

# Community Capacity Building as a Model for Career Development Planning

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## PRE-READING QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think is meant by community capacity building?
2. How might community capacity building apply to career development?

## Introduction and Learning Objectives

Community Capacity Building (CCB) may seem a little foreign, or out of place, when discussing career development, yet it is very relevant to the field. More and more, **community capacity building** is being used to develop structures that bring about systematic change. Like the related concepts of community development and empowerment, community capacity building is about increasing the capabilities of people to articulate and address community issues and to overcome barriers to achieving improved outcomes in the quality of people's lives (Chaskin, 2001). More specifically, "[c]ommunity capacity is the interaction of human capital, organization resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community" (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001, p. 7). This view is vastly different from prior models that focused on a community's weaknesses and deficits and largely ignored resources and assets.

In this chapter we describe the community capacity building approach by

which communities are empowered to address local problems, and show how this holistic approach is better at fortifying a community's resources than delivering social programs based on specific needs. We review the assets that are to be considered in building capacity with particular attention on the importance of the capabilities of individuals and the roles of local organizations. Specific techniques and methods of how to build community capacity will also be explored. We will then examine the context of career development and how the community capacity building model may be applied by career practitioners in their work with individuals and in developing career development programs.

The learning objectives for this chapter are to enable you to do the following:

1. Define community capacity building.
2. Explain how community capacity building is proactive and empowering.
3. Identify the range of potential community assets.
4. Outline the importance of human and social capital as community assets.
5. Outline the steps involved in building community capacity.
6. Clarify the link between individual career planning and community capacity building.
7. Develop awareness of the ethical implications and limitations associated with community capacity building.

### **What Is Community Capacity Building and Why Is It Important?**

Needs-based programs typically focus on what communities lack (a deficit approach) as opposed to what they have (an assets approach). The Nutrition North Canada Program (NNC) is an example of a needs-based program. In 2012, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter, after consulting with a wide range of Aboriginal groups and communities in Canada, reported on the disproportionate vulnerability of Indigenous peoples in Canada (about 3% of the population) to food insecurity, diet-related illness, and lack of access to land and traditional foods (De Schutter, 2012). The Nutrition North Canada Program is a subsidy program run by the Government of Canada with the aim of improving access to perishable healthy foods in isolated northern communities. De Schutter noted that the NNC program was insufficiently monitored to ensure that retailers pass on appropriate subsidies to recipient communities. However, more fundamentally, he was “concerned that Nutrition North Canada was designed and is being implemented without an inclusive and transparent process that provides Northern communities with an opportunity to exercise their right to active and meaningful participation” (p. 18). He would have preferred an assets-based approach.

## Community Capacity Building as a Model for Career Development Planning

A legacy of the needs-based approach is that those receiving aid learn to define themselves and their communities by their needs and their deficiencies. They come to believe that only a state of degradation will enable them to attract resources from expert-based, top-down approaches. In the case of the NNC program, De Schutter maintains that continued and concerted measures are needed to “develop new initiatives and reform existing ones, in consultation and in real partnership with indigenous peoples with the goal toward strengthening indigenous peoples’ own self-determination and decision-making over their affairs at all levels” (De Schutter, 2012, p. 19).

Recently, policy makers and local residents have explored asset-based alternatives to community development. Asset-based approaches seek to identify and capitalize on the tangible and intangible assets available to the community, rather than on what the community and its members lack. For example, community members in Port Alberni, BC, enhanced their ability to be self-sufficient in food knowledge, collection, and preservation methods using an Indigenous approach that relied on local knowledge and resources. Here we compare the two approaches and present the benefits of community capacity building.

### The Needs-Based Approach

Most social assistance programs are needs-based, that is, they are designed to produce an outcome for a specific and urgent need. In the past, programs related to immigration, health services, social assistance, and housing relied heavily on expert-driven approaches that delivered outcomes to their “clients” or “customers.” For communities devastated by natural disasters, the most common path taken has been that of addressing the needs, deficiencies, and problems faced by the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). For example, in response to the 2011 Slave Lake wildfire that destroyed roughly one third of the community, the Canadian Red Cross stepped in to provide assistance to families, individuals, and community groups. As is the case in emergencies, the Red Cross first conducted client needs assessments and then provided services and materials to meet people’s immediate needs for safety and comfort, and to expedite their return to normal daily activities. Over the long term the Red Cross continued to work in the community to identify unmet community needs and to provide appropriate support.

This needs-driven approach uses up most of our financial and human resources today, and has led to situations where the greater the need, the more money the community receives. People become consumers of services, increasingly dependent on outside funding, rather than being producers and creators of solutions. The needs-based approach tends to create and perpetuate the cycle of dependence.

The needs-based approach further weakens the community by pulling in “experts” from outside to advise and guide rather than using and developing local

expertise. This use of outside experts is a common practice when we consider the myriad of governmental employment programs aimed at assisting people of wide and diverse backgrounds. Many employment programs, due to the legislated areas of education and training, fall under provincial control. These programs are developed in the provincial capital and representatives are sent to the far reaches of the province to implement them. This deploying of outside experts weakens relationships within the community and loosens the glue that binds the community together. This needs-based strategy perpetuates a type of “maintenance” or “survival” mindset targeted at isolated individuals, rather than developing the energies of the entire community. This type of attitude contributes to feelings of hopelessness that pervades struggling communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

### The Community Capacity Building (CCB) Approach

**Community capacity**, in contrast, is the degree to which a community can develop, implement, and sustain actions that allow it to exert greater control over its physical, social, economic, and cultural environments (Littlejohns & Thompson, 2001). Community capacity building has been conceptualized as a holistic representation of capabilities (those the community is endowed with and those the community has access to), plus the facilitators and barriers to the realization of those capabilities in the broader social environment (Littlejohns & Thompson, 2001). In comparison to needs-based models, a greater emphasis is placed on producing resolutions to collective problems as well as accessing and bolstering hidden and overlooked resources (Chaskin, 2001). CCB has been described as a grassroots process that aims to bring together and enhance existing skills and abilities of communities (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). The focus is on finding solutions to problems from existing resources and individuals, and using relationships to leverage the collective knowledge of the community to create solutions.

CCB can also be viewed as being intimately related to outcomes and government policy. As indicated by Dodd and Boyd (2000), “A community’s capacity is directly linked to its ability to act effectively to influence change, and to engage government officials and elected representatives in meaningful, collaborative policy dialogue” (p. 9). The emphasis, in this context, is very much based on outcomes and how the community performs against certain measures. Building a community’s capacity must be focused on results in order to keep community members engaged by producing concrete changes. The purpose of the CCB process should, therefore, be determined by the collective members of the community in order to create something that is meaningful for everyone involved (Coyne and Associates Limited, 2006). Community support is critical in ensuring that the CCB initiative is accepted, adhered to, and allowed to flourish. In fact, the lack of community support could be used as a measure of the effectiveness of a CCB initiative. If it is succeeding,

community members will be active and engaged — even questioning, challenging, and/or debating the issues with a focus on what should be done rather than complaining about what can't be done (Frank & Smith, 1999).

A local approach fosters better co-ordination and understanding within a community. Significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. Moreover, with continuing budget constraints and lack of funds, community capacity building is often the only viable option for some communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). As pointed out by Atkinson and Willis (2004), there are many internal (within the community) benefits to consider such as civic engagement, the strength of local networks, increased levels of trust, and pride of place. For many battered communities, where the local economy has struggled, a lack of pride and self-worth may make it very difficult to “sell yourself” effectively in a tough job market. CCB can provide tangible outcomes such as increased number of community-based work opportunities and increased competency in setting and achieving goals (Atkinson & Willis, 2004).

### What Are the Assets of the Community?

#### Individual Capacities and Resources

Community capacity building involves all of the community assets, its buildings and natural resources, and its people — its “human capital” or member capacity. To build capacity, community members need to be skilled in working collaboratively, building effective programs, and building effective coalition infrastructures. Members' attitudes and motivations are also crucial. They must: (a) value collaboration; (b) have a strong commitment to the targeted problem; (c) hold positive attitudes about the other stakeholders (e.g., viewing them as capable and needed, and valuing their diversity); and (d) have a positive perception of one's own role and competence (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001).

The community may use a mapping technique (described later in the chapter) to inventory the individual talents and skills of its members. As well, the community may gather local stories and knowledge to uncover hidden or overlooked resources (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). Through storytelling, a community may be able to detect root problems impeding its advancement, identify assets and starting points, as well as motivate and enthuse members. It is important to put an emphasis on the potential of all community members to have the ability to contribute, especially if some of them are finding themselves marginalized, such as the elderly, the disabled, and the young.

When the community of West Carleton in Ontario began to experiment with capacity building in their youth mental health promotion, they experienced difficulty,

initially, in identifying human assets because community members did not feel they had the skills and understanding to deal with the situation (Austin, 2003). This is a common theme and a challenging aspect of successful community capacity building. Acknowledging that every individual has the potential to contribute to the progress of the overall community is essential; however, many communities will experience the same fate as West Carleton in that some individual members will downplay or not acknowledge their own skills and abilities. In a community whose assets are being mobilized, marginalized people and those who feel inadequate play an integral role in the process — not as recipients of services, but as full contributors to society.

### Capacities of Associations, Organizations, and Institutions

Although the capacities of larger groups and institutions may be obvious, they are equally important when it comes to CCB. Private businesses and public institutions, such as schools, libraries, parks, police/fire stations, hospitals, and service agencies make up the most visible part of a community's fabric. Associations are less formal and less dependent on paid staff than institutions and organizations. The largest part of the asset base of any community is composed of its individuals, associations, organizations, and institutions — this is where the **social capital** and sense of community can be found (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The capacity of these larger groups to mobilize a community's resources plays a key role in determining the positive or negative change within the community.

Organizational capacity is the degree to which institutions can organize their members in a productive manner and involves having the following five fundamental aspects:

1. Leaders with good communication, conflict resolution, and administrative skills, and a strong vision.
2. Formalized procedures that clearly identify members' roles and provide clear guidelines for making decisions.
3. Well-developed internal communication systems that allows for effective information sharing and problem solving.
4. Human and financial resources, including those that are required to implement new programs and maintain daily operations.
5. An open learning orientation that seeks and responds to both internal and external feedback.

These five types of organizational capacities are necessary in order to adapt to changing contexts, overcome barriers, and promote accountability (Foster et al., 2001).

Outside organizations can play a key part in forming institutional structures and in identifying challenges that need to be addressed and/or resolved from a community

perspective. With a holistic approach such as CCB, these organizations often carry a more favourable position within the community because they have established strong connections and trust among the wider population (Torres & Barnet, 2002). Community networks and “bridges” can be built that allow for wider community involvement and participation in developing systematic policy change.

### How to Build Community Capacity

The components required to build community capacity will vary depending upon the terminology used and the approaches taken. There are, however, some common elements that appear when we look at the literature on this topic. Common themes or elements include participation, leadership, communication, skills and knowledge, resources, and sense of community (Aref, Redzuan, & Gill, 2010; Bopp, GermAnn, Bopp, Baugh Littlejohns, & Smith, 2001; Labonte & Laverack, 2001; Maclellan-Wright et al., 2007). Although these “ingredients” will mean different things to different people, they are all necessary to some degree in order to effectively build community capacity. Although we will not go into detail regarding the various elements and their definitions, it is important to keep these themes in mind as they are interwoven throughout the following steps.

#### Step 1: Map Assets

A thorough map of a community’s assets should start with an inventory of the talents, skills, and capabilities of the community’s residents. Working household by household, building by building, block by block, the capacity mapmakers will find a surprising array of individual talents and skills; but oftentimes few of these talents and skills have been mobilized for community-building purposes (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Local knowledge that may have been hidden is extremely beneficial for a community to share and learn from in order to advance its goals. When outside experts are utilized to provide solutions to community problems, the lack of local knowledge can be a barrier to obtaining trust and gaining a fuller understanding of the issues at hand. For example, upon further review, a career practitioner may gain a much better understanding as to why there may be hostility to a new governmental program. Working with the community in a collaborative manner can help produce a much more dynamic and accurate map of the community that will allow its members to move forward together. As pointed out by Atkinson and Willis (2004), it is essential to engage as much of the population as possible to identify the full community and not just the vocal members.

Creating an environment of equality is also important in achieving this goal. An environment in which every voice is given equal importance and each person’s

opinion can be heard will help to keep the community's vision for the future strong. Individuals who can participate in creating a shared vision for their community help validate that everyone involved has innate knowledge and solutions to the issues being discussed (Austin, 2003). Another benefit of community engagement is that people and organizations who normally do not work with one another are brought together for a common purpose, resulting in new relationships and a better capacity to collaborate (Ramirez, Aitkin, Galin, & Richardson, 2002).

Communities are rarely homogenous; thus the need to cast a net far and wide through various methods of engagement in order to capture as much of the capacities of the community as possible. Some methods that can be used include forums, focus groups, surveys (online and paper-based), telephone interviews, and association newsletters. This could include scheduling meetings at different times of the day/different days of the week, using different survey designs (narrative versus fact-based), or providing information in another language format. By using as many of these methods as possible, a better inventory of the community's assets is obtained. It is also important to stay current as communities change over time, sometimes abruptly. For example, a mill closing down in a single-industry town would have a high impact on the capacity assessment. By regularly assessing a community, there is a much better chance of ensuring that the assumptions and understanding of the community's capacity are accurate (Frank & Smith, 1999).

Non-economic institutions, such as churches, schools, police departments, libraries, hospitals, and parks, can be overlooked in terms of their potential in positively rebuilding their local economies. Yet they have the potential to be key players in building stronger and healthier communities depending on how they spend their money. Although the end result is not of a pure economic benefit, it is still an important part of the community map and may have greater potential in long-term planning than some immediate economic outcomes.

Examples of using non-economic institutions to help rebuild a community's economy include: libraries purchasing from local vendors; hospitals hiring neighbourhood residents; and schools employing students through entrepreneurship training programs. There are several methods that institutions can use to build the local economy: local purchasing, developing new businesses, developing human resources, hiring locally, freeing potentially productive economic space, adopting local investment strategies, mobilizing external resources, and creating alternative credit institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). For example, a school board that decides to purchase second-language textbooks from a local supplier may, in turn, provide an opportunity for a local bookstore to expand and provide more services, which then can add to the linguistic and cultural capabilities of the community.



## Step 2: Develop a Vision and a Plan

Once a community's assets and capabilities have been identified through mapping, it is important to develop a shared vision and plan that the community can act upon. Without a commonly held vision, the hard work of regenerating a community is difficult to sustain. The process of building community capacity must involve a representative mix of participants and not be limited to the visible civic leaders. It is vitally important that the voices of all community members be heard. An active approach to the management of CCB is needed in order to achieve a broader representation of the community and to eliminate the dominance of representatives from previous power-holding groups such as entrenched families or community elites (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). Past history may have had the effect of "silencing" a group and, without that group's input, the community will suffer in its quest to build capacities. If the vision or plan does not represent the majority of members, the community's problem-solving potential will not be fully realized.

This is often the case with young people who usually have very little voice or influence in the community, and lack the skills and support to participate fully. A rural community in British Columbia succeeded in promoting youth capacity and strengthening the voice of youth by matching each young person with an adult for each position on the local Youth Council, Restorative Justice Committee, and Town Council (Shepard, 2005).

In order to keep residents connected to the here and now, future planning should be tied to problem solving. Members should be committed to mobilizing capacities to deal with current problems; otherwise planning can become a future-oriented and abstract exercise (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The vision and plan should not be focused solely on short-term goals or treated as a "quick fix" to a problem, but should include long-term goals and a vision (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). Developing a shared vision, however, is not always a harmonious process and individuals may have differing opinions as to where the community should be headed.

Institutions and organizations will likely have different priorities and the existing bureaucratic structure may be cumbersome and counterproductive to the community's goals. If members can work together, however, having a unified goal can increase personal investment, creativity, hope, and control (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). There may be a tendency to align the process with community elites and/or vocal individuals to lessen conflict and friction. Such an approach may result in increased harm and distress to community members over time. The key is to ensure that leaders in the CCB process possess the ability and skills to negotiate and resolve small-group conflicts (Atkinson & Willis, 2004).

CCB should also allow adequate time and resources to develop inventories and maps that reflect the community in question. However, it should not be an infinite process that impedes the community's ability to achieve its goals. A balance needs

to be struck, one that is different for every community. CCB must be systematically addressed and developed. Community member fatigue, or burn-out, is another consideration to take into account when developing a shared vision and plan (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). Some community members may be over-involved as far as time and energy commitments or may be taking the place of other, more suitable members.

### Step 3: Leverage Outside Resources to Support Local Development

Once a community's assets and resources have been identified and a shared vision and plan have been developed, the community can seek outside alliances, partnerships, and networks to provide additional assets and resources to create change. A community needs to feel engaged and capable before outside resources can be put to good use; therefore, enlisting outside resources should occur only after all the community's capacities have been thoroughly inventoried and a broad representative group of citizens have begun to solve problems together (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). By leveraging outside resources after these steps have been taken, communities are often left with better employment and economic opportunities.

### Step 4: Evaluate

Evaluation is an important step to ensure that the community has been able to meet its goals in an efficient and useful manner. Part of this process involves establishing measurements that will result in tangible results that the community can later use to evaluate themselves. Some of the ways in which capacity can be measured include stronger community relationships, new and/or increased community-based opportunities, enhanced communication among members, increased competency in communal goal setting, enhanced respect for limited resources, skilled leadership, and an increased ability to handle stressors (Frank & Smith, 1999). Unfortunately, this step is often neglected or overlooked due to lack of resources and/or support, resistance in the community, or a lack of understanding. However, every CCB initiative should include evaluation and should aim to answer 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? (Frank & Smith, 1999).

Answering these throughout the CCB process will ultimately allow for the community to make adjustments as needed.

## Using the CCB Framework for Career Development

The community capacity building model can be applied to career development planning and yield many of the same benefits. Increasingly, career development professionals are asked to identify strategic community partnerships in order to develop programs that make the most of limited community resources.

### CCB — A Canadian Perspective

CCB has been incorporated into the Canadian career development landscape from work influenced by the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (S&Gs). The S&Gs' community capacity building competencies are linked to maximizing community resources, connecting clients with those resources, and better co-ordinating services for clients within the community (National Steering Committee, 2004).

The idea for linking individual career planning to community capacity building was first proposed for those living in rural environments or in developing nations (Aisensen, Bezanson, Frank, & Reardon, 2002). Researchers have suggested that counsellors in rural and remote communities focus on community sustainability and economic growth as part of individual career development in order to be relevant and effective. In support of this idea, Aisensen and colleagues provided several examples of innovative career-community development projects in which career guidance specialists, teachers, and experts in economic development collaborated to support young people in unpredictable economies. Aisensen and colleagues suggested that such an integrative approach helps address relationships between (a) personal development and employability, and (b) the sustainability and vitality of a community. It is essentially a reciprocal process, whereby the community benefits when its members benefit and vice versa.

The traditional needs-based model requires the career practitioner to “fix” the client’s problem of not knowing what career to pursue. The career practitioner becomes an “expert” who is there to give direction and advice.

### Community Capacity Building and Career Development

by Waylon Greggain

Paulo Freire once wrote, “...to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (Freire, 1970, p. 85). Communities and parents hold a wealth of expertise in life choices and career-path decision making. However, parents and community members are often excluded from the formal career development process because there are no mechanisms for involving them. Community capacity building is about including parents and community members in the dialogue with youth and the process for career development.

As we have seen, the use of an expert can have a negative effect on the ability of the group or an individual to advance collective and individual goals. For example, the career practitioner expert may be mistrusted due to past experiences with other outsiders or be out of touch with local knowledge and events. An asset-based strategy, on the other hand, offers a fresh point of view to assess career choice and intervene for career facilitation purposes (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003).

Viewing the receiver of career development services as having inherent or accumulated assets changes the lens through which assistance is offered. Using an **asset-based approach** means moving away from a focus on the expert knowledge and skills of the career practitioner to the skills and abilities of the client. An asset-based approach suggests that helping can be a pluralistic effort where career development becomes a process of facilitation (Savickas, 1997). All of these efforts increase the likelihood of the community's individual members to achieve meaningful goals of their own.

### **Promoting Community Partnership to Increase Self-Sufficiency and Productivity**

Professionals in the career development field must initiate and maintain effective relationships with key community partners. Doing so serves to maximize community resources, co-ordinate services for clients better, and help bring the community together. Career development practitioners must attend regular community gatherings, visit with people new to the community, and share information openly. Other options include seeking out natural helpers, establishing advisory groups, and maintaining relationships with past clients (National Steering Committee 2004). It is vitally important for career practitioners to collaborate with community partners to assess a client's need for community service in areas like training, education, careers/employment, family support, and finances. In addition to gathering knowledge by formal methods, it also involves informal methods such as narrative accounts from community members. It is the quality of connections between individuals and their community that will help develop a sustainable career development landscape.

### **Working With the Community to Develop a Vision**

The career practitioner should take a key role in helping a community develop its capacity building plan and vision. It is the career practitioner's job to help the community create a common understanding of the preferred vision. Career development workers must participate in a wide array of community organizations and businesses. In doing so, they will help to define parameters for working together by establishing roles and responsibilities. It is also necessary to conduct interviews with a variety of community members in order to facilitate discussions and establish vision statements (National Steering Committee, 2004). This step is especially true

of small, rural, or remote communities that have perceived limited resources. Career practitioners should help the community and individuals identify employment and lifestyle alternatives through such mechanisms as building an adaptable workforce, increasing employability and basic skill levels, and improving life and leadership skills.

### **Working With the Community to Assess and Implement Action Plans**

The final two crucial steps in community capacity building that career practitioners can help with are the implementation and evaluation of action plans. Career practitioners can assist in establishing an action plan, promoting an environment that encourages sharing, and helping individuals in defining their roles. An evaluation process is necessary as it encourages accountability and helps to determine what is working and what is not. Career practitioners can help the community to establish evaluative criteria and work with the community to collect and analyze data. One must remember that addressing economic, social, educational, and employment goals is the community's work. Career development practitioners provide support by acting as a resource — they are not meant to take the lead on such activities (National Steering Committee, 2004).

#### *Case Study: Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training Community Capacity Building Project*

Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training was created in 1991 to meet the unique training and employment needs of Aboriginal peoples in Toronto. The project helps to provide the Greater Toronto Area's Aboriginal community with training initiatives and employment services (Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, 2002). Long-term goals for this community were incorporated into the design and implementation at the outset of the Community Capacity Building Project. Miziwe Biik Board and staff were invited to think how they might fit into the Aboriginal community in the future and were asked to consider how this community might become more self-sustaining. Members were able to identify and consider in more detail some of their inherent skills, abilities, and assets as well as some of the inherent gaps in reaching future goals.

The agency undertook a mapping exercise of existing programs and services available to its clientele, which was meant to serve not as an evaluation of the agency but rather as a snapshot of the agency from the perspective of clients and community members (Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, 2002). The agency identified some of the perceived gaps in services and program delivery facing their community. Other methods for finding available

community assets included surveys, various focus groups, and meetings with Elders, employers, management, employment counsellors, and clients. The agency was then able to gather more knowledge of their assets, existing and potential, for their community. One such example involves the Elders and their ability to act as mentors to young Aboriginal people.

One participant in the Elders' focus group spoke extensively about the benefits of having mentors in schools. Elders pointed out that they could be an example to youth by speaking on panels about their own experiences of employment. They said they saw a role for themselves in talking with young people and building connections with the younger generations. Such a link would allow inexperienced, younger people to see how Elders have travelled their own career paths. There is no direct economic benefit to such a mentoring relationship, but the exchange may help to increase social capital as well as highlight the individual capacities needed to achieve the community's goals.

Elders who took part in the research stressed that emotional wellness, self-confidence, and assertiveness are necessary components to improving the status of the Aboriginal workforce. These components, however, are capacities that require efforts beyond a career practitioner-client relationship. These capacities need to be developed through a community capacity building lens. This project was an example of shifting from a deficit (needs-based) approach to an asset-based one that had a broader goal and included all of the community members. The project provided a shift in vision from that of a small agency offering standard employment services (e.g., counselling and basic training) to an agency with a much broader perspective on how to address the employment needs of Aboriginal people.

## Ethical Implications and Limitations

CCB is an organic process that can differ according to the community. We have outlined some key components to using CCB effectively to assist the community in achieving its goals. However, there are some limitations. For example, there are not always local solutions to local problems, regardless of the strength of a community's capacity. Some problems require changes in policies, political approaches, or resource allocations at a provincial or national level (Chaskin, 2001). Education and training, and in many cases employment support programs, are largely dictated by provincial bodies. These "outside" entities can have a severe disconnect to other areas of the province.

Canada is becoming more and more urbanized, with a few key areas gaining the benefit of the growth. In the same vein, many of the decision-making authorities are centralized in these large urban areas. There is a tendency to develop programming that works well for one region (such as urban), but does not work well for another (such as northern or rural communities). When these structures are put into place in

**SPOTLIGHT: THE MEDICAL CAREERS EXPLORATION PROGRAM (MCEP)**

by Frank Deer

The Medical Careers Exploration Program (MCEP), a partnership in Winnipeg between Pan Am Clinic and Children of the Earth School, created a four-year secondary program for Aboriginal students in 2007. The program encourages students to consider entering the medical field.

Every year, a cohort of 12 students is selected to learn core academic competencies related to health. Through internship experiences, they also gain exposure to a variety of areas in health care (MRI, X-ray, physiotherapy, research, and the surgical centre).

The goals are:

- in grade 9, to demystify health care professions;
- to provide a progressive curriculum commensurate with the requirements of the health care sector;
- to provide students the opportunity to participate in varied internship experiences between grades 10–12;
- to foster interest to pursue postsecondary study in health education.

A 2011 study revealed that all the students who took part in this program graduated and that they were interested in pursuing a health-related career.

Read more at <<https://www.winnipegssd.ca/schools/childrenoftheearth/programs/medical-careers-exploration/pages/default.aspx>>.

a systematic and province-wide manner, it becomes difficult for communities outside of certain areas to effectively “plug into” programs.

Another important consideration is the health of the community networks. An ill-conceived or poorly executed CCB strategy could have disastrous effects and could damage the social networks and community relationships that previously existed (Atkinson & Willis, 2004). There may be a strong aversion to participating in any further CCB projects, or any project that may be perceived as being attached to the previous failure. When conducting an inventory or community map, these negative experiences with prior projects can become crystallized into major concerns. Convincing community members that the issues have been addressed and will not interfere with current or future CCB projects may be necessary to regain the community’s trust.

Homogeneity, or the lack thereof, could affect CCB’s success as well. Different perspectives and approaches usually result in more creative outcomes and allow a

community to progress; however, defining “community” can sometimes be difficult, especially when there are many differing and conflicting views. The views may be so conflicting as to cause harm or distress to other community members and impair their ability to work as a team and reach their goals. Without the majority of members agreeing upon what to do and where they are headed, building community capacity becomes very difficult.

As with any program that involves human subjects, there are many ethical considerations around issues such as privacy, consent, and transparency. A flawed process may undermine results and cause further conflict within the community. For example, according to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychology (2000), the Canadian Psychological Association identified ethical conduct when working with marginalized groups as “seeking an independent and adequate ethical review of human rights issues and protections for any research involving members of vulnerable groups, including persons of diminished capacity to give informed consent, before making a decision to proceed” (p. 12). Issues that may arise include privacy and/or consent of the individual or organization, and transparency in the process. The CCB process may be adversely affected if an individual or an organization feels that privacy has been violated or consent not obtained. Not only is the desired goal(s) of the community in danger of not being realized, but there may be lasting effects that will impede the development of any new initiatives.

## Conclusion

CCB is a process that allows communities to set and achieve goals that move the entire community forward. Career practitioners can use this approach to assist individuals with the skills, abilities, and capacities that allow them to gain autonomy and interact with the community at large in a more productive manner. Doing so allows the networks and partnerships of a community to become better intertwined. If managed and nurtured properly, this environment benefits both the individual and the community. As career practitioners who adopt a CCB perspective, we engage ourselves in a more meaningful learning process and either directly or indirectly pass along this valuable information to our clients. By choosing to focus on the capacities of the community and therefore the individual, career practitioners can help to reorient clients to a more hopeful and empowered vision of themselves and the future.

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## Glossary

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**Asset-based approach** involves identifying and tapping all of the potential assets in a neighborhood or community. An asset-based approach to community level planning encourages a shift from “needs” and “problems” toward “assets” and “opportunities” for a sustained livelihood.

**Community capacity** “is the interaction of human, organizational, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective

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problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of association among them and between them and the broader systems of which the community is a part” (Chaskin, 1999, p. 7).

**Community capacity building** is an approach to strengthening the skills and abilities of people and groups to empower them to contribute effectively in the development of their communities.

**Social capital** “refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions ... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society — it is the glue that holds them together” (The World Bank, 1999).

## Discussion and Activities

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### *Discussion*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Is community capacity building distinct from community activity generally?
2. What steps would you take to identify where relationships exist naturally in the community?
3. Imagine that you are working in the community to develop an Aboriginal Education Centre. Brainstorm the key features of the program (e.g., to foster Aboriginal identity) and proposed outcomes (e.g., increased self-esteem).

#### Personal Reflection

Reflect on the following key competencies identified as necessary for engaging in community capacity building. What are areas of strengths? What are areas that you need to develop? These may include:

- analysis of community perspectives,
- analysis of community maps
- able to elicit “thick” descriptions,
- use of creative and empowering language,
- active listening,
- reflection and introspection,
- respect for differences,
- storytelling,
- strategic questioning,
- teamwork,

- tolerance and respect for others.

### Career Practitioner Role

1. According to the S&Gs what skills are required to become specialized in community capacity building?
2. Which of these skills do you see as the most challenging?
3. Where would you obtain further training in this area?

### Activities

1. Community capacity building is composed of three main types of activity:
  - (a) Developing skills — learning and training opportunities for individuals and groups, and sharing through networks and mutual support, to develop skills, knowledge, and confidence.
  - (b) Developing structures — developing the organizational structures and strengths of community groups, communities of interest, and networks.
  - (c) Developing support — developing the availability of practical support to enable the development of skills and structures.

Thinking about a community you live in, look for and describe specific examples of those three activities.

One example of developing skill is seen in the work of the Alberta Ministry of Aboriginal Relations to develop a Community Economic Development Toolkit as a resource for First Nation staff and decision makers, and others interested in promoting Aboriginal community economic development. As a result of the toolkit, in collaboration with Keyano College, courses in Aboriginal economic development were created.

2. The Community Futures Network in British Columbia works with rural communities to assist in their socioeconomic development. As described on its website, “Community Futures focus on building local capacity as a means of facilitating growth from within communities. In addition to assisting with business development, Community Futures practice and promote community Economic Development and Community Economic Adjustment Initiatives. In carrying out these roles, Community Futures act as facilitators, bringing together diverse groups to develop a locally driven vision for their future and integrate community resources into a long-term sustainable strategy.” (Retrieved from <http://www.communityfutures.ca/>.) Use the website to answer the following:
  - (a) What types of programs are available through Community Futures?
  - (b) Provide an example of one successful program funded in any province by Community Futures Network of Canada.

## Resources and Readings

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### Resources

#### Websites and Videos

- Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD), School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University <<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>>.  
The Community Toolbox — practical resources <<http://ctb.ku.edu>>.  
Vital Signs, Community Foundations of Canada <<http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/en/home>>.

### Supplementary Readings

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