,
- look at options and alternatives,
- help individuals understand the views of others,
- break the impasse if discussions get bogged down,
- manage conflict when it occurs,
- help find common ground,
- assist members to recognize agreement when it happens and
- ensure that everyone understands the agreement.

All these tasks require skill if they are to be undertaken successfully. These skills are needed throughout the community development process. Conflict may occur as you build support and create the community plan. The potential for conflict and the need for problem-solving also occur as you implement your community development plan. Many implementation decisions impact on the use of resources and power relationships, resulting in the potential for disagreement and differing perspectives. Conflict is to be expected. Problems and conflict should not be suppressed. It is important that individuals express their views and opinions.

Skill, however, is required to build constructively on problems and differences so that common ground is created.

## Management Skills

Management of a community development process involves a variety of different skills. In order to effectively start and maintain a community development process strategic, financial, human resource and operational planning skills are required. Good management comes with good leadership. This means understanding group facilitation, having the ability to work with diverse interests, collective decision-making, conflict resolution, anticipation of issues and opportunities, plus the skills needed for building support, energy and motivation. Financial, human resource and project management skills become critical as you move from planning to implementation in maintaining momentum.

## Organizational Design and Development Skills

Eventually all community development initiatives need an organizational structure. This may require creating a new structure or making changes to an existing organization. In addition, as the community development plan is implemented and adapted, changes may also be required in how activities and resources are organized. Thus, organizational design and development skills are important to the long-term success of any community development process.

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## Building on Skills and Responding to Skill Gaps

Skills and how you use them will change throughout the community development process. It is important to be open to using your skills in new ways, developing new skills and recognizing the abilities of others. Community development activity often challenges us to think and do things differently. A strong set of the skills described above and an open mind help to make this happen.

To build upon your community development ability you must have a clear understanding of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that those leading your process bring to it. The best way to do this is to reflect upon the skills, attitudes and knowledge listed above and determine:

- areas of strength,
- areas that may require a bit of refinement but are basically in place, and
- areas where gaps exist that could hamper your community development efforts.

There are many ways to respond to knowledge, skills and attitude gaps. Examples of these are:

- group discussion and agreement on values and beliefs that shape your community development work;
- individual learning through courses and workshops at local educational institutions;

### Training Plans

*Two organizations took different approaches to training their boards of directors. One had a training plan that considered each individual's needs and their skills that could be shared, while the other purchased a package of training from an outside specialist that was specifically designed for not-for-profit boards. The one with the training plan making use of inside skills ended up with twice as much training at half the cost, and their board felt more skilled and competent than did the other.*

- identification of written and Internet resources that can help to fill the knowledge gaps;
- group workshops and training sessions that are tailor-made to meet the learning needs of your team;
  - asking community members with the knowledge you are looking for to become part of the leadership team or assist you with a particular tasks or initiative; and/or
  - sharing your own knowledge and skills by teaching and supporting others.

It is strongly recommended that, as part of the planning process, you formally assess the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed for success and develop a training plan to respond to these needs.

Training plans are comprehensive overviews of the knowledge, skills and attitudes desired to reach the goals and objectives of your community

development plan. They can be designed to address both individual and organizational capacity development needs. Although capacity building is a high priority in most community development initiatives, the actual development of a training plan rarely is.

There are several reasons for this. One is that so much work is done creating a vision and action plan that training is pushed to the side, or seen as a luxury and something that can be delayed. Another reason is that putting together good training plans also requires knowledge and skills.

Regardless of the difficulties, a training plan should be developed as soon as you can identify the capacity issues facing your community. If it is not possible for the group itself to produce a training plan, outside help should be sought to determine what roles need to be in place and what skills are necessary to perform these roles. As you develop your training plan:

- base the training on the skills that will be acquired, not on what topics will be covered;
- provide examples of where the desired skills might be used, and try to use these skills soon after they have been acquired;
- consider a variety of training methods as people learn in different ways and there are many options to choose from; and
- understand that specialty skills may need custom-made training.

Sometimes the cost of training or the location where it is offered makes it unaffordable or unrealistic, given financial or geographic restrictions. Do not give up on the training plan; instead, look for other ways to acquire the skills and expertise the group needs.

### Lessons from Experience

The following tips will be useful as you develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to undertake the community development process:

- If knowledge/skill development is new for your group, start small.
- Get advice from others and learn from their successes and failures.
- Make sure you have the knowledge and skills needed to manage the capacity building process.
- Make sure you have the right people doing the right jobs. Match people's values, interests and skills to the tasks that need doing.
- Some people find learning easy and fun, but others are afraid of it and will need encouragement and support.
- Learning and capacity development does not work as an isolated event; it has to be connected to whatever comes next.
- If you need outside help, hire it.
- Shop around for prices, tools, courses, content and trainers. There are lots of "experts" around! Find the ones with whom you are comfortable.

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- ❑ Don't be afraid to ask questions and change directions when trainers, content or delivery methods don't go the way you expected.
  - ❑ Capacity building is a long-term process. Learning and development take time to set up and undertake. Make sure to acknowledge your progress and successes along the way.
  - ❑ All community members have skills and valuable experience that can be applied to the community development process. The challenge is to identify ways to tap into and develop this skill. This challenge can only be met if you have the ability to match the skills needed for a successful community development effort to the skills and on-going learning of community members.

#### Points to Ponder

- ❑ What process will you use to determine if you have the attitude, knowledge and skills needed to undertake the community development process skills?
- ❑ Is there someone in community or organization who can explore capacity issues, identifying gaps and developing these strategies for filling these gaps?



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## SECTION V - COMMON PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

This section identifies some of the most common challenges and difficulties which communities experience in building capacity and undertaking a community development process. Thinking about these issues in advance will help to avoid some of the difficulties experienced by other communities. Each community is different, so the problems that arise may be slightly different, and the solutions you find may be better than the ones offered. This section is simply a guide to help discussion and to develop a better understanding of challenges related to both community development and capacity building.

The most common problems seem to occur around the following issues, which are outlined and then described below:

- not understanding your own community,
- getting from planning to action,
- failing to evaluate results,
- lack of financial resources,
- role confusion and power struggles,
- unresolved conflict and
- not applying tools and techniques effectively.

### Not Understanding Your Community

Assumptions are often made about what a community is and what it has going for or against it. When undertaking a community development initiative, assuming or guessing are not good enough. It is important to know your community and be able to provide accurate information about it. A community assessment is a process designed to gather community information and data. The purpose of a community assessment is to help understand the nature of your community and develop a common information base among community members. It can be hard to develop a shared understanding of the environment and the issues facing the community without this information.

For some communities, assessment involves identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, while for others it may mean a very detailed analysis of all the sectors of community life. The amount of detail you require in developing an understanding of your community will depend very much on where you are in the community development process.

A common challenge communities face is to develop an assessment process that meets their needs and circumstances. Communities can fall into the trap of collecting information simply because it is available. The assessment process becomes an end in itself and not a way to promote common understanding.

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It is important to remember that you are gathering information for a purpose. A great wealth of information about the community or the general environment may exist, but collecting information without a focus and a purpose is not helpful.

A starting point in the assessment process is to create a picture of your community that explores:

- demographics — current and projected,
- social issues and trends,
- economic issues and trends,
- environmental issues and trends,
- opportunities and issues from the perspective of community members,
- opportunities and issues from the perspective of community leaders, and
- trends and issues outside of your community that are already having or will have an impact on the community.

Common sources of information are:

- reports and studies from provincial and local governments;
- information from Human Resources Development Canada, Statistics Canada and other federal government departments;
- universities and colleges;
- newspaper and magazine articles;
- personal interviews;
- focus groups; and
- informal conversation.

Remember that community members and organizations are the experts about your community. If you want to know about social trends, ask organizations and individuals involved in the delivery of social services and in the volunteer sector for information. If there is interest in economic trends, ask people active in the private sector and unions.

Understanding your community is a continuing process. Due to the rapid nature of change in our society, what is true today may not be true tomorrow. Assuming that you know all there is to know about your community is dangerous. Taking stock and assessing the community on a regular basis ensures that your assumptions and understanding of your community are current.

### Getting From Planning to Action

If you are producing a community development plan for the first time, the steps of creating a vision, goals, objectives and action plans can seem never-ending. Remember that this work will pay off in the long run. Be patient. Don't rush the front end of the process. Getting the involvement and buy-in of a broad cross-section of community members is essential to your long-term success. It is also important to remember that planning does not occur in a vacuum. Community activities and opportunities are occurring concurrently with the planning process; therefore, you must let common sense and the vision of the community guides your actions.

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However, many communities find that the planning process can be frustrating if no focus for action or results is apparent. If you find that you are getting bogged down in planning, and frustrated by a lack of concrete action, then:

- prioritize your goals and objectives, and focus your energy and capacity in those areas;
- ask yourself if you are trying to be all things to all people and if the focus of your community development activity needs to be narrowed in order to make it manageable and in keeping with the present capacity of the community;
- ask those involved in the process for ideas and suggestions on how to move forward;
- review the situation, and see if the hiring of some technical support or expertise can move you forward; and/or
- take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves, but do so in a manner that is consistent with the community development work that has been done.

Change and adjustments are an ongoing part of the community development process. Do not be afraid to re-define your original approach if you find it is not working for you. However, balance this with the need to take the time to do the hard front-end work that is needed to create a community development plan.

## Failing to Evaluate Results

Many communities fail to evaluate results in a systematic way. This often occurs because they do not think through what success will look like or what information might be needed to evaluate the results of their efforts. These things should be done as part of the planning process, not as an after-thought. In other words, while you are carrying out your plan, you need to collect the information necessary to evaluate the results of the plan. Assessing the success of your plan based on incomplete or biased information that happens to be available midway through or at the end of the implementation process is not credible or meaningful.

Some communities resist evaluation because they perceive it is hard and complicated work and/or that it will involve "outsiders" making judgments about their community. It is important to

take the mystique out of evaluation. Evaluation is simply a tool that helps you understand if you are on the track and achieving the results that will move you towards your vision. It is not about determining what actions were "right" and what actions were "wrong" and does not have to be overly technical and complex.

### *From Planning to Action*

*Three of the five people involved in a community theatre were very good at planning and developing concepts. They enjoyed meeting and putting ideas forward. They weren't particularly good at getting the ideas off the ground and the other two became frustrated. When things got out of control, they finally agreed to stop planning things that they had no way of implementing. Instead, they made plans that were logical and allowed them to get from planning to actually doing something.*

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In an evaluation you need to explore four basic questions:

- What worked and why?
- What did not work and why?
- What could have been done differently?
- What adjustments and changes are required now?

The process you develop for answering these questions depends on the complexity of your community development activities and the depth of knowledge and understanding you require. Evaluations of community development can be a challenge because they should have both a quantitative and qualitative side. Concrete information about what has been undertaken is important but so too is information about community members' perceptions of the process, the results achieved and the overall benefits of community development.

Community development does have risks and, often, it involves new ways of doing things. It is important to acknowledge that risks are being taken and that mistakes most likely will be made. Evaluation enables the community to learn from these mistakes. It ensures that the necessary information is available to adjust and adapt your activity and, therefore, minimize risk.

Evaluation supports the community's commitment to stay on track and achieve results. In addition, evaluative information is an important element of funding proposals. Funding agencies often want to know what you have achieved in the past, in order to assess whether they should support new projects. Evaluation may be one area where you may want to tap into some outside expertise to help get you started.



## Lack of Financial Resources

Very few community development initiatives are cost-free. Funding has, over the years, become a major challenge for many community development initiatives as they often do not fit into the types of programs, grants or loans that are available. Usually, the project-based approach, that many funders and financial institutions have adopted, conflicts with the long-range goals or undertakings that will result in substantive community improvement.

Funding and comprehensive financing, for large-scale or even smaller initiatives, can be difficult for several reasons. The ten most common ones are:

- lack of funding sources for specific community development undertakings;
- lack of funding initiatives that provide seed money to support the first steps of community development process;
- short-term and low-risk approaches to loans and grants by funders;
- confusing and changing eligibility criteria of government grants and programs;
- difficult and/or confusing funding application processes;
- limited ability of community development organizations to match funds or make down payments;

- poorly-written funding requests or project plans;
- lack of experience with fundraising;
- no track record, limited credibility with funders and/or no credit rating; and
- too much competition for limited financial/donated resources.

### Lack of Funding

*A community development corporation had received government funding for a period of three years to run an employability program. Although employment preparation was not a key issue identified in the community plan, this is where the funding was available and the corporation decided to pursue the opportunity. Many community members did not agree with this decision and began to lose interest in the initiatives of the corporation. At the end of three years there was no more funding for the initiative. The corporation faced a crisis as they had limited financial resources and had alienated many community members. In the end, it collapsed and the individuals involved lost some personal credibility.*

Some of these issues rest with funders and how they design and distribute funding, but others are in the control of the community. In order to avoid these funding problems, many community groups are approaching financing as a job that requires skilled staff and a plan. The skills needed for this role include project planning skills, proposal writing skills, knowledge of grants and lenders, experience with fundraising, an understanding of investment partnering and, most of all, a real belief in the validity of the work that must be funded.

Project plans, funding requests and proposals will vary depending on the audience and the amount of money being requested. Some are very elaborate and include a prospectus of the organization and a detailed strategic plan as well as flow charts and financial projections for revenue and expenses. Other requests are two- or three-page overviews of the activities and a rationale for funding.

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The following are some of the basic questions which should be considered when putting together a request for funding:

- Who is the sponsoring organization? What type of legal entity is it?
- Who is involved? Who will act as a contact and accept responsibility for the funds?
- For what are the funds required? What need is being addressed by the work that is being undertaken?
- How does this fit into the bigger picture or complement existing community activities or services?
- Who supports or recognizes this group or this request?
- What equity or assets are being brought into the initiative from the sponsor or others?
- How will the funds be managed? Is there a process for evaluation and accountability?
- What results are expected and when?

## Role Confusion and Power Struggles

Role confusion and power struggles can arise in the community development process. This is particularly true if the community development initiative has a large scope. Community development brings about change, forges new relationships and shifts power. Some community members may perceive a loss of power or be threatened by the new relationships that they see being developed. To resist or to be threatened by this type of change is quite natural.

Although role confusion and power struggles may not be possible to avoid completely, here are some things that can be done to minimize these issues:

- Be up-front about the fact that community development involves change. Anticipate where this change will occur and talk about it with those who will be affected.
  - Assess the community situation, especially where role confusion and power struggles are likely to occur, and identify action you can take to minimize these.
  - Work to develop trust and promote two-way communication.
  - Develop open dialogue so that those who are resistant to change know what is happening and why.
  - Promote the vision and goals of your community development plan to create a common purpose and focus.
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- Invite and encourage those most likely to be affected by the community development process to take leadership roles and actively participate.
  - Ensure that structures and procedures created to get the work done minimize divisions rather than accentuating them.

The power of community development is that it is holistic and inclusive. Yet when we want to get the work done we must, by necessity, divide the work into manageable pieces. The way we divide and manage the work can have a large impact on role confusion and power struggles. With the best of intentions and in good faith, community members or organizations may be taking on work that impinges on others without their knowing it. If you perceive tension or confusion over group or individual responsibilities, seriously examine how the work has been organized.

An individual's personality or character, however, can also cause power struggles. It is important to try to put the suggestions above into place, but remember that the right solution may be that an individual leaves the process or activity. If this is the case, your goal is to manage this process with as few hard feelings as possible.

## Unresolved Conflict

Conflict and disagreement can occur in any human endeavor. In and of itself, it is not a bad thing; it depends on how it is managed. It is always best to have disagreements clearly expressed and out in the open. Disagreement becomes dangerous when it is suppressed. To avoid or ignore conflict is to risk the escalation of the issue and an increase of divisiveness.

The key to resolving conflict or disagreement successfully is to:

- clearly identify the cause of the problem, not the symptoms;
- understand the problem and who is involved;
- separate the person from the problem;
- identify possible options for resolving the problem; and
- pick an option and act upon it.

Conflict and resistance may be a signal that you have not developed an inclusive process. Community members may be challenging or resisting elements of the process because they have not been involved in the development of these activities and/or have little understanding of what is being undertaken. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that an inclusive process is too difficult or that certain elements of your community are not really interested and, therefore, do not need to be involved. Do the legwork needed to promote inclusion. Involve the entire range of interests and perspectives in your community in the development process rather than having to address issues of concern and conflict after the fact.

## Not Applying Tools and Techniques Effectively

Undertaking the community development process requires not only tools and techniques, but also an understanding of how to use them. One of the most common reasons for not using tools and techniques properly is not knowing what they are. A tool is series of specific process steps, an exercise or a checklist that can be outlined in detail and then applied in a variety of circumstances. Examples of tools are community assessment questionnaires, skill inventories and funding proposal checklists. A technique is less tangible and is a method or means of undertaking a set task. Examples of techniques are community visioning approaches, tips for how to communicate effectively and ideas to promote effective group facilitation.

The tools and techniques used in community development evolve and change. What works well in one community may not work well in another. Therefore, a set of tools and techniques that is guaranteed to fit all circumstances cannot be identified. Communities can and must learn from the experience of others but must adapt and refine what works in other places to their own set of circumstances.

### *Building a Toolbox*

*Several members of a community action group met to look at their community plan and to assess what needed to be done and how it would happen. There were several community assessments required, two town hall meetings and a great deal of data to gather. They knew that they needed specialized tools and techniques but didn't have the money to hire someone to help. Instead they asked people they knew how to do the various things and what tools they used. They put together a great little tool box for their own use and have since created a handbook filled with community planning tools.*

It is important that you explore the range of tools and techniques that are available and apply them to your own particular circumstance. As you explore tools and techniques for your community ask yourself these questions:

- Has the needed prerequisite work been done to make the tool or technique useful and effective?
- Will use of the tool or technique advance the community development process?
- Will community members understand the need for the tool or technique and the intended result?
- Does the tool or technique need any adaptation to be effective in your community?
- Is there an individual or group that can use the tool or technique effectively?
- After the successful use of the tool or technique what is the next step?

There is a wealth of possible tools and techniques available in the form of print/video material and the wisdom of other community developers. Section VI of this handbook provides some starting points for beginning to explore the wealth of material that is available. Many of the tools and techniques you

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discover will be for sale. Regardless of whether you pay for the material or not, be aware and respectful of copyright issues. If you adapt the material of others it is important to acknowledge the contribution they have made to your thinking.

If you are contacting other community developers you must also be respectful of their time and circumstances. Be clear what it is you want to know and ensure that your expectations are reasonable. For example, asking an individual if they can identify some effective resources for you is reasonable, but asking someone to produce a community development process for you over the phone is not. Many community development organizations and individuals work on a contractual or fee-for-service basis; therefore, anything beyond preliminary inquiries may require that a fee-for-service arrangement be put in place. If an individual contributes time and effort to locating resources and/or providing direction, acknowledge this contribution.

### Lessons from Experience

- ❑ Community development is not an easy or simple process. Anticipate issues and concerns and respond to them before they become problems.
- ❑ Learn from the experiences and mistakes of others. Understand why these mistakes were made and build strategies into your process that ensure that you do not make the same mistakes.

- ❑ Do not be afraid to refine and adapt your process to ensure that it has meaning for community members and is achieving the results that you want to achieve.
- ❑ Ask for and be open to feedback.
- ❑ Ask for help when you need it.
- ❑ Take the time to identify tools and techniques that help you move forward and that "fit" your community. Adapt and refine existing tools and techniques to meet the needs of your community.
- ❑ Use outside expertise but ensure that the community, not the expert, is driving the process.

### Points to Ponder

- ❑ Think through the list of common problems identified above. Do you believe that your community development efforts could or are experiencing any of these problems? Which ones? Why is this the case?
- ❑ How can you respond to the concerns you have identified above? What tools and techniques will you use?
- ❑ How can you avoid some of the mistakes or problems others have experienced?
- ❑ What resources, expertise and experiences can you draw upon to help inform your community development efforts?





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## SECTION VI - CONCLUSION

Community development and capacity building are processes that increase the ability of people, as individuals and groups, to prepare for and respond to opportunities and challenges in their communities. Community development should belong to the community and be from the community. It should not be imposed from the outside. Whether it is a multifaceted process or a fairly straight-forward and simple undertaking, it should lead to improved or enhanced community living.

As an introduction to community development this handbook was designed to develop an understanding of:

- the terms "community development" and "community capacity building";
- the conditions within communities that support community development;
- the community development process;
- the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed for effective community development; and
- common problems and solutions.

This handbook was not intended to be comprehensive or to cover every situation that might occur. Much of community development is common sense and group participation in finding solutions or creating opportunities. As each community is unique, each initiative will be distinct. We have, over the past few years, learned a great deal about what works and what doesn't but there is still much to discover. What we do know is that to undertake an effective community development effort you need to have the following:

- a common vision, purpose and plan;
- an understanding of and the ability to initiate the community development process;
- resources, tools and techniques; and, most important,
- people who are ready, willing and able to take the lead and see it through to the end.

Our community cultures are changing, and more and more we are looking at community-based accountability and responsibility for the future. This is a significant shift in attitude and signals the acceptance that ordinary people often know what is best for their lives and have the interest and capacity to make it happen.



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This handbook is a good starting point, but it is simply one of many resources that can assist you to initiate, develop and sustain community development. Use the ideas presented in this handbook along with other available resources to further develop your understanding of these concepts and processes and how to apply them in your own community.

Many colleges and universities have courses and programs that explore community development in depth and offer everything from workshops to degree programs. As well, there are countless numbers of technical assistance providers and experienced people in community development who have gained insight over the years from actually doing it.

In addition, there is a wealth of resource material available. To create a list of such material in this handbook would be difficult as it would quickly become outdated. Consequently, we urge you to research appropriate information or resources by asking those in the field of community development, by talking to government representatives, through your local library or by using the Internet.

Keep learning, sharing information, generating ideas and doing good community development. Canada, as a country, is recognized world-wide for the quality of its people and the richness of our communities. We are presented with an opportunity now to continue this legacy and involve more people in creating sustainable communities and brighter futures.

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## EVALUATION FORM

We are very interested in hearing from you about what we are doing right and what might need some improvement. Your comments and feedback about this handbook are welcome in any format through the following numbers:

Mail: Labour Market Learning and Development Unit  
Attn: "Community Development Handbook"  
Human Resources Development Canada  
5th Floor, 140 Promenade du Portage  
Hull, Quebec K1A 0J9

Email: [learning-apprentissage.lmld-apmt@hrdc-drhc.gc.ca](mailto:learning-apprentissage.lmld-apmt@hrdc-drhc.gc.ca)  
Fax: (819) 997-5163  
Phone: (819) 953-7370

Specifically, we would appreciate hearing about the following, which will be used as an evaluation of this handbook and the information it contains.

- How did you hear about and locate this handbook?
- What is your overall assessment of the handbook?
- What parts did you find most interesting or useful?
- What improvements would you make?
- For what purpose(s) have you used or will you be using this handbook?
- Do you have any additional comments you wish to make?

## RESPONDENT INFORMATION (OPTIONAL)

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Name and contact information

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Occupation or field of study

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