

measuring community capacity



Community Capacity Building Approach

For the past several years, people in community and government organizations have been talking about *building community capacity*, and using a *community capacity building* approach in our work. However, there is no common definition for building community capacity among community and government workers, and until now, there has been no way to assess whether the way we work is actually building capacity in communities.

With funding support from Health Canada's Population Health Fund, Sharing Strengths and Horizons Community Development Associates have been working with five community groups in Southwest Nova Scotia to develop a process for community groups to define their own capacity¹, and assess whether it is increasing over time.

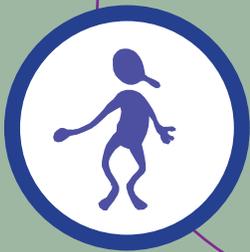
The Measuring Community Capacity Resource Kit

is now officially launched, and is available to community groups, service providers, and governments. You can order a copy of the Kit, or you can download the Kit from

www.horizonscda.ca/projects/ccmp.html

Measuring Community Capacity Resource Kit

The heart of *Measuring Community Capacity* is a facilitated group-survey for collecting information about the various ways groups build, develop and sustain their capacity to address child and youth health issues. The Kit contains the supports necessary for facilitators to use the survey with their groups, and the supports to work with the information once it is gathered.



The Resource Kit has six sections, with supports and tools for each section:

- Deciding to Use the Survey
- Preparing to Use the Survey
- Using the Survey
- Analyzing the Group's Responses
- Moving Forward– Using the Information
- Feedback



Measuring Community Capacity is a user-friendly tool for communities to assess their capacity over time. It is not an evaluation, a judgment, or a report card critiquing how community groups work; rather it is a tool to assist groups in self-reflection. It is completely up to each group to decide whether and how to use the tool, as well as whether and how to use the information that is gathered in the group's responses.



The survey questions ask group members for their perceptions about a variety of components of community capacity, including:

- basic background information about individual group members and their community;
- basic information about the group, agency, or organization;
- group processes such as selection of group members, making decisions, leadership, planning and program implementation, methods of gathering input and support, and evaluation;
- the group's relationship with the community;
- whether and how the group monitors the impact of its work;
- whether and how the group uses community strengths and public policies to support its efforts;
- personal knowledge and skill levels of group members in relation to planning and implementing programs and/or projects, and evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of community-related initiatives;
- individual group member's skills and experiences that contribute to the group's work;
- process(es) and practices the group uses when addressing child and youth health issues;
- type of leadership found within the group and its level of effectiveness in addressing child and youth health issues;
- connections the group has made and the support it has received from other groups, agencies and/or organizations within their community; and
- the types of connections the group has made and the types of supports it has received from other groups, agencies and/or organizations outside their community.



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Benefits of Using the Measuring Community Capacity Resource Kit

- Group members will have meaningful and useful discussions with each other about the way they work together.
- Groups will have an opportunity to reflect on their bigger picture – and think about whether there are any adjustments they would like to make to build on the way they work.
- Groups will receive personalized user-friendly data on their group and community.
- The data collected can be compiled into an average or range for all groups that use the survey, which will give funders, decision makers, and policy makers a picture of exactly how to support community groups in building their knowledge, skills, and capacity.
- Groups will have an opportunity to give feedback on Measuring Community Capacity, which will be valuable for further developing this Resource Kit, and will help contribute to the growing body of knowledge on community capacity building.

Horizons Community Development Associates is available to train facilitators to use the survey and to assist groups in accessing the data analysis component of the Kit.

For more information please contact us:



¹ For the purposes of this project we have developed a working definition of community capacity building: Community capacity building is a process that aims to increase a community's ability to work together to meet its goals and needs. Capacity building works to enhance the strengths a community already has. Capacity is built from:

- Commitment – the will to act
- Resources – including both financial and other resources
- Skills, talents and expertise (Adapted from the Community Foundation of Canada, 1999.)

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