
Capacity-Building Needs Assessment

Initial Scan

Produced by




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Helping Rural Communities Thrive

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Instructions

1. Read through the overview explanation of each outcome.
2. Respond to the list of statements that follow. Circle the response that best captures how well you feel the statement reflects how your group *usually* functions. Don't just consider the last two meetings or only the last issue the group dealt with. Also, answer from your own perspective, not as you think others in the group would answer.
3. Please feel free to ask the RDI staff conducting this assessment for clarification on any questions that you do not understand.

Response example:

Never..... Always


1.....Never

2.....Rarely

3Occasionally

4.....Not consistently

5.....Always

DK.....Don't Know

NA.....Not Applicable to your group

PLEASE RELAX! This is not a test.

It is a survey intended to help diagnose what areas of capacity building your group needs to focus on as you work on projects and other goals. It is also designed to help identify the areas in which you need RDI assistance. The results can be used to shape a Memorandum of Understanding with RDI for services over the upcoming months.

Outcome 1

Expanding, diverse, inclusive citizen participation in decision-making and leadership

Overview:

In groups that are building their capacity:

- ┌ a stable or increasing number of participants are involved in making decisions and taking action.
- ┌ there are enough active people to carry out priority projects.
- ┌ the membership, as well as leadership, includes broad representation from throughout the community to adequately reflect all interests and achieve benefits for the community as a whole.
- ┌ membership also includes a mix of ages, gender, ethnicity, length of residence in the community, occupation, place of residence and other characteristics that define diversity within the community.

	Never	Always		
	←————→			
1. The group has enough active members to implement the priorities in its strategic plan and to maintain itself as a viable organization.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
2. Over time, the group has been able to draw new people into leadership position (executive committee members, task force chairs, project leaders, etc.)	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
3. Group general membership has active participation by diverse segments of the community. (Ex: economic, cultural, educational, occupational, neighborhood, age, ethnic, length of residence, etc.)	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
4. Leadership of the group reflects the diverse segments of the community. (Ex: economic, cultural, educational, occupational, neighborhood, age, ethnic, length of residence, etc.)	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA

Outcome 2

Increasing Knowledge and Skills

Overview:

Ability to effectively implement the group's strategic plan is directly linked to the collective skills and knowledge of group members. A healthy group:

- ┌ recognizes that a variety of communication, group process, analytical and management skills are needed to function as an effective community organization,
- ┌ keeps an eye on the underlying skills that influence its capacity to act and on the information and knowledge needed to make good decisions,
- ┌ notices when inadequate skills or knowledge are affecting its ability to accomplish objectives, and,
- ┌ takes action to increase those skills or knowledge within the group.

	Never	Always		
	←————→			
1. When assigning project and organizational responsibilities, the group tries to match work to individual members' skills and expertise.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
2. The group discusses the importance of building members' skills and knowledge bases to carry out action plans and accomplish goals.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
3. The group looks for and shares information on training opportunities for members to acquire a variety of skills and knowledge needed to carryout group work.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
4. Do you pursue training to increase your own skills and knowledge related to group work?	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA

Outcome 3

Strategic agenda and ongoing process of strategic decision-making, grounded in a widely shared vision of the future.

Overview:

Strategic planning involves making choices based on an understanding of the community's present and future circumstances.

- ┌ Groups are more effective when they routinely make strategic decisions about actions to take, even when not involved in a formal planning process.
- ┌ Creating a vision of the desired community future is an important part of planning and action.
- ┌ Building agreement on the vision among different community interests increases commitment to making it real and enhances a group's capacity to successfully carry out community and economic development strategies.

	Never	Always				
	←————→					
1. The group has a strategic plan that reflects the community's desired future and includes effective, feasible ways to get there.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
2. A range of organizations support and feel ownership of the strategic plan/vision statement.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
3. The group uses the vision, goals and strategies in its strategic plan to set priorities and make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
4. The group reviews and updates its vision and strategic plan regularly to keep them valid, practical, and relevant to the community over the long-term.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
5. The group makes ongoing decisions using a variety of analytical approaches (Ex: brainstorming issues, evaluating ideas, establishing priorities, identifying alternative solutions, and problem-solving)	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
6. The group uses a variety of information to make strategic decisions. (Ex: local history, other community efforts, data from state and county agencies, community and economic development resource/approaches, issues, goals and strategies beyond –or broader than– the local community.)	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA

Outcome 4

Action! with systems to measure progress and to learn from results of action.

Overview:

- ┌ An effective group turns its strategic plan and vision into action. The momentum and desire for action comes through as the group gets things done.
- ┌ Group members know whether they are successful because they pay attention to the result of their efforts (both intended and unintended).
- ┌ They compare results to goals to track progress and know accomplishments.
- ┌ The group learns from experience and integrates that learning into future strategic action planning and ongoing project design.

	Never	Always				
	←————→					
1. The group is productive, action-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
2. The group's actions are achieving stated goals and moving it closer to the vision of the desired future.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
3. The group monitors progress towards goals through the framework set out in its action plans.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
4. The group celebrates its successes and acknowledges when members are getting things done.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
5. The group is learning from its mistakes and successes.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA
6. The group uses project management techniques, such as developing work plans, budgeting, delegating assignments, and tracking progress.	1	2	3	4	5	DK NA

Outcome 5

Group Structure and Procedures

Overview:

- ┌ The purpose of a group is to facilitate community and economic development.
- ┌ It is important, however, for the group to spend part of its time and energy on developing and maintaining its own functions and its relationships with other groups.
- ┌ A group is more effective when members are organized to make decisions and carry them out over the long haul.
- ┌ Certain practices and characteristics are critical to a group's ability to sustain positive action: organizational structure, defined practices and procedures, internal working relationships, partnerships with other organizations, to name a few.

	← Never	Always →		
1. The structure of the group is clear to members. (i.e. bylaws, committees, leadership positions, member roles, policies and procedures)	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
2. Meeting time is well used; decisions get made and members leave with a feeling of accomplishment.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
3. The group process is open and participatory; members are willing to contribute and explore new ideas.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
4. The leadership shares responsibility for carrying out the work of the group rather than trying to do it all themselves.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
5. The group is successfully building partnerships with groups within and beyond the community.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
Only groups with staff answer 6 & 7				
6. Staff arrangements and responsibilities are clear to the group.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
7. Staffing is effective for the group.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA

Outcome 6

Better resource utilization

Overview:

- ┌ Success in community and economic development is tied to an ability to balance self-reliance with the use of outside resources. Resources can be cash or in-kind (i.e. volunteer time).
- ┌ Groups get more done with their own resources to the extent that they are able to draw on the expertise, political clout and funds of various interests and organizations within and beyond the community.
- ┌ Effective use of resources requires being clear about the specific assistance needed, finding an appropriate provider, and negotiating for assistance that meets the group's needs.
- ┌ Effectiveness in obtaining outside funds is greater when the group is able to show that its proposed project will advance the goals or interests of the funder being approached.

[Note: In the statements, below, **Local** refers to within the community as a whole, not only the group. **External** refers to outside the community.]

	← Never	Always →		
1. The group is able to determine what specific resources and types of assistance it needs to carry out its priority projects.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
2a. The group effectively identifies <u>local</u> providers of the needed resources and assistance.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
2b. The group effectively identifies <u>external</u> providers of the needed resources and assistance.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
3a. The group is successful in obtaining <u>local</u> assistance and resources necessary to carry out its projects and meet its goals.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA
3b. The group is successful in obtaining <u>external</u> assistance and resources necessary to carry out its projects and meet its goals.	1	2 3 4 5	DK	NA

