



**Commonwealth
Foundation**

Capacity Development Framework

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Definition of and Approach to Capacity Development

The Civil Society Engagement Strategy of the Foundation takes on a long-term perspective, building capacity, strengthening the enabling environment for participatory governance and policy change and applying an integrated, holistic approach. It underscores a systematic and synergistic approach to monitoring, learning and sharing of best practice. Within this strategy, the Foundation promotes three areas of strategic constructive engagement: capacity development, enhancement of engagement platforms and spaces and replication of good and fit practices and knowledge management.

Capacity Development (CD) may be defined as “the process of change whereby individuals, organisations, institutions and systems develop their abilities to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve their goals.” The World Bank defines it as “a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that brings about changes in socio-political, policy-related, and organisational factors to enhance local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal.” This definition describes increasing the capacity for development as “by extension, a process of socio-political, policy-related, and organisational change... and driven primarily by changes in how knowledge and information are applied at various levels of society - that is, by learning.”

The role of the Foundation is to facilitate and support this change process in achieving its mission and mandate to support Civil Society in the Commonwealth. The Foundation adheres to the principle that the individual, organisations and institutions involved own and manage their own CD and use methodologies that contribute to sustainability.

The aim of the Foundation is to facilitate this process by providing support at various levels of the governance system; by following a systematic process of CD that leads to sustainability; by utilising effective CD delivery methodologies and promoting knowledge sharing and learning as an important aspect of social transformation in bringing about locally-owned changes to advance a particular development goal.

Levels of Capacity Development

Effective CD focuses on the organisation and the individuals within a system. The Foundation’s CD Results Framework describes an open system that defines the stakeholder terrain at the individual, organisational and institutional levels. It identifies stakeholders such as CSOs that should be involved in the capacity development process and the capacities that are needed. These stakeholders perform a range of functions that include developing and advocating for policy and plans, mobilising resources, performing administrative functions, delivering basic services, providing oversight, managing financial systems and implementing programs.

In addition it considers the policy, funding and supporting environment in which the individuals and organisations operate. This “enabling environment” may also need enhancement if the process and the results of CD are to be sustained. In the past, reference to capacity has often emphasised individual capacity to the exclusion of organisational and institutional capacity. There is a growing awareness that human resource development alone is not the answer to capacity constraints in most institutions.

These levels are depicted in Table 1: Civil Society Capacity Development Results Framework by Level. The table provides examples of capacities within CSOs at the individual, organisational

and system level as well as examples of possible CD activities that could be considered in areas where the need for performance improvement and capacity enhancement have been identified. The CD Results Framework of the Foundation offers a view of capacity as a complex, holistic process that takes place at different levels of the system in a web of interconnectedness.

Staged Process of Capacity Development

The process of change and development in the CD Results Framework of the Foundation includes four general stages. CD is viewed broadly as a developmental process that takes place over time, each step or stage building on the one before or at times overlapping and/or the steps repeating themselves in a cyclical, upwardly spiralling manner in a response to internal and external influences.

- **Stage 1: Consensus** - increased and facilitated agreement about the need to enhance capacity in order to achieve a development goal; and about what capacities and whose capacities to develop.
- **Stage 2: Strengthening Capacity** - strengthened individual competencies and organisational processes, structures and systems.
- **Stage 3: Application** - improved application of capacities; improved implementation of processes, structures, and systems to improve performance.
- **Stage 4: Institutionalisation** - enhanced regulatory support for new systems; culture of continuous improvement internalised; increased ability of the enabling environment to support and sustain development.

Stage 1: Consensus

The first stage of CD is to assist partners and stakeholders to assess their capacity development and institutional strengthening needs and to come to a consensus on organisational development priorities and a plan for change. Building consensus among key stakeholders on the priorities and plans for CD is critical for encouraging local ownership of the process. This stage seeks consensus among development partners on what capacity is needed by whom, for what purpose and how these partners will develop and exercise this capacity over time.

This key stage includes an assessment and analysis using an “appreciative inquiry” approach that provides baseline data on the current performance and existing capacity of the organisation (both strengths and weaknesses), and provides the information on which CD interventions are planned.

Stage 2: Strengthening Capacity

The second stage examines how individual and organisational capacities can be enhanced through improved knowledge, personnel competencies and organisational processes, structures and systems. It assists partners in acquiring knowledge required to better design and implement systems, programs and services at the individual, organisational and institutional levels. This stage includes carrying out capacity strengthening activities such as human resource development, skills training, introduction of new systems and technologies, and improvements in policies and procedures.

A key component of Stage 2 is the strengthening of participatory mechanisms that would facilitate effective, responsive and accountable governance.

Stage 3: Application

The third stage is to assist partners to apply their enhanced knowledge, skills, systems and procedures to implement new development programs, to improve their performance and to increase effectiveness and efficiency. The Foundation will support Civil Society partners to use new skills, systems and procedures to implement new development programmes, identify and replicate good practices as an approach to applying proven and effective solutions to common or similar problems, and to improve the process of dialogue and interaction with governance stakeholders, primarily government.

This stage may involve shifts in cultures and ways of thinking, changes in work systems and procedures and enhancing management styles, among others. The strategies and approaches that can be used in this stage to help apply new capacities, implement new plans and programmes and monitor progress are on site mentoring, learning by doing, follow-on activities, peer-to-peer learning, provision of knowledge tools and assistance to mobilise resources, among others.

Stage 4: Institutionalisation

The fourth stage guides individuals and organisations to internalise changes and processes for on-going performance assessment and CD. Institutionalisation requires the establishment of regulatory support for the new systems to ensure that a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement is internalised. At the end of Stage 4 a Civil Society network/alliance will have created a culture of continuous learning and have systems in place to elicit feedback and to respond to the need for further development and improved performance. Activities in this final stage will support a Civil Society network/alliance to internalise institutional improvements to ensure their sustainability through policy, guidelines, developing and formalising resource pools and to establish participatory mechanisms for continuous learning and improved performance.

Participatory Capacity Development Methodologies

The Foundation will use participatory methodologies in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of its CD activities. Exemplary practices and lessons in CD have shown that delivery methodologies for capacity development activities are most effective when there is an emphasis on learning-by-doing, on site mentoring, locally based hands-on training approaches, broad participation of stakeholders, and direct application of new skills to the local situation. There are also examples of successful CD that utilised public communication strategies and demonstration projects for concrete and on-site applications of skills and technology.

Participatory CD methodologies are not only effective in helping Civil Society partners strengthen their skills and abilities, but they also model participatory approaches that these partners can utilise when planning their own activities beyond the technical assistance. The participation of Civil Society partners in the planning of the CD activities and the integration of a communication strategy underscores the importance of consultation and communication with partners during planning and implementation of projects.

The Foundation recognises the critical role of on-site coaching by the Technical Advisors in ensuring and increasing the effectiveness of the CD projects. This strategy moves beyond the delivery of discrete interventions towards on-going support to partners in identifying their issues, developing solution seeking approaches to solve their problems, identifying new methods

of approaching dialogue and interaction with government, and providing support to broadening the CD initiatives. The Foundation will use this strategy to ensure that partners receive comprehensive and cohesive coaching for ongoing CD rather than a series of disjointed “training” interventions and capacity replacement approaches.

Essential Characteristics of Capacity Development in the Foundation

CD in the Foundation is viewed as a comprehensive approach involving necessary and strategic stakeholders in a change process aimed at improved performance of a Civil Society network/alliance within a system or a sector. The principles that underline CD in the Foundation are characterised by the following:

- *Holistic*: CD builds on a vision of a well-functioning Civil Society network/alliance in the Commonwealth and takes a multi-stakeholder approach to governance and development.
- *Participatory*: CD requires a full range of stakeholders in governance and promoting ownership of CD initiatives, which help stakeholders learn and apply the new systems, procedures and service delivery mechanisms.
- *Priorities-based*: CD responds to the needs and priorities of Civil Society partners and promotes the local ownership of development. It is based on consensus reached through the assessments of needs. It relies on Civil Society partners who would champion the integration of the new capacity in the system and culture in the Commonwealth.
- *Culturally situated*: CD respects the local culture, capitalises on indigenous knowledge systems and is not prescriptive.
- *Results-based*: CD encourages positive change that is articulated, planned and measurable. It promotes accountability, learning and performance, and describes sets of concrete results linked in the development process that are unfolding over time.
- *Collaborative*: CD requires coordination of efforts by Civil Society, government, private sector and international agencies working together in and across the Commonwealth. This ensures that efforts are harmonised, resources are maximised and initiatives complement and build on the needs of the various sectors of governance. This also leads to the development of partnerships.
- *Analytical*: CD requires strategic and analytical thinking. This includes development of conceptual frameworks and systems analyses for program design, implementation and monitoring.
- *Staged sequencing*: CD supports on-going change. The process is seldom linear and often unpredictable. The four stages of the Foundation’s CD Results Framework are: consensus building, capacity building, application and institutionalisation.
- *Practical*: CD initiatives need to be practical and useable. Successful CD provides partners with new and user-friendly tools.
- *Iterative*: CD requires flexibility and creativity as well as allowance for trial and error to determine the best ways to achieve one’s objectives. It is through continued, yet incremental guided practice, that the Civil Society partners gradually appreciate how the innovations being introduced can help them be more effective in delivering programs and achieving their goals. For this approach to succeed, it requires an open and trusting relationship between partners.

Table 3: Civil Society Capacity Development Results Framework by Level

| System Capacity | Institutional Capacity | | | Individual Capacity |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Enabling Environment | Leadership and Communication | Organisational Capacity | Work Environment and Motivation | Human Resource Competencies |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national / regional policies • legal and regulatory framework • supporting institutions • capacity development • and replication mechanisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vision, goals and objectives • sectoral policies and legislation • sectoral programs and plans • performance management • Civil Society-Civil Society network/ alliance relations • Civil Society - inter-governmental relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational structure • tools and equipment • work processes • supplies and materials • technology • internal communication • physical facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment • compensation • achievement recognition and promotion • performance appraisal and HR development • teamwork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of elected officials ▪ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of staff ▪ staff certification and qualifications |

Possible Capacity Development Activities

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ advocate for new or improved national policies and legislation ▪ form and strengthen partnerships/ networks/alliances/ coalitions to address common problems ▪ develop and strengthen mechanisms that link Civil Society organisations with government and the private sector ▪ strengthen institutions that build Civil Society capacity ▪ facilitate Civil Society-governmental dialogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clarify vision, mission and development plans ▪ engage in participatory policy development ▪ engage in participatory development ▪ support mainstreaming of poverty reduction, gender equality, cultural respect and understanding and environmental sustainability ▪ support monitoring ▪ promote internal leadership and ownership ▪ promote participatory ▪ Communications ▪ facilitate government-community dialogue ▪ facilitate Civil Society-governmental dialogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ conduct organisational review ▪ plan and implement restructuring ▪ upgrade tools and equipment ▪ improve physical layout ▪ streamline processes ▪ develop operations manuals ▪ develop procedures guidelines ▪ introduce new technologies ▪ enhance performance measurement systems ▪ identify and replicate best practices ▪ enhance feedback systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ enhance HRM / HRD policies and plans ▪ improve recruitment and selection procedures ▪ clarify job descriptions ▪ enhance employee incentive schemes ▪ develop performance appraisal system ▪ mainstream gender equality and cultural respect and understanding into organisational policies and plans ▪ improve teamwork ▪ introduce staff feedback systems | <p>Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ workshops ▪ tailor-made training ▪ formal education ▪ study tours ▪ on-site coaching ▪ mentoring ▪ job shadowing ▪ peer-to-peer exchange ▪ self-study modules ▪ conferences and seminars ▪ planned and supported learning-by-doing ▪ employee assignment review |
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Additional notes: