Community Capacity Building

Supporting Military Service Members and Families

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Department of Human Development and Family Science

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

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A Resource Manual for Military and Family Program Professionals

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Preface

Community Capacity Building (CCB): Supporting Military Service Members and Families

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Purpose of the Community Capacity Building (CCB) Online Education Program

Both military and civilian program professionals are showing a great deal of interest in mobilizing communities to support individuals and families, because it is well-recognized that the social environments in which people live add to or detract from their quality of life. Yet, many of these professionals are less sure about how to make it happen. *Community Capacity Building: Supporting Military Service Members and Families* is an online education program and training specifically designed for professionals in the military and civilian worlds who focus on supporting military service members and their families. This approach emphasizes the importance of informal networks in people's lives (friends, neighbors, work associates) and the need for connections between those informal networks and the formal systems (agencies and organizations) in achieving desired results for military service members and their families. Community capacity is based on the sense of *shared responsibility* (the investment people have in the well-being of others in their community) and *collective competence* (individuals coming together to make positive changes).

Goals of the Education Program

The goal of this training program is to help human service professionals think about, plan, and develop programs for individuals, families, and communities in a way that promotes community capacity building. This Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach offers a way to think about how communities can support military service members and their families. CCB also provides program professionals with information on how to mobilize communities and more effectively plan for and develop programs. The education program itself provides a *set of principles* and *practices* that can mobilize support toward measurable results that improve lives. Both the *principles* and the *practices* in the Community Capacity Building approach have broad application to diverse families, communities, and situations. For example, the principles and practices of effective collaboration are not specific to a particular problem or type of community. And, although formal systems vary, all communities have some formal systems available.

Description of the Education Program

The Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach is based on the idea that community action creates change. A results-focused planning model is provided for use at the local, state, regional, and national levels. This course begins with three core modules that all training participants need to complete:

1. *Community Action and Change*
   This module explains the Community Capacity Building approach as a foundation for understanding how positive change can happen in your community and highlights the value of community members working together.

2. *Becoming a Community Capacity Building Organization*
   This module describes what a community capacity building organization looks like and how members of an organization can strengthen the sense of shared responsibility and collective competence within their own organization. Increasing capacity from within helps organizations to more effectively build capacity in the larger community. To start the conversation about the functioning of teams, the chapter discusses and provides an assessment tool that evaluates team functioning and helps identify potential hurdles an organization may face.

3. *Results-focused Planning*
   This module promotes a planning process that is focused on achieving results. It describes four steps in the Results-Focused Planning (RFP) process: 1) Prioritize issues and challenges, 2) Define desired results, 3) Develop an action plan, and 4) Orchestrate the action plan. A *Results-Focused Planning* worksheet is included to guide your team in completing a plan for capacity building in your community.

The first three modules lay out a foundation for the next six modules. These six supporting modules elaborate on and provide in-depth training on activities related to community action and change and results-focused planning:

4. *Community Assessment*
   This module explains how a community assessment is used as an important part of the capacity building process. Community assessments help to understand the current conditions in a community, the priority needs, and community assets that could be mobilized to achieve desired results. The training provides techniques for collecting information on community characteristics, needs, and assets and also explains how to communicate your assessment findings with others to encourage support of your efforts and to develop more effective programs.

5. *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration*
   This module examines the role of formal systems in community capacity building and the importance of collaboration between formal systems. It describes the principles that contribute to successful collaborations and includes tools to assess collaborative functioning.

6. *Mobilizing Informal Networks*
   This module highlights the role of informal community networks as active partners in capacity building. It discusses informal networks, how organizations can mobilize and partner with these networks, and ways to measure the functioning of those networks in a community.

7. *Engaging Military Leaders*
   This module discusses the role of military leaders in promoting the well-being of service members and their families and provides strategies you can use to form partnerships with leaders for capacity building. It discusses the characteristics of involved military leaders (in various capacities) and suggests ways to involve and engage leaders in community efforts to reach desired results.

8. *Monitoring Results and Activities*
   This module describes monitoring of both program implementation and program outcomes to determine if progress is being made toward desired results. It provides information and techniques to help program professionals monitor the performance of partners, planning team members, and also explains how to monitor progress towards desired results. It elaborates on how to communicate your findings in ways to reinforce community support of your efforts.

9. *Sustaining Desired Results*
   This module outlines factors that have been found to be effective in sustaining the results of a community program. These factors provide a guide for maintaining the benefits to military service members and their families in your community. It includes an assessment tool to evaluate a program's sustainability and to guide the development of a sustainability plan.

Purpose and Focus of the Resource Manual and Chapters

In addition to the online training modules, there are resource chapters that correspond with each module. These chapters provide more information on CCB principles and provide recommendations for additional resources that individuals and organizations may want to access. It's intended that trainees who take part in this educational program start with the online modules and refer to the accompanying chapters in the resource manual for additional information. These resource chapters do not mirror the training modules but rather supplement and enhance the training module content.

History of the CCB Approach

The Community Capacity Building approach offers a way to understand community capacity, mobilize communities to enact change, and, ultimately, enhance the well-being of individuals and families. In 2001, this approach was used to develop a training manual for family support professionals that included practical on-the-ground activities using their understanding of the CCB concepts.[*] The manual outlined in detail how to plan activities that target specific results for military service members and their families, and that promote shared responsibility and collective competence.

Since then, several studies have looked at the usefulness of applying the Community Capacity Building approach.[†] One of the many ways it has been used is by a group of university professionals who examined ways to better prepare communities for natural or human-caused disasters.[1] They were especially concerned with ways to support vulnerable populations. The CCB approach was invoked because it advocates the use of informal networks for supporting vulnerable individuals and families, building resilience, and decreasing vulnerability. Another study using a sample of residents in Virginia looked at sense of community and community engagement and how those affected the quality of life among adults.

Developers of the Education Program and Resource Manual

The faculty and scientists at The University of Georgia (UGA) and at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) developed this MC&FP Community Capacity Building (CCB) education program. The team at UGA's Family and Community Resilience Laboratory (Department of Human Development and Family Science) is: Amy Laura Arnold, Ph.D., Neila Grimsley, M.P.H, Meghan Dove, Ph.D., Deepu George, M.S., Megan McCoy, M.S., James L. Ford, Ph.D., Mallory Lucier-Greer, Ph.D., Megan Oed, M.S., D. Bruce Ross, M.S., Rachel Hagues, Ph.D., and Principal Investigator, Jay A. Mancini, Ph.D. The team at UNC's School of Social Work is: Denise Lindley, M.S.W., Danielle Swick, Ph.D., Jodi Flick, M.S.W., Tamara Norris, and Principal Investigator, Gary L. Bowen, Ph.D.

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[*] This manual, focused on the Community Capacity Building approach, was used with family support program professionals in the U.S. Air Force.

[†] In 2003, researchers analyzed Air Force Community Needs Survey data to see how outcomes for families related to the degree of unit support and sense of community. Earlier field work at several Air Force bases examined how psychological sense of community related to the degree that military members were engaged in their community.

Reference

[1] Kiefer, J. J., Mancini, J. A., Morrow, B. H., Gladwin, H., & Stewart, T. A. (2008). *Providing access to resilience-enhancing technologies for disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations* (The PARET Report). Retrieved from ORAU, Community and Regional Resilience Initiative website: https://orau.org/university-partnerships/files/The-PARET-Report.pdf

1. Community Action and Change

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Summary

The Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach explains how community action creates change. Its primary goal is to enhance the ability of people to take care of each other and their community in good times and in bad. Community capacity, therefore, is based on the strength of informal networks and formal systems (e.g., organizations and agencies), and how well they work together to achieve desired results and positive change. Consequently, community capacity reflects "the extent to which community members (a) demonstrate a sense of shared responsibility for the general welfare of the community and (b) demonstrate collective competence to address community needs."

To effectively impact families and community members, communities must be viewed as positive influences that enact change. Communities are physical and social infrastructures where built environments and social relationships help community members stay connected with each other. More specifically, communities are places (the physical settings), targets (the shared norms and beliefs), and forces (the energy and relationships the community uses to mobilize support) for change. Communities are a collective source of power and influence that mobilize community members to achieve desired results.

The Community Capacity Building approach starts with a sense of shared responsibility and a common sentiment that "it is not enough for me to be doing well, but others should also be doing well also." Collective competence puts shared responsibility to work by pooling and empowering the strengths, resources, and skills of community members to take action. People who belong to informal networks and formal systems in the community enact change by sharing responsibility and putting their combined competences to work. When community members have an unmet need they typically turn to their informal network of friends, neighbors, coworkers, or extended family members. If their informal network is unable to solve the problem, they may then turn to formal systems (e.g., agencies and organizations) for help. All of these efforts are focused on moving toward desired results, or the positive changes that community members agree upon.

Community capacity building requires that community members be active in the welfare of their community and come together to solve problems. More simply stated, achieving positive results is all about creating and strengthening relationships. When formal systems identify, develop, and partner with informal networks, it increases the odds that communities achieve desired results.

Welcome to Community Capacity Building

This **Community Capacity Building approach** explains how community action and interaction creates change.[1] The approach helps family program professionals understand communities and guide community members' actions. Community capacity building starts when members share responsibility not only for their own well-being, but for that of the larger community. This sense of shared responsibility is then translated into action when community members demonstrate collective competence as they combine their skills and resources. This approach is the basis for the practical steps outlined in the later modules.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ Communities and how they function
- ✓ The roles of communities
- ✓ The Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach
- ✓ Ways to get started and make the Community Capacity Building approach work

What is a Community?

The word **community** refers to a group of people who share common factors. The word can be described and understood in many ways, and each way has its merits. Broadly, communities can be defined by the pre-existing infrastructures within a community. A community is made up of physical infrastructures and social infrastructures. These are the physical places and social spaces where people connect and interact with each other. As such, these provide the context for both a community's interactions and transactions.[1]

The **physical infrastructure** of a community is primarily the built, geographic areas where families reside.[1] Examples of elements that make up the physical infrastructure include states, districts, counties, cities, and regions. It also includes the built environments (e.g., parks and neighborhoods) that encourage members of the community to come together, spend time together, and build relationships. The **social infrastructure** of a community is primarily composed of people and the interactions that transpire between them. It refers to the shared contact patterns that community members have that enable them to come together and build relationships.

Ways people connect

Sometimes the community fosters interactions based on additional shared aspects.[2,3] For example, a community of people may connect and interact because of:

Shared proximity: People connect and interact with each other because they live together, work together, and/or share space together. People may make good friends at work, places of worship, or other venues like the local gym because they interact with each other on a frequent basis.

Shared characteristics: When people share attributes such as language, customs, class, ethnicity, age, and employment, which increases their connections and interactions.

Shared interests and experiences: For example, people may share an interest about a sport or game and come together because of that interest. As for experiences, those shared by military families could include aspects of military life like transitions or deployments.

Shared concerns and values: When people want to address a common concern they will often connect and interact with one another. In the event of a natural disaster, several members and surrounding communities may share concern and come together to help the affected area recover. People also share values attached to certain beliefs. For example, people come together for heart walks, marathons for breast cancer awareness, and other activities to support causes they believe in and are passionate about. Their common commitment to these issues is evidenced by their willingness to volunteer their time, money, and skills to help others.

The Roles of Community

Within any given community, a range of relationships and networks exist. The physical and social infrastructures are the venues through which people connect, interact, and build relationships with each other. The relationships people build and the places they live play a role in helping communities achieve change. The Community Capacity Building approach is based on the premise that connections between people transform communities and drive change.

From a Community Capacity Building perspective, communities are places (the physical settings), targets (the shared norms and beliefs), and forces (the energy and relationships the community uses to mobilize support) for change.[4,5] Family program professionals must think about how the physical setting affects relationships, understand community norms and beliefs, and know how relationships with other people and agencies can be mobilized to provide support that leads to change.

First, a community is a **place** where change occurs. This is very similar to the physical infrastructure described earlier. Defining community as a place identifies the physical boundaries. Physical boundaries can determine eligibility for resources from agencies and local groups. Both the geography and the physical setting have significant influence on people and the way they live. Natural geographic features, like an ocean, a river, or the type of climate offer both assets and limitations to a community. The physical settings (e.g., roads, structures, parks, sidewalks, lighting) can encourage or discourage social interaction. For example, a neighborhood with sidewalks that lead to a park encourages people to get out and interact. This can help create relationships and connections to other people in the community.

Second, a community is a **target** for prevention and intervention activities. The Community Capacity Building approach takes the view that the community norms, beliefs, and expectations about a specific issue are the leverage points for change and a target for community efforts. Any effort to create change (whether it is supporting military spouses, addressing childhood obesity, or facilitating military youth academic success) needs to start by assessing the attitudes and beliefs of community members. This is a good indicator of the community's readiness to change.

Third, communities are a **force** for change, or a collective source of power and influence. The Community Capacity Building approach mobilizes community members to be active and uses the energy and connections of social relationships to move communities closer to achieving their desired results. Therefore, physical settings, social relationships, and the various ways members connect and interact with each other all contribute to the ability of the community to enact change.

The Community Capacity Building Approach

The Community Capacity Building approach is a clear, direct way to view communities and guide community action and change. Increasing community capacity requires that community members be active in the welfare of their community (*shared responsibility*) and come together to solve problems (*collective competence*). There are two ways support is provided to individuals and families in a community — through *informal networks* and *formal systems*. All four of these elements emphasize coming together to take action that produces observable *desired results*.
Figure 1.1 (below) provides a visual representation of the five elements of the Community Capacity Building approach and how they connect and work together.

Figure 1.1: The Five Elements of the Community Capacity Building Approach

Community capacity: Shared responsibility and collective competence

Community capacity is defined as the ability of any community to "(a) demonstrate a sense of *shared responsibility* for the general welfare of the community and its members and (b) demonstrate *collective competence* in taking advantage of opportunities for addressing community needs and confronting situations threatening the safety and well-being of community members." [1]

As mentioned previously, **shared responsibility** refers to the willingness of community members to come together to take care of each other. It is the feeling of investment community members have for one another. It speaks to the larger sentiment of "it's not good enough for me to be doing well, but others in the community should be doing well also." Shared responsibility occurs when people recognize the common issues that are affecting others' lives and are willing to take responsibility and change the situation.

This idea of shared responsibility is fundamental to the Community Capacity Building approach. It speaks to the larger idea that we are all in this together and moving forward is strengthened by "our collective commitment and investment."

Collective competence refers to the collective skills, abilities, and talents of community members that can be combined and applied to help a community move forward. Collective competence goes beyond a shared sentiment or a commitment to action. It is pivoted on actual changes taking place in the community as a result of deliberate action from its members. In a community, no one person has the ability to accomplish all needed changes. However, if people come together and combine their skills, talents, and gifts, a community can be collectively competent to influence the well-being of its members. For example, imagine community members that share concern for the homeless in their community. Members can then come together to volunteer their time, share their expertise, and provide resources to make a positive impact. It would be difficult for one person to accomplish, but a lot easier for a group of residents to pool their strengths and address this common need.

Informal networks and formal systems

Networks within any community consist of informal relationships and formal organizations in the community. These networks and systems are assets. The Community Capacity Building approach focuses on mobilizing networks and strengthening systems to achieve results.

Informal networks and formal systems drive the Community Capacity Building process. The amount of community capacity then is based on the strength of informal networks and the formal systems in the community as well as how effectively they work together. When community members have a need that they cannot meet on their own, they may turn first to the people who are closest to them – friends, neighbors, co-workers, and extended family (or informal networks).

If informal networks are unable to solve the problem, they may then turn to formal systems for help. This layering of systems in a community works best to meet the needs of individuals and families. Thus, strong, healthy, networks and systems buffer and protect community members when they face challenges.

Informal networks consist of relationships such as those with friends, neighbors, work colleagues, extended family members, and informal groups. These relationships are often characterized by mutual exchanges, trust, and responsibility. Typically, individuals have a great deal of choice in developing and maintaining the relationships in their informal networks. These relationships are maintained by face-to-face interactions or through letters, telephone, and electronic media. The relationships and connections in informal networks serve multiple functions. They provide:

- Emotional support - encouragement, celebration, help in dealing with despair and worry
- Practical help - assistance in accomplishing tasks
- Information - help in making better decisions
- Companionship - spending time together, having fun, developing a context for support
- Validation - help to feel worthy, competent, and hopeful[6]

Informal networks provide most of the day-to-day support in people's lives. Most individuals are part of multiple informal networks. Relatively few people are entirely isolated from any network. So in many respects, achieving positive results for military service members and their families is all about creating and strengthening informal relationships around them.

Formal systems are the public and private agencies and organizations that provide services and support to communities. For example, organizations that make up formal systems include hospitals, law enforcement, social services, businesses, and government. Formal systems typically have paid personnel as staff, organization charts, specific service goals or mission statements, and well defined roles and responsibilities.

Formal systems must be careful not to over-function and assume responsibility for tasks that informal networks can perform. When a formal system over-functions, it grows at the expense of informal networks. An over-functioning formal system can actually keep people from feeling responsible for meeting each other's needs or from developing the relationships that form the basis of informal support networks.

The success of a formal system is based in part on how well it supports the informal networks in the community and consequently how well those informal networks function as a result of that support. When there is an effort to create change in a community, formal systems provide the specialized expertise that complements the capacity, power, and energy found in informal networks. For more information on mobilizing informal networks, refer to *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6)

The relationships and connections in a community are its strength to enact change. They are also the leverage point for change. Consequently, a primary function of formal systems is to enhance informal networks.[7] Formal systems must examine the functioning of local informal networks to determine what they can do to strengthen these networks. This is a critical element of the Community Capacity Building approach. Informal networks are the focus of action, because that is where community members develop relationships. Formal systems and informal networks can be aligned and strengthened through systematic attention and effort.

In some cases, a formal system may need to assume greater leadership and involvement, such as after a natural disaster has occurred. However, in most cases, it is informal networks that need to be activated. For example, military families are accustomed to dealing with the stresses of change and transition. Therefore, other military family members who have experienced similar circumstances may be more of an asset and be more effective than formal organizations that may be less familiar and distanced from military life.

Here are some assumptions about networks, relationships, and capacity building:

- All communities already possess the raw material necessary for support in the form of people, groups, and organizations.
- Most individuals are part of multiple informal networks, and these connections are important sources of support and powerful allies for change.
- When community members work together, their collective efforts increase the odds that they will achieve their desired results.
- Collective efforts generate both material and social resources, by providing opportunities for community members to share information and develop relationships that lead to sharing resources and social support among community members.

Desired results: For individuals, families, and communities

Effective community capacity building is dependent on clearly identifying **desired results.** These results are the shared outcomes or changes that people in a community value and want to work towards. Examples of desired results include improved health and higher levels of well-being, safety, sense of community, and family stability. However, "improved health" and "higher levels of well-being" can mean a lot of things for different people. Program professionals should help their agency and the communities clearly define their specific desired result or results. Clearly defined results help program professionals and community members know if they are closer to where

Effective community capacity building is dependent on clearly identifying desired results.

they hope to be. And if they are not where they hope to be, a clearly defined result can help them start thinking about ways to get back on track. When professionals are intentional and plan for *results*—rather than make themselves busy with *activities*—their efforts are more effective and are more easily monitored or evaluated.[1]

Desired results are often not defined specifically enough. For example, an organization might decide they want "good health-care," but the result they may actually want is for a person to regain good health and return to employment after an injury. It is not enough to say "good schools" as a desired result. Achieving the desired results depends on identifying specific results, such as higher graduation rates or more students being accepted to college. Every desired result therefore must be clear, precise, and measurable. The Community Capacity Building approach and its focus on "desired community results" is action-oriented rather than merely being a positive sentiment. The action and interaction of others, often between informal networks and formal systems, is what leads to desired results and improves the lives of military service members and families.

When communities can come together and express shared responsibility and collective competence through informal networks and formal systems, their ability to achieve desired results increases. As family program professionals begin to work with their communities towards successful initiatives for military families, they should be aware of some assumptions of this approach:

- People express concern for their community and are willing to work to address not only their own well-being, but also well-being of others.
- Community Capacity Building is action-driven rather than merely being a positive sentiment. In other words, the approach is powerful and successful when the shared positive sentiments and concerns members have for each other are translated to concrete actions.
- People seize opportunities for action and change instead of being passive and inactive about a situation.
- Every community has varying degrees of capacity, rather than it being simply present or absent.

Making it Work: How to Use the Community Capacity Building Approach

The Community Capacity Building approach provides a clear understanding of how communities can be viewed and mobilized to take action. It's important to understand how informal networks and formal systems interact to create *community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence).* When formal systems are able to mobilize informal networks and are able to form diverse partnerships with the larger community, the odds of achieving specified desired results are increased. With this knowledge, program professionals can begin to work with and for the community through use of a Community Capacity Building approach.

Below are a few suggestions and questions a planning team may choose to use to prompt conversation and discussion about using the community capacity building approach:

Getting started

Think about the words or phrases that most accurately describe the community being served. Do these words tend to be positive and hopeful? Are they strengths-based? Or are they negative and of some concern? Every community has both positive and negative aspects. For those positive descriptions listed, try and build on and improve those strengths. For those things that are not so positive, it's also important to realize the things that must be changed.

Shared responsibility at work: A good starting point for family program professionals interested in implementing the Community Capacity Building approach is to identify others who are already sharing responsibility for the community and displaying investment in its well-being. If the goal is to help military service members and families, find out who already reaches out to military members and their families. Once there is knowledge of the invested and active individuals and groups in the community, program professionals can begin to connect those groups together and build connections with and between them.

Consider asking the planning team (or others in the community):

- How much do community members and organizations share responsibility for issues that face military service members and families? What about people in the civilian community?
- Right now, who is showing they are invested in the community? Are there individuals that stand out? Groups of people?
- What are they doing to show this investment?
    - Are there people putting up yellow (welcome home to the troops) ribbons? Are their individuals or groups stopping by to welcome new families to the community? Perhaps dropping off welcome baskets with maps, gift certificates, or important telephone contact numbers?
- How can we strengthen the community's investment and commitment?

Collective competence at work: Collective competence often starts with the question "Who knows how to do what?" So identify the people with the skills, talents, and expertise that can help execute the changes needed in the community. Determine how these skills and resources can help and find ways to connect these people and get them to work together. When people begin to work together, they are likely to learn from each other, support each other in their common effort, and take action to better the community.

Consider asking the planning team (or others in the community):

- What skills, resources, or talents do we need to get the job done?
- Who knows how to do those things? Or who could help put us in contact with someone who does?
- What are the various ways we could put these skills and resources to work?
- Are these folks interested in sharing what they know? For example, would they be willing to conduct workshops to share their knowledge and skills with others in the community?
- What is the best way to connect with these people?

Informal networks at work: The more program professionals understand what makes informal networks come together, the easier it will be for them to help grow stronger networks or even establish opportunities to connect different groups of people together. To develop a better understanding of informal community groups that come together, ask the questions “What groups of people care about the community and share a sense of responsibility for the lives of community members?

Consider asking the planning team (or others in the community):

- What is the level of engagement of the informal networks in the community?
- Are there groups’ already supporting military service members and families?
- What other informal networks should be on our radar?
- When, where, and why do they meet?
- How can we find these groups? How can we meet and get involved with them?
  - Would they be willing to let someone listen to, learn from, or attend one of their get-togethers?
  - Do they need a place to meet that we may be able to provide?
  - Can we offer to partner with them for a community event or promote what they do for others?

Formal systems at work: Every program professional is involved in an organization that is active in the community and serves the various needs of individuals and families. So get to know the other various organizations that are making a difference in the lives of community members.

Also remember that in the Community Capacity Building approach, formal systems are to focus on developing, encouraging, and strengthening informal networks. So how are organizations in this community supporting informal networks? Knowing this can help professionals decide how to partner with other formal systems to strengthen efforts towards desired results.

Consider asking the planning team (or others in the community):

- What organizations or agencies have already stepped up to support military service members and families?
- What additional formal systems are essential to an effective support program for military service members and families?
- Can we do an extensive online or on-the-ground search for other organizations that are acting as a resource to the community?
- How can we connect with formal systems in the community and find out what they are doing now and what new efforts they are interested in starting?
- Are there other formal systems focused on similar desired results to ours?
- Are there any organizations we should collaborate with?
    - Can we offer to partner with them for a community event or promote what they do to others?

Desired results at work: All the efforts from informal networks and formal systems make sense when a community is working toward a clearly defined desired result. Make sure everyone has a common understanding of what the end result is and there is an agreement on how the community is going to get there.

Consider asking the planning team (or others in the community):

- What kinds of changes are needed in our community to make a positive difference for military members and families?
- What are the one or two sure signs of change we would see in the community if things were beginning to move in the right direction?
- Have we listened to and communicated with community members to discuss what their concerns are?
    - How can we encourage the kind of communication and active listening that leads to hearing community voices and concerns?
- Are the results defined clearly enough so that we can communicate them to others?
- Will community members rally behind the results defined?

These ideas can jumpstart an organization's conversations about their use of community capacity building, but it is not the finish-line. Identifying opportunities for change and becoming invested is just the beginning. Collective competence is needed to take advantage of those opportunities. At every stage of an organization's development, steps need to be taken to encourage strong relationships with the local community agencies and community members. Formal agencies should work with informal networks, but not assume responsibilities or roles that informal networks can undertake so as not to interfere with the connections and close relationships that community members have with one another. In short, members of formal organizations have to be careful not to "over-function" thereby taking ownership, power, and initiative from community members themselves.

Conclusion

In sum, communities are made up of physical and social infrastructures where community members interact and connect with one another. Within these community infrastructures, the connections and resources within the formal systems and informal networks work together to create change and achieve desired results.

The Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach works best when informal networks and formal systems share responsibility for the general welfare of the community and combine their skills and abilities to solve problems. When all of the CCB elements work together, community members are able to more effectively take action and help the community they care about reach their desired results. Program professionals invested in a CCB approach value the crucial role of informal networks, they strengthen social connections, and they focus on the strengths and resources required to promote desired community change.

Glossary of Terms

Collective competence – is a group of people employing their varied skills to address community needs and take advantage of opportunities to improve well-being.

Community – is a group of people who share common factors (location, interests, language, custom, or belief) and is made up of physical and social infrastructures.

Community capacity – is the extent to which formal systems and informal networks demonstrate a sense of shared responsibility for the general welfare of the community and its members. It demonstrates collective competence in taking advantage of opportunities for addressing community needs and confronting situations threatening the safety and well-being of community members.

Community Capacity Building approach – is an action-oriented, strengths-based way of thinking about communities and how community action creates change.

Desired results – are broad, shared changes desired by community members, such as better health, higher level of well-being, greater safety, or greater sense of community. Desired outcomes are achieved by the combined efforts of formal systems and informal networks.

Force – is the collective energy, power, and influence of community members and their families.

Formal systems – are public and private agencies and organizations that provide services and support community needs.

Informal networks – is the voluntary relationships people have, such as immediate and extended family members, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and support groups.

Physical infrastructure – is primarily the built, geographic areas where families and communities reside.

Place – is identified as the physical and geographical locations that have significant influence on people and the way they live.

Shared responsibility – is the feeling of investment community members have for one another to improve the general welfare of the community

Social infrastructure – is primarily composed of people and the interactions that transpire between them.

Target – is the community norms, beliefs, and expectations regarding specific issues, which are the focus of an intervention, rather than individual or family dynamics.

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2. Becoming a Community Capacity Building Organization

Contents

Summary

Community capacity is built on the intersection between formal systems and informal networks. Social connections created from these transactions drive change in communities. Organizations, as part of formal systems, play an important role in the Community Capacity Building process. In order to be an effective community capacity building organization, it is necessary to understand the role of a formal system in building community capacity.

An effective community capacity building organization is comprised of people who are committed to the success of a common goal. An organization demonstrates its commitment to success through having consistency in its work, positive interdependence, and the belief that everyone contributes to the success of the goal. These traits lead to having not only higher productivity and better relationships, but also increased social support within an organization.

An agency is better positioned to build capacity within the community when there is a sense of shared responsibility about the work each person performs and a consistent demonstration of collective capability (utilizing varied skills and taking action to address community needs).

Strengthening shared responsibility within an organization is important because when people are working together for the good of the organization and each other, they are more effective. When an organization has little to no shared responsibility too much time is spent being unproductive. Staff members who share responsibility invest in their work, show concern for those they work with, and exhibit a common identity and sense of pride. These individuals also reflect a sense of "we" versus "I" in their language and mentality, see their organization as worth their investment, and pull together to reach desired results. One way to increase shared responsibility is to connect with others through teams.

Collective competence is present when staff members put their various abilities together to take action. Demonstrating collective competence allows staff members to come together and combine their existing skills, resources, and talents to help those in the community. In order to demonstrate collective competence, organizations must identify resources and assets within staff members. Everyone has something to offer that can benefit the goals. Understanding these assets is vital to the success of the project and will help team members achieve desired results.

What Does a CCB Organization Look Like?

A community capacity building (CCB) organization has an internal culture that reflects a sense of **shared responsibility** (collective feeling that brings people together) about the work they do and consistently demonstrates **collective competence** (utilizing varied skills and resources) to take action to address community needs. Similar to the community, an organization uses its resources to strengthen shared responsibility and collective competence within the organization to achieve desired results.

An organization that understands how to cultivate this sense of shared responsibility and collective competence is positioned to more effectively reach the community and achieve desired results. When the focus is on results members of the organization are encouraged to think of new and innovative ways to enhance the well-being of military service members and their families.

Functioning from a Community Capacity Building perspective, staff members show:

- Commitment to group decisions
- Knowledge of each other's unique strengths and challenges
- Open engagement during times of conflict
- Accountability for one another's behaviors and actions[1,2]

Capacity building within organizations is important because it can lead to an increase in staff members' sense of shared purpose and empowers them to commit to the success of the organization and the community, capitalize on others unique abilities, skills, talents, and resources, collaborate effectively with co-workers to get the job done, and collectively take action to reach desired results.

This chapter will provide information on:

- ✓ How to strengthen shared responsibility within an organization
- ✓ How to demonstrate collective competence in an organization

Strengthening Shared Responsibility

As previously mentioned, shared responsibility is when staff members have a shared sentiment about promoting the common goals and mission of the organization. In other words, the staff shares responsibility for achieving the desired results of the organization.

Staff members who share responsibility:[3,4]

- Invest in their work and show concern for those they work with
- Exhibit a common identity and sense of pride
- Reflect a sense of "we" versus "I" in their language and mentality

- See their organization as worth their investment
- Pull together to promote common good

Connect with others

A primary building block to becoming an effective community capacity building organization involves the element of social connection. When an organization is comprised of people working together, with a mutual investment in the mission of the organization, it often leads to higher productivity and better relationships. Not only that, it also increases social support within the organization.[5,6,7] Forming "teams" and having people work together is necessary to increasing the organization's function and cohesion and helps bring about desired results more effectively.

The collective efforts of a team can accomplish much more than any one person can alone. When people are working together for the good of the organization, the community, and each other, they are more effective at capacity building. Staff tend to pull together to accomplish a task. A good way of thinking about **teams** is as a small group of individuals who are committed to achieving desired results, which is the hallmark of an effective organizational team. As staff members share responsibility for the task, they also have the opportunity to get to know one another. These informal ties among staff can promote shared responsibility as staff members care about the organization and each other.[8]

One internal document that helps guide the actions of the organization and teams is a mission statement. This document explicitly and briefly describes the organization's objectives or goals, desired results, and the path to accomplishing them. Mission statements can get team members on the "same page" because the desired results and visions for the organization are clearly laid out. In essence, it provides staff with clarity about the goals of the organization. It reflects the organization's desired results and describes the population it seeks to serve. When staff are able to see the bigger picture of the organization and the importance of their work, it can serve to increase investment in the larger cause because everyone partners to help achieve the desired results of the organization.

Demonstrating Collective Competence

Within an organization, collective competence occurs when staff members come together and combine their existing skills, resources, talents, and abilities to help those in the community. Collective competence is present when staff members put their various abilities together to take action. To demonstrate collective competence, organizations must first identify resources and assets that can most effectively help them reach desired results.

Identify resources and assets

Working together as a team naturally allows an organization to capitalize on and combine the skills that are available. Start by identifying what each person brings to the project – their strengths, experience, and the connections they have to community resources. Everyone has something to offer that can benefit endeavors. Understanding these assets is vital to the success of the project and will help team members achieve desired results.

Just as with your own strengths and weaknesses, sometimes it is hard to see others strengths and weaknesses. That's why it's important to occasionally provide time to explore these. You may find that you need to reorganize teams to best utilize those resources.

Discover more about teams

An effective community capacity building organization that initiates a project must first assess and understand itself before undertaking action for others in the community. Interactions and dialogues between professionals in an organization can lead to the creation of a "collective inquiry that focuses on the thoughts, values, and worldviews of the group and creates a flow of shared meaning, shared perceptions, a shared world view, and a social milieu of friendship and fellowship."[9] This process helps a team unite and better enables them to enact change in the community together.

An organization can use existing readiness assessments to evaluate their values, intents, operations, resources, and expertise. These readiness assessments help the organization recognize and address the hurdles they may face as they undertake a project or effort. It can also begin the conversation about a team's cohesiveness.

To discover more about teams, create time for team building activities and periodically assess a team's functioning. These activities and assessments may uncover areas that need improvement. If improvement is needed, the team can collectively come together to celebrate successes and mend those problem areas as a unit.

To begin the conversation about a team's cohesiveness, we focus on one helpful assessment: The *Effective Teams Checklist.* This tool provides a checklist of the factors that are important to the effective management and the growth of teams. This checklist can be applied to an organization or to specific teams. This is a very simple tool and doesn't require a lot of preparation. It is intended to be used by the team members to guide their thinking about the key things that make teams work, whether or not they're doing them, and whether what they are doing could be improved. The process is primarily used as a conversation starter and encourages participants to reflect upon their own performance. More information on this tool can be found in the *Community Capacity Building Tools* chapter of this resource manual.

Organizations should consider making team assessments and check-ins with team members a regular occurrence. It is important for leaders and colleagues to assess, observe, and listen to concerns so they can take action to improve them.

Conclusion

As a type of formal system, organizations must understand the processes and the role they play in building community capacity. However, before an organization can begin community capacity building, it must have capacity within itself. An organization can build capacity from within by assuring that the internal culture reflects a sense of shared responsibility (collective feeling that brings people together) about their work and consistently demonstrates collective competence (utilizing varied skills and resources) to take action and address community needs. Strengthening shared responsibility within an organization leads to people effectively working together for the good of the organization and each other. Demonstrating collective competence allows staff members to come together and combine their existing skills, resources, talents, and abilities to take action and help those in the community.

Glossary of Terms

Shared responsibility – is the feeling of investment community members have for one another to improve the general welfare of the community

Collective competence – is a group of people employing their varied skills to address community needs and take advantage of opportunities to improve well-being.

Team – is a small group of individuals who are committed to a cause larger than they are.

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3. Results-Focused Planning

Contents

Summary

Results-Focused Planning (RFP) is a planning model designed for community capacity building initiatives—a disciplined strategy for developing and implementing a results-oriented and evidence-based Community Capacity Building practice model. Its key principle is planning with measurable results in mind. In the current outcomes-oriented environment, military and family support programs are increasingly called upon to demonstrate the impact of their services. RFP builds community capacity by strengthening formal systems and informal networks and the reciprocal influence these have on one another. Collaborations within and between these groups involve integrated working relationships in which people and organizations combine their talents and resources to achieve results that are beyond the capacity of any single person or organization. In RFP, the focus shifts from "activities that respond to problems" to "actions focused on desired results."

The four steps in the RFP sequence are: 1) prioritize issues and challenges, 2) define desired results, 3) develop an action plan, and 4) orchestrate the action plan. In the first step, the planning team gathers specific evidence of issues and challenges faced by service members and their families and makes informed decisions about the priority for a response. They assess the readiness of the community and identify assets in the community that can be mobilized to address the issue. In the second step, the planning team defines the specific, measurable outcomes they want to see occur as a result of their efforts, and set performance goals that will demonstrate progress toward the outcome. In the third step, the team develops an action plan that identifies the activities that partners (specific formal systems and informal networks) will perform. The team chooses interventions that are based on research evidence and practice experience. These interventions work to strengthen the functioning and interaction of informal networks and formal systems with the goal of improving the lives of military service members and their families. In the fourth step, the planning team orchestrates the action plan and the working partners carry out the action plan. Together they negotiate information and resource sharing, coordinate joint planning, and assist with resource development for the partners. The planning team recognizes the barriers to success (cognitive, motivational, political, and resource hurdles) that often occur when recruiting and mobilizing partners and they plan ahead to address these barriers. Finally, the planning team develops a plan for monitoring the progress being made and sustaining benefits that have been achieved.

An Overview of Planning

To build community capacity, collaborations must be established among formal and informal community resources that are directed toward accomplishing specific results for military service members and their families. A key role of a planning team is to develop a strategy for achieving desired results. However, teams are often told only that they need to produce a plan; they are not provided with any instruction on how to plan.

Results-Focused Planning (RFP) is a model used to design community capacity building initiatives.[1,2,3] RFP moves the thinking from an *activity*-oriented planning design to a *results*-oriented planning design. The focus shifts from measuring activities (what is being done) to measuring results (what is being accomplished). Collaborative planning teams operating at any organizational level – regional, state, or local – can use this proven planning model. A four-step planning model is described:

1. Prioritize issues/challenges
2. Define desired results
3. Develop an action plan
4. Orchestrate the action plan

RFP is a decision-management strategy that maps the path of influence between intervention activities and desired results. Its key principle is planning with the intended results in mind. In other words, RFP specifies that community capacity building efforts (interventions) should only occur after desired results have been clearly defined. The resulting plan of action is based on theory, empirical research, practice wisdom, and/or discussions with **stakeholders** and partners at multiple levels.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The difference in action-oriented and results-oriented models
- ✓ The steps necessary to implement results-focused planning
- ✓ Steps for engaging others to join the organization's community capacity building efforts

Six supporting modules provide more in-depth discussions of the following topics: *Community Assessment* (Module 4), *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration* (Module 5), *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6), *Engaging Military Lead ers* (Module 7), *Monitoring Results and Activities* (Module 8), and *Sustaining Desired Results* (Module 9). Training participants are encouraged to consult these modules.

Planning Models

The main task of the planning is to produce a plan to achieve desired results in the community. Groups often focus on activities when it is not known if these activities are actually helpful for accomplishing the goals of the group. Activities do not always equal making a positive difference in the community. *RFP* helps bring more success to intervention planning and implementation efforts. In this case, success means producing "desired results" rather than performing activities.

Desired results are those outcomes that improve life for individuals and families but can only be achieved by the combined efforts of formal systems and informal networks. If the community has tried activities and programs to address a need but has not seen the results expected after a reasonable amount of time, then there may be a need to increase the present efforts (using the same plan) or modify the plan to achieve the desired result. In other words, a decision must be made either to do more or do something different!

The key is in developing a plan that will produce observable and measurable results. We generally measure (or keep track of) what we are doing, not how effective those activities or efforts are in actually helping to solve the problem. It is common for programs to ask how many participants attended an event rather than asking a results-oriented question such as, "How many participants' lives were improved?" In RFP, the focus shifts from measuring "what was done" to measuring "the extent to which the desired result was achieved." Accountability is not only about doing what was planned but also achieving what was intended.

Activity-oriented

Traditional planning models for collaborative groups tend to be "activity-oriented," rather than results driven. Many groups see a problem and go straight to doing something they assume will be helpful (See Figure 3.1). This classical approach to planning focuses on needs and on agency responses (activities) to those needs. However, this approach often fails to clearly define the desired results or work from an **evidence-based perspective**. The activity-oriented model expects results to occur, but it seldom takes measures to determine if the desired results occurred because the focus is on "doing something" and not on how these activities create change.

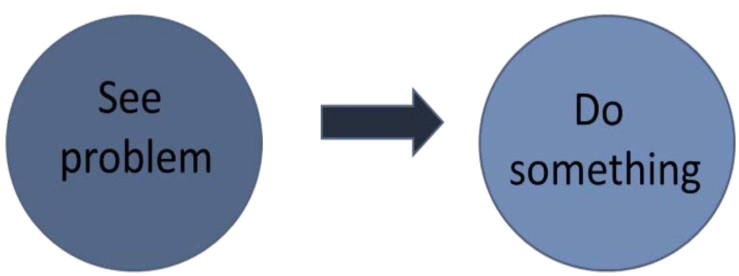

Figure 3.1: Activity-oriented approach.

Over time, a "doing loop" may emerge between needs and activities that result in a flurry of activities with no real intended results in mind. Instead, the activity becomes centered on "putting out fires." Solving problems immediately provides temporary solutions that are not always effective in the long-term. People often end up wasting time, money, and effort doing activities that don't produce desired results. What follows is a simple model for planning that is focused on observable results.

Results-oriented: A preferred approach to planning

Planning occurs between the phases of "seeing a problem" and "doing something to solve the problem" (See Figure 3.2). It is tempting to immediately respond to a problem before gathering enough pertinent information that will help to fully understand what is causing the problem, to know what factors could make the problem worse/better or stabilize it, what measurable results are desired, the key people or organizations who can help, or what strategies have worked well in other communities.

As mentioned earlier, RFP consists of four steps: (1) prioritize the issues and challenges, (2) define desired results, (3) develop an action plan, and (4) orchestrate the action plan.

Figure 3.2: Results-focused model (RFP).

Steps in the Results-Focused Planning Sequence

The activities associated with the four steps in the RFP process will help the planning team achieve desired results for military service members and their families. The planning team will develop multiple planning documents based on specific needs and target results. For each desired result the planning team identifies, a separate action plan is developed. These documents may or may not be integrated into one master plan.

Step 1: Prioritize issues and challenges

The first step of the RFP model is to prioritize the issues and challenges to be addressed. In this step, gather specific evidence of issues and challenges faced by members and their families (the status quo) and make informed decisions on which ones to address first for the action plan.

Importantly, this is a collaborative process with other community partners, including military service members and their families.

These needs should be measurable, specific problems, concerns, or issues that may compromise the achievement of critical personal, relationship, or performance objectives if left unaddressed. At the personal level, for instance, needs may involve the frequency of inappropriate behavior, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. At a relationship level, needs may include the level of interpersonal conflict, such as marital violence, parent-child difficulties, or problems with the unit chain of command or an employer. At a community level, needs may involve the difficulty working mothers encounter in seeking safe, affordable childcare or problems accessing needed services and supports. Regardless of the level of needs, it is important to clearly define the problems that are most important to the community and to the target groups directly affected by these problems. Again, the problems need to be expressed in ways that are measurable and specific.

Not all problems and issues have equal priority or the same degree of negative consequence for military service members and families, and every problem in the community cannot be addressed at once. So in the first RFP step, the planning team will prioritize the issues to address first and identify the challenges most likely to get in the way of achieving the desired results. Next, the planning team will select one high priority issue to address. A results-focused planning worksheet is completed for each priority issue. Please refer to the *Results-Focused Planning Worksheet*, which can be found in the *Tools* chapter of this resource manual. It can assist in identifying issues or challenges, defining desired results, developing the action plan, and orchestrating the action plan.

Use evidence: Start by gathering data and evidence on the issue. There are different kinds of data, and different methods for collecting it. Many sources of information are available, such as administrative data from agencies and government sources, reports from community or military leaders, and/or individual data from an administered survey. For example, if a community is concerned about unemployment among returning service members, the planning team will want to collect evidence about local unemployment rates. Is the rate of unemployment among service members higher than among other groups? Do females have higher unemployment rates than males? Do minorities have a more difficult time finding work; and if so, which groups have the highest rates of unemployment? Use concrete facts to make decisions about priority issues. Define for whom and under what circumstances these problems are occurring. This identifies the target group--the specific group of people that are the primary focus of the intervention or prevention efforts.

Another way to clarify issues is through conducting interviews and surveys. For instance, employers might be interviewed about the type of skills that are needed for the jobs they offer or unemployed service members about their experiences in looking for employment. Use this information to decide how to prioritize the issues to address.

Gathering the pertinent data, or information, can help determine if the problem is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable over time. It creates a baseline so that the team can measure whether the interventions have a positive effect. Use the information to determine if there are patterns related to the problem. Does the issue or need occur only at certain times, like when a service member has recently moved to the community, or at a certain point in the deployment cycle? Is the problem isolated to specific parts of town? Consider what impact this problem would have if the issue were left unattended.

Assess community readiness: Carefully assess whether the community is ready to take on a particular challenge. Communities, like athletes preparing for a competition or students studying for an upcoming test, vary in their levels of readiness to handle the challenge. Before going any further with the planning process the team should assess the readiness of the community to act. Is the priority issue one that only a few people recognize as a community problem or do most people see it as a problem? Is there motivation in the community to address this problem? Are people discouraged from lack of success with past efforts or energized from previous successes? The planning team will need to assess the level of community readiness so that the initial steps involved in implementing the intervention can correspond to the present level of the community's preparedness to solve the problem.

Identify community assets: In prioritizing issues and challenges it is also important to identify community assets or resources that can be mobilized to address member and family needs. Identify key members of highly effective formal systems and informal networks in the community – those who are most often involved in successful intervention and prevention efforts in the community. These assets could become valuable partners in developing the intervention plan. Also, keep in mind that there may be benefits from speaking with key members in nearby communities that have experienced similar problems.

Step 2: Define desired results

Once priorities have been set based on the evidence gathered, the next step is to define the desired results. For example, if the priority issue was support for military families who have children with special needs, the next step would be to specify the desired results associated with this issue. This step in the planning process is to answer the question: "Given this issue, what specific result(s) do we want for members/families?" The planning team will choose the activities, services, and actions they take based on these desired results.

The results should be benefits that are directly tied to the priority issue. Thus, if supporting families who have children with special needs is the issue, increasing awareness of and access to support services may be the desired result. Improving military members' and their spouses' physical health and psychological well-being, enhancing families' deployment readiness, and promoting the successful performance of military duties are other examples of desired results.

Reframe the issue or challenge as a result: A good, well-defined "desired result" is positive in tone and can be easily measured. Consider stating the desired result in terms of people moving *toward* something *positive* rather than *away* from something *negative*. Using an example about family conflict, instead of thinking about the desired result in terms of decreasing family conflict or stopping domestic violence, reframe the problem as a move toward family safety and nurturing (e.g., "an increase in the number of safe, nurturing families in the community"). Examples of shifting from a problem-oriented view to a results-oriented view are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Examples of Rewording Problem-Oriented Issues into Results-Oriented Issues

Problem oriented	Results oriented
• Domestic violence	• Family safety / nurturing
• Illness / injury	• Physical health
• Driving under the influence	• Motor vehicle safety
• Mental illness or behavioral problems	• Psychological well-being
• Family problems interfere with military duties	• Deployment readiness
• Employment problems	• Successful job performance

"Desired results" are worded from the perspective of the military service/family member (or the target group who will benefit from the positive change). For example, "Married active-duty members will experience a more positive and supportive relationship with their spouses."
Another example concerns school-aged military children. There may be a need to stop problem behavior at school, but the root cause of the behavioral problems is that children are not fully engaged in school activities. Thus, the desired result is children's increased engagement in school activities.

Specify performance goals, standards, and timeframe: Performance goals can be framed in terms of knowledge, attitudes, or behavior. What is important for people to know? What is important for people to value, or deem important? What do people need to do, or do differently? All of these are important to examine. A working assumption in this step is that the current level of the desired result reflects the sum of all of the efforts of the formal systems and informal networks. As stated previously, for the community to achieve the desired result, either present efforts will have to be increased, a different planning strategy will have to be implemented, or some combination of current efforts and new strategies will have to be employed.

It is necessary to make the desired result(s) measurable by defining *performance standards* in the form of a number, rate, or percentage. This is the level of performance to be considered a successful achievement of the efforts. This requires discussion of the current performance level and then deciding what would be a reasonable, positive goal for the desired result. For example, performance standards might be stated like this: “90% of married active duty members will report that they can depend on support from their spouse if they request it, as reported on a standardized assessment tool.”

For each desired result, a timeline (in units of months) needs to be established. It is within that timeframe that the desired performance standard should be achieved. It is important to determine a realistic timeframe for meeting the goals.

Any one agency or group working alone cannot accomplish desired results. These results do not occur because of a single activity or intervention. They are the positive outcomes that occur because the community is working together to create change. The next activity is to consider the people and agencies in the community who will need to work together to achieve these results—the action plan.

Step 3: Develop an action plan

The third step in the planning process is to develop an action plan. This involves strengthening the formal systems and informal network supports in the community. Formal systems typically involve staff or individuals that provide professional services or support, such as military and civilian agencies, organizations, businesses, military leaders, and institutions created to support people’s social, mental, and physical health. Informal networks are social relationships and connections, like extended family, friends, work associates, the faith community, volunteer groups, and local clubs.

Formal systems and informal networks are the generators producing and building community capacity. The amount of success depends on increasing the effectiveness of the informal **social networks** in a community (i.e. how well people in the community know each other and work together). For more detailed instructions on building community capacity with others, refer to the modules on *Strengthening Formal Systems Through Collaboration* (Module 5), *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6), and *Engaging Military Leaders* (Module 7).

The more one increases the connections within and between the formal systems and informal networks and the effectiveness of their interactions, the more likely the desired result will be achieved. In the action plan, specify how formal systems and informal networks will need to function together to achieve the desired results. One way to determine this is to ask, "How would formal systems and informal networks interact to achieve this desired result?" Of course, this is best accomplished using a collaborative planning process—working with others in planning to achieve desired results.

The **action plan** is the part of the plan that identifies the activities the partners will perform to work more effectively together and to move the community towards the desired result. Importantly, community stakeholders share in the achievement of these results for military service members and families, working in full partnership. Although the planning team will initially outline the activities it believes the partners should perform to work more effectively together and move the community towards the desired result, it is very important to include all of the partners' inputs and ideas in this process once they are on board. The partners may offer valuable insights about working effectively together that may have been overlooked by the planning team. So, essentially, the action plan is not a "static" document- it can be modified as partners come on board and offer their own opinions about what they think will work best.

Having specified the desired result(s), focus attention on the following question: "Who do I need to involve in the plan to achieve this/these result(s)?" This question is designed to identify the key players who will play an active role in achieving the result(s) and, therefore, should be involved in working to achieve those desired result(s). Refer to the list of community assets. Identify the formal systems and informal networks that are the potential partners who would be most critical to achieving the desired result(s).

Collaborations involve integrated working relationships in which people and organizations combine their talents and resources to achieve results that are beyond the capacity of any single person or organization. A variety of collaborative partners should be considered: military leaders, military and civilian agencies/organizations, businesses, volunteer groups, local clubs and citizen groups, neighborhood groups, service members and family members, and the faith-based community. Members of the planning team may also serve as partners. The partners will share information and resources with each other, do joint planning and coordinate their efforts, work together to develop new resources, and help promote greater informal network ties.

Once the potential partners have been identified, describe how these partners would need to function and/or interact in order to achieve the desired result(s). Specifying how formal systems and informal networks would interact and function uncovers community capacity building leverage points that, if promoted, would start change in the desired direction. These actions will be supported by evidence, knowledge, or past success in communities. Ideally, these strategies are promising practices that have shown success in similar communities.

Plan community capacity building activities: The last part of this step is to identify the community capacity building activities the partners will perform. Remember, these activities must be purposeful interventions that promote successful functioning of the formal systems and informal networks. These interventions are intended to change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the prioritized issue and desired result. It is not about trying to fix something – it is about trying to grow something![4]

Describe the actions: In developing the plan of action, the planning team should carefully consider:

- What is already being provided to service members and their families and whether these efforts are working effectively?
- What strategies are recommended based on evidence (documented successes) or practice experience?
- In what ways, if any, informal networks are being activated in support of desired results?

We recommend that attention focus on identifying three to five actions considered most influential in achieving the desired result(s). The partners carry out these actions that are associated with the generation of community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence).

For the action plan, specify: the partner or partners (the "who") working together will do what (the "action"), for whom (the "target group"), for what reason or consequence (the "purpose"), and within what timeframe (the timeline). For example, the Marine Corps Family Readiness Program (i.e., who) will offer financial management classes (i.e., the "what" or the "action") for junior enlisted members (i.e., for whom) to instruct them in how to develop and maintain a budget (i.e., for what purpose), beginning within 2 months (i.e., the timeframe). Specify this for each partnership or partner interaction. This section of the plan needs to be very clear and specific. Specify the actions that each partner will undertake to increase the probability of achieving the desired result(s). In defining the actions expected by those involved in the plan, it is important to ensure that each activity by each partner or partner combination has the intended purpose of achieving the desired result(s).

Using the example of military families who have children with special needs, ask, "How would formal systems and informal networks interact to increase awareness of and access to support services for these families?" The formal systems most involved with this issue would likely be the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), state and local collaborative groups for families with children with special needs, recreational and therapeutic camp organizations, physical and mental health departments, and child protective services. The informal networks involved may be neighborhood group leaders, unit support groups, parent and child advocacy groups, and other parents of children with special needs. As agency representatives and individuals begin to meet, they may ask others to join them in the endeavor. Then, as a group, they will discuss how best to disseminate information about existing support services and informal support networks that would be relevant to this target group of families, as well as how those target families can access those services and networks.

Purposeful interventions that promote successful functioning of formal systems and informal networks should be interventions that already have been used and proven to work. Use practices with evidence showing that they are effective in solving the problem, such as interventions that have worked in other communities, and adapt these practices to the specific community. Also look for programs that have clear standards, (which may be found in intervention/program operating manuals) so that people can be consistent in their use. For example, *Joining Community Forces* might be a valuable resource

A Neighbor-to-Neighbor program is a good example of how formal systems can help increase the functioning of informal social networks. For example, assume that a local agency knew that support for families could be improved if the social isolation of families could be decreased. Therefore, the agency focused on building connections between families and their neighbors, and its goal was to build positive relationships and increase networking through the sharing of common interests and concerns. The agency worked with neighborhood volunteers to organize local block parties to help people get to know their neighbors; to establish Neighborhood Watch projects to help create a shared sense of responsibility in looking out for each other; and to take part in beautification projects that encouraged people to invest in, care about, and find joy in their neighborhoods. They helped set up a Skills Bank where residents could share their talents, which increased opportunities for community members to turn to one another for assistance, rather than to seek help outside of their community.

Helpful suggestions for developing an action plan include:

- Plan *with* partners rather than *for* partners.
- Involve partners in the planning process early.
- Requested actions need to be positive in tone, actionable, realistic, measurable, and timed.
- Sort specific actions from “least critical” to “most critical” to perform.
- Specify a performance timeline. As a baseline, it may help to rate each action from 0 (not met at all) to 5 (fully met) at the present time.

Step 4: Orchestrate the action plan

Define responsibilities of the planning team: The last step of the planning team’s work will be to *orchestrate* and coordinate the action plan. The partners then *carry out* the action plan. Some members of the planning team may also be working as partners. In fact, assume that the norm is that quite a number of planning team members are also among the partners; if not as individuals, then certainly as representatives of organizations.

In order to complete this part of the plan, the team will need to determine what the planning team will need to do to support the partners in their efforts to carry out the action plan. As a planning team, identify purposeful activities that would promote successful functioning and/or interaction of the partners. These are the activities that members of the planning team will assume responsibility for, including information/resource sharing (e.g., contacting the partner and negotiating the request), joint planning/coordination (e.g., helping to develop an Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] between two partners), and resource development (e.g., requesting workplace involvement or applying for grants to support community capacity building efforts from the partners).

The planning team will need to be specific about its own activities and list the purpose of the activity and the timeframe in which it should be accomplished. For example: "A planning team member (the “who”) will contact (the activity) the local United Way Agency (target group), to identify the children of deployed service members in the public schools for special outreach and support (the purpose) within the next 30 days (the timeframe)."

Address potential hurdles to success:[5] Part of orchestrating the action plan is to recognize the hurdles to success that often occur when recruiting and mobilizing partners, including the negotiation of their requested roles. The planning team must anticipate at least four potential hurdles and plan ahead to address them.

Cognitive hurdles. Potential partners may not be fully convinced of the importance of the desired results, why particular groups have been targeted for intervention, or why they need to be involved as a partner. They may not understand what is being requested of them, especially if they have not been involved in the development of the plan itself. Overcoming this hurdle requires that planning team members help others to understand the context and convey the importance of the effort and why their role is critical to its success.

One way to address the cognitive hurdle is to put the people making decisions face-to-face with the problem. If a potential partner is not fully informed about an issue, or does not understand why an issue or problem is important, it sometimes helps to allow them to experience the problem first-hand (if possible). For example, if working to raise money for new playground equipment for a local park, meet potential donors in the park itself to see lack or poor condition of existing equipment.

Motivational hurdles. Partners may be supportive of the change initiative, but they may have doubts about the planning group's ability to successfully make those positive changes. Thus, they will be reluctant to collaborate. Another motivational hurdle concerns the impact of the change on the potential partner. Sometimes, people are just confused about what the change will mean for them. Don't mistake this confusion for resistance.

Here are some tips for overcoming the motivational hurdle. First, don't set the goal so high that no one believes it would be possible to accomplish it. For example, do not set the goal as "world peace" and expect people to actively support it with their time, money, and other resources. Describe the challenge and the plan to overcome it so that it is achievable. It helps to frame it as a series of smaller, obtainable goals. For instance, a community wants to add equipment to local playgrounds for children with special needs, but it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. Such a large sum of needed funds may seem completely overwhelming! Instead set a series of small goals, such as obtaining donations to cover the cost of a specially outfitted swing set at one park in a community where there are a high number of military families with young children. Having a series of smaller goals helps people see that the plan is making realistic progress.

Another tip for overcoming the motivational hurdle is to convey to potential partners not only how the desired change is beneficial to the target population but also how that specific partner can benefit. If the potential partner is a local business, explain how their involvement could potentially attract more clients to their business.

Finally, involve key people in the community who are "influencers"--people whose opinions and recommendations are valued by others. Seek out those key people in the community who have connections, the ability to persuade, or access to pertinent resources. Identify such people, both inside and outside the partnerships and get their support and backing. Also enlist them in spreading the word to others.

Political hurdles. Political hurdles often involve dealing with people or groups who must be on board for the change initiative to be accepted by the larger group. To conquer political hurdles it is important to enlist the backing of those with influence in the community. The planning team will need to identify other partnerships that support the change initiative.

Whenever there is change, no matter how valuable, some people may be unsupportive of the change initiative and possibly disrupt the efforts of the working group. The planning team will need to develop strategies for overcoming this type of resistance.

Resource hurdles. Of the four hurdles, resource hurdles may be the one most often mentioned. Resource hurdle arguments often involve the qualifier "but." For example: “I really agree that we should address getting neighbors engaged, *but* we don’t have the time, the resources, or the energy for such an outreach strategy.” Resource hurdles may mask other hurdles.

Overcoming resource hurdles may involve helping partners examine the initiatives that are currently underway but are having little effect. It may mean shifting resources from ineffective efforts to the new efforts that are being proposed. Often, a great deal can be achieved with available resources, if they are allocated differently. Concentrate on changes where payoffs are likely to be the greatest.

Bargain with and trade resources, as appropriate, with partner organizations. Some agencies have more resources in certain areas, but are short in others. One agency may have office space it is not using. Another agency may have an abundance of supplies, but no liquid cash. Still another agency may have skilled personnel to offer, but need space for them to work. The planning team can work to pool these existing resources and make the most efficient use of all of them.

As part of orchestrating the action plan, the planning team needs to identify potential hurdles to engaging and motivating partners and then develop strategies to overcome these hurdles. For a plan, consider each of the four areas: cognitive, motivational, political, and resource related to the issue. Identify potential hurdles and how each will be addressed.

Complete the RFP: The planning team has a few other tasks for which they are responsible before completing its own RFP. These tasks are described in detail in later modules of this training.

Monitoring plan. It is essential to have a plan to monitor the progress being made on an action plan. Members of the planning team will be responsible for tracking the activities throughout implementation as well as how efforts are impacting desired results. Monitoring includes reviewing the performance of partners on the action plan, and the performance of the planning team in orchestrating the plan. There are two ways of monitoring a community capacity building program: implementation monitoring and outcome monitoring. Implementation monitoring is used to determine if actions were implemented as planned and whether these actions were implemented in the correct sequence and on time. Outcomes monitoring refers to measuring the effectiveness of these activities on desired results. Monitoring will be described in detail in *Monitoring Results and Activities* (Module 8). The information and instructions in that module will be needed in order to complete a detailed plan.

Sustainability plan. Desired results not only must be achieved but also sustained. **Sustainability** is about maintaining the desired results rather than the particular activities that led to the results. Although it may seem presumptuous to develop a sustainability plan as part of the planning process, it is not. *Sustaining Desired Results* (Module 9) is addressed in detail in the final module.

Resource requirements. It is important to determine what resources the planning team will need--not what partners are needed to accomplish the activities, but what the planning team will need in order to support the action plan. This could be in the form of staff time or non-personnel resources, such as meeting space, training, equipment, materials, travel budget, or communications.

Progress reports. The planning team needs to review the action plan every 30 days. The action plan should be updated and revised when results change, if proposed activities cannot be implemented, or when activities are not producing the desired result. These progress reports should be sent to all partners.

Conclusion

Taking a planning team through RFP is a highly educational process for identifying hidden practice assumptions and potential challenges. The process reveals new pathways to success, as well as creates opportunities to envision new ways of overcoming barriers and achieving desired results.

The RFP model offers great opportunities to incorporate evidence-based practices into planning efforts. First, empirical and practice evidence can be used to identify potential supports and connections associated with desired results. Second, RFP relies on evidence to identify community capacity building activities for promoting the development of formal systems and informal networks. Finally, performance monitoring and evaluation depend on having an explicit understanding of the change process—RFP leads to this understanding.

The RFP model for planning keeps the focus on results and chooses interventions based on evidence and past experience of success. It increases the chances of success by strengthening the functioning and interaction of formal systems and informal networks in a community with the ultimate purpose to improve the lives of military service members and their families.

RFP comprises a disciplined strategy for discovering and implementing a results-oriented and evidence-based Community Capacity Building practice model. An important aim is to identify and make explicit the critical processes within and between formal systems and informal networks that increase the probability that community capacity building activities will achieve desired results.

Glossary of Terms

Action plan – is the part of the plan that identifies the activities the partners will perform to work more effectively together and to move the community towards the desired result.

Desired results – are outcomes that improve life for individuals and families, which are achieved by the combined efforts of formal systems and informal networks. The desired results address priority issues agreed upon by the community.

Evidence-based perspective – is the perspective based on what was found by others to have worked successfully in similar situations.

Results-focused planning – is a planning model that addresses community improvement goals by identifying the desired results. In results-focused planning, accountability shifts from measuring activities (what is being done) to measuring results (what is being accomplished in terms of the ultimate goals or outcomes).

Social network – is a set of relationships and connections in the social domain of individuals and families.

Stakeholders – are individuals with an interest, involvement, and/or investment in the initiative or project.

Sustainability – is maintaining the desired results rather than the activities that led to the results.

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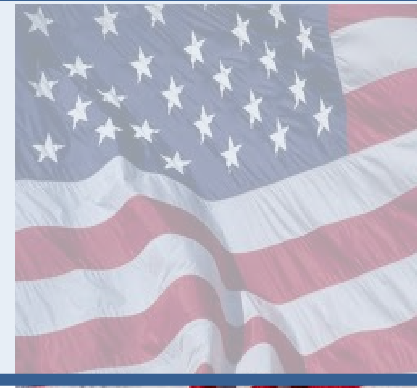
4. Community Assessment



Contents

Summary

Community assessment is necessary in developing effective programs for service members and their families. Community assessments are a planning tool that provides insights into the physical and social conditions in a community. They provide an organization with a clearer vision of the current needs and assets of a community in order to develop and implement community interventions. This enables the planning team to capitalize on the assets and use them to address community needs.

This exploration of the assets of a community is often referred to as an asset-oriented assessment. By focusing on the positive features of a community, organizations can develop programs based on that particular community's capacities, skills, and resources. This is consistent with the CCB framework and a strengths-based perspective. A thorough asset-oriented assessment of a community has three components: understanding the current characteristics of a military community, identify priority needs, and identifying current assets that can be mobilized to address needs and improve services.

There are several methods for gathering the information needed for a community assessment. These include existing and primary sources. Existing sources consist of information that has already been collected by others, while primary sources are first-hand accounts that the planning team gathers. It is best to use both existing and primary sources whenever possible. After a community assessment has been conducted, a summary and evaluation of the relevant information gathered will direct the planning team's actions. It can be helpful to discuss the findings from a community assessment with community engagement and advocacy efforts through developing briefings. The briefing will help in making informed decisions about the next steps, collaborating with potential partners, and various ways to design interventions to achieve desired results.

What is Community Assessment?

When a team of people from different organizations come together to address a common issue, the first step in the Community Capacity Building approach is to perform a community assessment. A **community assessment** is both a process and a planning tool that provides insights into the physical and social conditions in a community. A community assessment is the systematic collection of information about a community and its people. It provides information about a community before an organization designs or implements any interventions.

Community assessments give team members an intimate understanding of their community so they can develop programs that will be effective in supporting military service members and their families. They inform team members about the current needs and the assets of a community. Community assessments are intended to happen early and inform program development and implementation[1,2] Assessments are a way to "map the terrain" of a community and develop a clearer picture of the community as a whole. This enables the planning team to capitalize on the individual and organizational assets and use these assets to address community needs.[3]

A thorough **asset-oriented assessment** takes stock of the current characteristics, needs, and assets of the community. These assets can be used to improve services and to positively affect the well-being of military service members and military families.[4,5] By focusing on the positive features of a community, organizations can develop programs based on that particular community's capacities, skills, and resources.[6] This is consistent with the CCB framework and a strengths-based perspective.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The value of community assessment
- ✓ The components of a community assessment
- ✓ Ways to gather information for a community assessment
- ✓ Steps for translating that information into action

Why is Community Assessment Important?

Community assessment provides program professionals with the information they need to tailor services to military service members and their families. A community assessment provides a clear description of the people being served as well as the needs and resources that exist. The planning process should be informed by community assessments so that efforts are appropriately targeted toward the population in need. Conducting a community assessment also provides an opportunity to get input from the targeted population. Their involvement is integral to identifying the community's strengths and assets, but also in building trust and developing a shared vision for the future.[7]

The Components of Community Assessment

For a community assessment to be truly beneficial, the planning team must:

- Develop a clear understanding of the characteristics of the military community
- Identify the needs of the military community
- Discover the assets of that community that could be used to address the needs

Understanding the community

Since each community has unique features, it is important to understand the characteristics of both the people and the physical layout of a particular community in which military members and their families reside. These characteristics should create a clear picture of the community being served.[4]The following information will help a planning team to begin to develop this picture: Who are the local military community members (e.g., the number of Active, Guard, and Reserve members)? What are the different family compositions (e.g., single, married, single/married with children)? Where do community members reside (e.g., on base, congregated around the base, widely dispersed throughout the local area)?

It is also valuable to uncover information about the broader community in which military service members and their families live. This could include the community that surrounds a military installation. To understand this larger community, planning teams should gather **demographic**, geographic, and health information such as:[4,8]

- Population statistics (e.g., the number of people residing in the area)
- Age, marital status, household size
- Racial and ethnic background, including language spoken at home
- Socioeconomic status, including rates of poverty
- Education levels
- Employment rates
- Characteristics of the location (e.g., urban/rural, condition of housing/infrastructure, predominant industry/occupations, etc.)
- Health and disability statistics

While this is not an exhaustive list, enough information should be gathered to highlight the trends and the overall living conditions in the broader community.[4] Demographic information of the military and larger community sets the stage for program efforts and shapes program planning and implementation. This makes programs efforts more effective.

Identifying priority needs

Common themes and community needs may become evident based on information collected about the characteristics of the community. **Needs** are defined as a lack of something that is desired or useful in a community.[9] Examples of such community needs could be public transportation, affordable housing, accessible youth programs, affordable day care, or support groups for military families. Each community's needs can vary drastically, depending on its existing resources, the make-up of the population, and a variety of other factors.[4] Your team will need to narrow down the list of needs and determine which are the most important.

As you review the assessment information, consider the following questions:

Who is most affected by the issues or needs? The planning team will use the information gathered to discover which populations are most vulnerable or most at risk. This knowledge should influence the decisions about where to focus interventions. For example, if the rate of spousal unemployment in a military community is high, then military spouses might be considered a prime target for potential employment interventions.

What circumstances increase, decrease, or maintain the problem? Knowledge of these circumstances helps the planning team identify potential targets for interventions and efforts. For example, if a majority of unemployed mothers cite childcare issues as the main obstacle to their employment, then that would be a circumstance that, if addressed, might decrease the problem.

What would happen if the need or issue were not addressed? If an organization chose not to address an identified need, would community members suffer? And if so, how? Carefully thinking through consequences will help prioritize the needs identified through the community assessment.

Identifying community assets

The flipside of identifying community needs is discovering current strengths, resources, and assets that can be used to addressed needs. Understanding assets is a very important part of the Community Capacity Building approach. **Assets** operate as protective factors in the face of community adversity.[4] They buffer people from the stresses of life, help reduce risks, and increase positive outcomes for service members and their families over time.[4] Examples of assets range from having an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA), to having safe parks and recreational facilities for youth.

Assets help the community eliminate risks and establish or maintain favorable community results for service members and their families over time.

Assets can be found in:

- *Individuals* - skills, talents, time, resources, connections, and money
- G*roups* - service clubs, sports leagues, parent groups, arts organizations, neighborhood associations, book clubs, veterans groups
- *Physical structures or natural resources* - community centers, libraries, hospitals, recreational facilities, parks, beaches
- *Organizations and institutions* - non-profit agencies, banks, universities, charities, businesses, health clinics, police, religious institutions, schools, ---including their facilities, equipment, purchasing and employment power, and financial capacity6

Figure 4.1 provides a visual example of some of the assets found in communities.

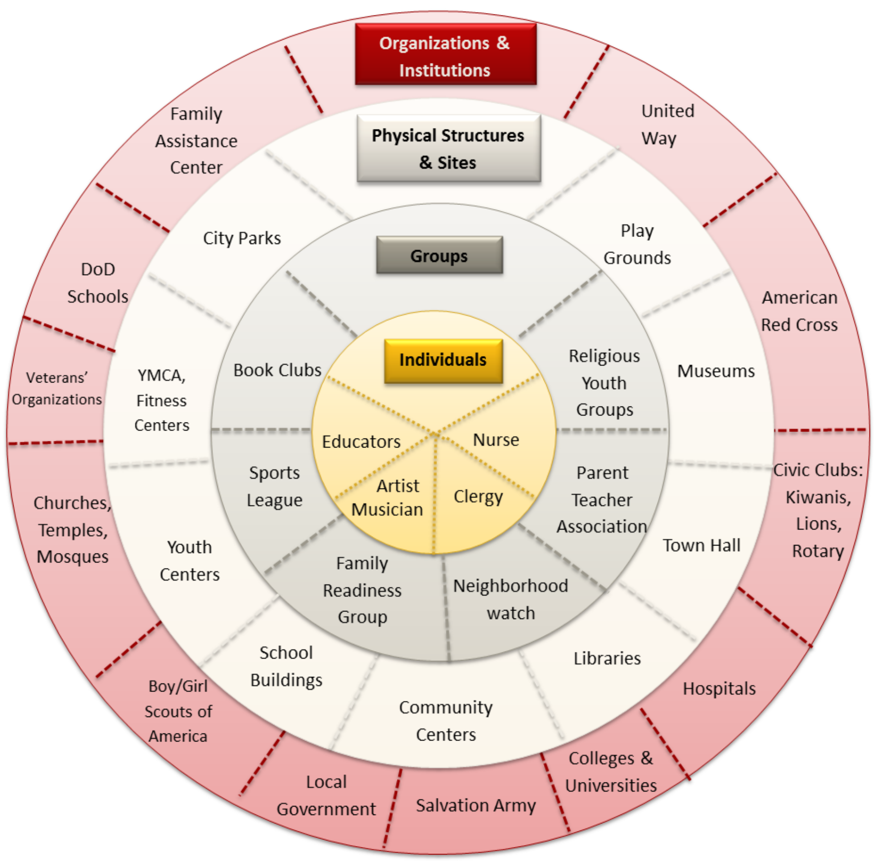


Figure 4.1: Community Assets

Adapted from The Center for Collaborative Planning.[10]

A key to building community capacity is identifying the range of individual and community assets that can be used to effectively address needs. There are a wide range of existing assets in any community, but some may not be currently available, accessible, or affordable. For example, there may be mental health providers in your area, but if the only child psychiatrist does not accept the military insurance coverage, then for many people that service is unavailable. There may be a dental clinic in your community, but if there is no public transportation system, then it may not be accessible. Once your community identifies its assets and resources, the team can find ways to mobilize those assets to address the existing needs.[6]

Ways to Gather Information for a Community Assessment

There are several useful ways to gather the information for a community assessment. First, look at **existing sources** - information that is already available, such as local, state, and federal government data, and academic journal articles. If these existing sources do not fully address the issue, then use **primary sources**, or first-hand accounts or new information from the community, to fill in the gaps.[1] The planning team can obtain this input through interviews, surveys, or focus groups.

The following are examples of questions that might be included in a community assessment:

- What are the characteristics of the community?
- What are the most significant needs and challenges among military service members and their families?
- What are the relevant strengths and assets that service members and families have that can be used to address these needs and challenges?

These questions can be answered by looking at both existing and primary information. Yet, typically, collecting information from multiple sources (known as **mixed methods**) provides a more comprehensive and accurate picture.[11] This could mean looking at multiple existing sources or looking at existing sources *and* gathering primary information to strengthen findings.

Existing sources

Demographic information about your community has probably already been gathered by other organizations. These existing sources are a good resource for learning about the characteristics of your community. Many of those sources of information are online and easy to access (See Figure 4.2 for examples).

Figure 4.2: Examples of Existing Sources for Demographic Information

The Military Demographic Report is one of those easily accessible sources and is excellent for finding information about specific military communities. Planning teams can find information about service members for each state, including the current number of Active, Guard, and Reserve members, the number of military children, etc.

Another resource that is available to provide information on military families and communities is the DoD Asset Map, which displays the location of service members and their families. It is available to State Family Program Directors and Military and Family Readiness Service providers that use a Common Access Card. It gives more specific information than what is found in the Military Demographic Report (see Figure 4.3).

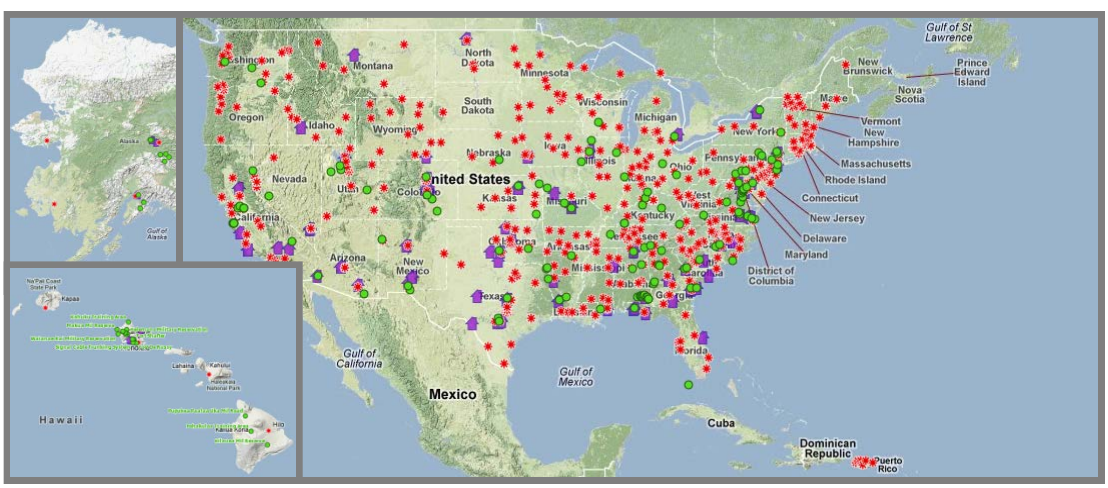


Figure 4.3: DoD Asset Map

For information about the characteristics and demographics of the larger community in which the target military community lives, there are other existing sources to consult. For example, Census QuickFacts provides demographics such as population, median household income, and language spoken in the home (See Figure 4.4 for a snapshot of information available on the QuickFacts website.) This database can provide information on a particular state, county, or city. Census QuickFacts is one of many existing sources of demographic information.

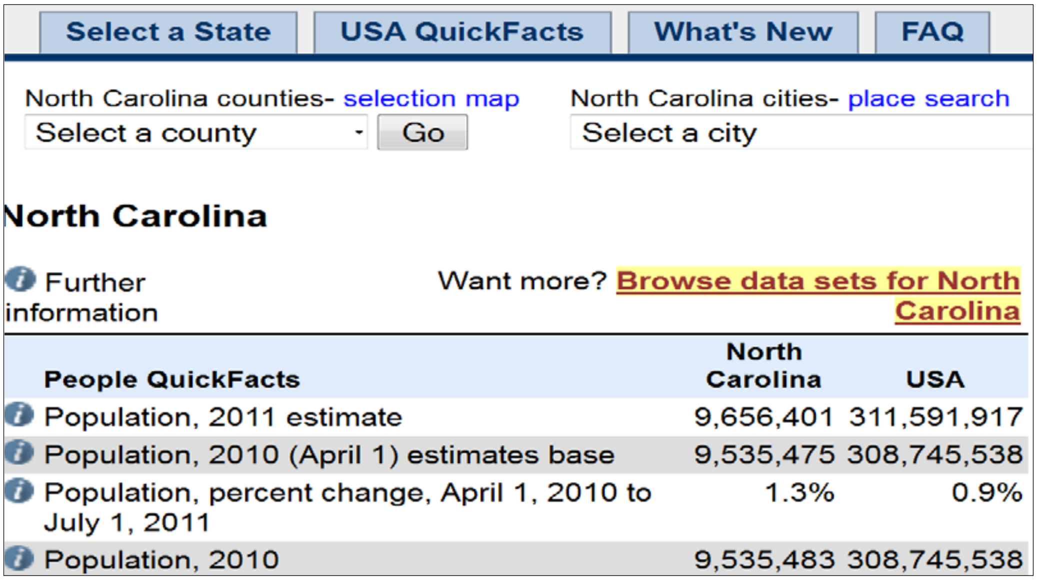


Figure 4.4: An Example of Census QuickFacts

You can also uncover community needs and assets through existing information online. The *Centers for Disease Control* is a useful source for obtaining information about a community's health needs. This website provides information on county health behaviors (smoking, obesity, teen birth rate), the county's availability of clinical care, its social and economic factors (inadequate social support, violent crime rate), and the physical environment (air pollution, access to recreational facilities).

Because there is a great deal of information available, the process of collecting data can become overwhelming. The goal is to gather enough information so that you have a clear picture of the community's landscape, but not so much that it becomes confusing or too difficult to interpret. Consider reaching out to experts and other agency team members for help with this process.

Primary Sources

Gathering new information from primary sources (first-hand accounts) clarifies the information obtained from the existing sources and can get information specific to your community and its members. Individuals in a community can have vastly different opinions, attitudes, and experiences. Therefore, it is critical to collect opinions from a variety of people. As time and resources permit, gather input from a number of military and civilian community members and leaders. It is important to include service members, their families, and agency directors in organizations with a history in the community in this process. Involving others can shed valuable light on the statistical information the planning team has obtained and provide information that is not typically found in existing sources. You can get this input during informal conversations with community members, through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or from one's own personal and professional observations about assets and needs[11] (See Table 4.1 for an overview of primary sources). For more detailed *guidance on developing a survey, conducting an interview, or focus group*, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Table 4.1

Overview of Primary Sources

Sources	Description of the Source
Surveys	Surveys are a useful way to gather personal opinions from individuals on their assets, concerns, and priorities. Surveys can be conducted in a written format, online, face to face, or by telephone. Keep the length of the survey in mind. Do not make the survey so long that people feel that they do not have enough time to complete it. Ask only a few, short, key questions. Another option is to find an existing survey with similar questions and use that with community members (See the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual for guidance on how to conduct a survey.)
Interviews and Focus Groups	Interviews and focus groups are individual or group discussions where people are asked about their perceptions and opinions. They are an effective way to gather detailed information. Interview or hold focus groups with military and community leadership, service members and their families, and people who interface with the military (e.g., staff from other agencies, business leaders; See the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual for guidance on how to conduct an interview/focus groups).
Town meetings or public forums	Town meetings or public forums are places where community members are invited to express their views about the assets and perceived needs of the community. Attend local town meetings with questions for community members.
One's own professional observations	You may hear useful information from people in the community during every day work situations. Be careful not to generalize one person's opinion to everyone, but patterns of observations from the planning team may start to emerge with respect to common issues.
Informal conversations with community members	Informal conversations with individuals in a community are another way to gather information. These conversations can provide insight into people's opinions and perceptions about assets and needs. This should not be the main source of information, but it can supplement other sources.

Community member's views are important, but it can be time consuming and expensive to collect primary source information. Because of this, it is not always feasible. The purpose of using primary sources is to provide deeper insight into the community's needs and assets by accessing different types of information. But if resources are limited, consider using the less complicated methods such as informal conversations with others or direct observations. Partnering with a local organization or advocacy group can also assist in the process.

It can be helpful to conduct a walking or driving tour of the community to find out more directly about the community's geography, needs, and assets. Direct observation of the layout of the community (How walkable is it? How safe does it feel? What is traffic like? What transportation systems exist? How accessible are agencies?) and the resources within it (libraries, parks, bodies of water, museums, health clinics, homeless shelters, employers) helps planning teams to understand the concerns of community members and the assets that are present. During the walking or driving tour, take the time to talk to people informally about their views of the town.[5]

Using the information discovered through these existing and primary sources make a list of the community's characteristics, its needs, and its assets. Determine which of the assets could be the most helpful in addressing the identified needs. This will also help the team discover what, if any, assets and resources are missing.

How to Use Findings

To address a community's needs and reach desired results, you have to start with a thorough understanding of the community's characteristics, needs, and assets. The assessment aims to accurately identify the needs, determine what assets can be mobilized, and learn what assets might need to be developed.

Summarize and share findings

After the community assessment is complete, use the information to clearly demonstrate why your efforts should focus on particular assets and needs. The planning team should compile and summarize the information. The findings should be used it to think about and design an effective intervention that organizes existing assets to addresses identified needs.

The summary should be no longer than two to three pages and include:

1. *Purpose of the assessment:* A statement of what the team was trying to discover
2. *How information was collected:* Existing sources, primary sources, and methods used in gathering the information
3. *Community characteristics:* Relevant demographics, etc.
4. *Community needs and target population:* Major findings that support the chosen priority need and population

5. *Community assets:* Individuals, groups, organizations, and physical resources that can be useful in addressing the need or needs
6. *Limitations of the assessment:* Characteristics which impact the application of or constrain the assessment
7. *Next steps:* What the organization will do with this information to address the needs of the community?

After summarizing your community assessment findings within your organization and planning team, it can be helpful to discuss those findings and next steps with other team members, collaborators, and community members by developing a **briefing**, or overview of your findings. The briefing should discuss the characteristics of the community, the needs, assets, and potential solutions identified by the assessment. Essentially, a briefing can help your organization make informed decisions about next steps, potential partners, and various ways to design effective interventions and efforts to achieve desired results.[12]

For a template to help summarize findings from a community assessment and for more information about *communicating findings through briefings*, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Conclusion

Community assessment is the systematic collection of information about a community and its people. It informs the results-focused planning process and helps the planning team design and implement more effective community interventions. Through a community assessment, the planning team develops a better understanding of the community, its priority needs, and the assets within the community that can help address those needs. With an asset-oriented assessment; the focus is on finding the strengths in the community and using those strengths to address community needs.

These are the two ways to gather information for a community assessment. One is to use existing information that has already been collected by others. The other is for the planning team to gather new information directly from people in the community. Existing sources of information include official records and public and private reports that has been gathered and analyzed by government agencies, colleges and universities, and public and private agencies and organizations. Primary sources include surveys, interviews, public meetings, professional observations, and conversations. Once the planning team gathers the needed information, it is important to summarize and share findings with others so everyone has a clearer vision of the current needs and assets of a community and planning team members can develop and implement more effective community interventions.

Glossary of Terms

Assets – are strengths and resources that serve as protective factors in the face of community adversity or obstacles.

Asset-oriented assessment – is an assessment that focuses on identifying assets that can be mobilized to improve well-being.

Briefing – is an overview of findings that discusses the characteristics of the community, the needs, assets, and potential solutions identified by the assessment.

Community assessment – is an information gathering procedure that discovers the physical and social conditions of a community to inform the plan for change.

Demographics – are characteristics of a community, including race, ethnicity, age, economic status, male to female ratio, education, etc.

Existing sources – is information already gathered by government organizations, academic institutions, and advocacy groups.

Mixed methods – is information collected through multiple sources.

Needs – are a lack of something that is desired or useful in a community.

Primary sources – are first-hand accounts from members of the community.

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5. Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration

Contents

Summary

Collaboration between formal systems includes organizations and agencies working together for the purpose of community capacity building. Members of a partnership can strengthen collaborations between formal systems. Thus, there are key principles that contribute to successful collaborations, including a description and instructions for each principle. Finally, assessment tools to assess strengths in a partnership and prioritize areas of improvement can be utilized to understand and strengthen collaborations.

Collaborations between formal systems are a collection of organizations or agencies that share similar interests and concerns for their communities. When these organizations come together and collaborate, they are better able to serve communities by sharing resources to meet specific community needs. Overall, organizations working together to achieve common desired results foster a shared sense of community as well as a shared sense of responsibility.

Collaborations demonstrating shared responsibility and collective competence share similarities in their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. These similarities can serve as standards to guide collaborative efforts. Additionally, there are steps collaborators can take to strengthen team functioning and help attain desired results.

The following principles contribute to successful collaborations: knowing the history of previous collaborations, developing a shared vision, understanding differences between collaborations, developing clear roles and responsibilities, assuring time devoted to meetings is productive, promoting the collaboration, being open to new ideas and encouraging open communication.

Lastly, two tools are provided that can be used to gauge the strength of the collaboration. These tools are The Partnerships and Collaboration Index and The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory. The Partnerships and Collaboration Index is comprised of statements that assess how agencies function both within their organization and with other organizations. The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory is a useful tool that captures a current snapshot of how the collaboration is doing, overall. These tools are comprised of factors shown to be important for successful collaboration.

Engaging Formal Systems

Collaboration is the partnership between formal systems (e.g., agencies and organizations) to address community needs. The most basic ingredient of a successful collaboration is that the partners share a similar concern for the community and have come together to address specific community needs or issues.[1] From the Community Capacity Building perspective, collaborations are the process used to build **social capital** among formal systems. Social capital is defined as the pooled resources (e.g., information, opportunities, and instrumental support) that arise from relationships.[2] Social capital fuels the formal system's collective capacity to solve problems, allocate resources, and attain goals.[3] Although service agencies and organizations have the ability to address some specific needs, they often have limited resources (e.g., time, money, personnel). Collaborations can help alleviate a lack of resources. Therefore, when agencies and organizations collaborate to support service members and their families, community needs can be more fully met.[1]

Formal system collaborators, working together for a common purpose, produce many advantages. The primary advantage is that skills and resources are shared across agencies. This allows collaboration partners to achieve desired results that might otherwise be out of reach. Another advantage is the sense of community that is fostered when people work together toward a common goal. Collaboration creates a sense of shared responsibility and collective competence that translates into more successful community outcomes.[1]

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ Elements of collaboration between formal systems
- ✓ Steps necessary to strengthen collaborations
- ✓ Methods for assessing an organization's ability to collaborate

Collaboration Characteristics

Collaborations that work from a Community Capacity Building approach exhibit certain knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Community change is more likely to occur when organizations exhibit high levels of these indicators. **Shared responsibility** and **collective competence** occur among networks of friends, families, and neighbors; the same can occur within and between formal systems. By collaborating, they share organizational responsibility for the well-being of the community and subsequently pool their resources and take action.

Here are some examples of the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors you would see in the staff of any organization working from a Community Capacity Building approach.

Knowledge is the overall awareness that members of an interagency collaboration have about the functioning of their own agency, about the needs and strengths of community members, and about other potential collaborators in the community.

> When collaborations work together to build community capacity, members of the collaboration have an awareness of:
>
> - The programs and services of their own organization
> - Other local agency resources, and what other organizations are doing in the community
> - The differences in organizational culture of other support programs
> - The strengths and needs of the community[1]
> - The importance of relationships and connectedness in family and community well-being

Attitudes are the beliefs that members of an interagency collaboration hold with regards to fostering partnership. Their attitudes should reflect the belief that connections (with both other formal systems and informal networks) benefit the community.

> When collaborators work together to build community capacity, members of the collaboration share the belief that:
>
> - Working with other agencies improves the support provided to military service members and their families.
> - Both agencies are committed to making a difference in the community
> - Coordinating services with others will improve outcomes for families
> - The skills and experiences of other community members are essential to reaching desired results

Behaviors are the actions of members of an interagency collaboration in their relationships with one another. These reflect a commitment to collaborating with other agencies in the community.

> When collaborators work together to build community capacity, members of that interagency collaboration demonstrate collaborative behavior by:
>
> - Regularly meeting with other agencies for networking, service coordination, and community planning
> - Soliciting and using feedback from community members in developing and improving programs[1]
> - Participating in and co-sponsoring community programs and events
> - Helping community members by making referrals to other community agencies

A collaborative team can use the list of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors described above as a reference point to check their overall status as builders of community capacity. The team should refer back to the list regularly.

Strengthening Collaborations between Formal Systems

Whether an agency has a rich history of collaborating with others or has little experience with such partnerships, members of an interagency collaboration can always work to strengthen their functioning.

Building a partnership

Each individual in an organization plays a part in the success of the collaborative team. To be most effective at building a partnership, all members must:

- Know the history of collaboration in the community
- Understand the differences in organizational culture
- Encourage open communication
- Create a sense of unity by developing a shared desired vision
- Be open to new ideas
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Promote the collaboration accomplishments
- Assure time devoted to meetings is productive

Know the history of collaboration in the community:[4] By the very nature of social and physical infrastructures, collaborative efforts function more easily in some communities than in others. A history of strong collaboration and a favorable political environment go a long way in making an ideal situation for partnering with other agencies. Although certain current obstacles and situations may be beyond control, collaborations work more effectively if they are aware of the successes and failures of previous community collaborations and consider them in the planning of new efforts.[4]

Trust is a key to successful collaborations.[5] So, the first step is to identify the organizations that can potentially work as partners. Agencies that maintain positive relationships with others in the community provide an advantage to collaborations. Since they have a history of working with and sharing knowledge with others, they are known and trusted among the agencies they have previously worked with.[1] Knowledge about an agency's past relationships with other agencies can help one learn about that particular agency's reputation of working collaboratively. This can help identify possible hurdles or difficulties that could arise when working with that agency.

You can explore the history of an organization by speaking with people involved in the agency, looking at events or activities it sponsors, and reading about the agency. This can provide insight into how that agency handles situations and challenges and how it might behave as a future collaborator. From there, evaluate which agencies and stakeholders are the best fit for the collaboration and the community's current needs.

Understand differences in organizational culture: The collaborating partners will include representatives from various aspects of the community, such as civilian and military stakeholders, informal groups and formal agencies, key leaders, and individual community members. Bringing together such a diverse group can be beneficial, but can also present some challenges – so it is critical to understand the differences of each organization's culture in order to work together effectively and efficiently. Although getting to know partners and key stakeholders takes time, this is a critical step in working together.

Each organization has a different way of operating due to their differing rules, regulations, values, and goals. **Organizational culture** refers to the patterns of relationships, attitudes, and worldviews that an organization develops over an extended period of time.[1] There are often pronounced differences in daily operations between civilian and military agencies. For example, in civilian organizations people address each other by first or last names, while people in the military often refer to one another by title or rank. In some organizations, people answer phone calls directly; others have an intermediary answer the phones, or prefer another method of communication, such as email. Some offer information easily, others are bound by confidentiality or other protocols. Some agencies are team-oriented, while others are hierarchical.[1] The culture of an organization is often closely tied to its identity. Knowing these differences and catering to each agency's preferences, builds rapport among those involved in the collaborations.

Partner agencies may have different perspectives or approaches to tasks and goals. The insight gained by exploring another agency's interests, assets, decision-making style, hierarchy, and connections to informal networks can improve interactions during the collaboration.[1,6]

Encourage open communication: Open, effective communication is essential to productive collaborations. Thus, a system of communication needs to be established with strategies that reflect the diverse styles of the members.[1,4]

The following strategies facilitate open communication:

Present the value of being in an open environment where people can agree or respectfully disagree, as well as give and receive ideas, comments, and concerns. Discussing this with the collaborative team opens lines of communication and creates a safe, respectful, and approachable environment.

Be clear about members' responsibilities for communication with the collaborative partners.[4] For example, each agency should designate a Point of Contact (POC). This POC will receive information from and send information to the collaborative group. The POCs will disseminate the information throughout their own agencies. The team can also decide when, how, and what information will be communicated.

Praise colleague and collaboration accomplishments. Provide words of encouragement to others to create a culture of appreciation for hard work. This can mean highlighting each partner's potential contributions, and focusing on and encouraging accomplishments, whether small or large, towards achieving desired results. When members of the partnership have positive attitudes about the value of the collaboration and their partners, their motivation and devotion increases causing a greater willingness to engage in collaborative work. If necessary, you should offer constructive feedback, comments, and concerns to members of the collaboration.

Make time for informal, personal communication to build trust and establish a sense of community.[5] Being intentional about this moves the group from just being representatives of organizations to becoming a team and working together.[1] Personal connections create a more informed, cohesive group to work together towards common desired results.[4] Building relationships is also important for networking and the development of personal and professional support.

Develop a shared vision: Once an agency has an understanding of their potential collaborative partners and has selected the appropriate agencies with which to collaborate, it can then create a shared vision of what the partnership will look like. Successful partners share a similar vision for what can be accomplished and how the community will be improved as a result of working together.[1]Partners must share a similar vision of the desired results and the action plans to meet those results. Each agency may have a different vision for itself, but there will also be overlap among each of the agency's visions that will enable them to work together to reach the desired results. The shared vision may be what has drawn them together in the first place or may result from the work the partners do together.[1]

The first step in establishing a shared vision is to identify issues that should be addressed first by the new partnership. This will pinpoint the desired results the collaboration wants to focus on for the community. Team members should use this information to begin a conversation with potential interagency partners on their shared vision of handling the issue.

Second, open the dialogue with your new partners to discuss common goals and visions to assure that the collaboration will meet community needs and focus on desired results.[1] Think about how the community can benefit from the proposed interagency collaboration, and be aware of how each organization can benefit. Compare ideas with partners to determine if there is a fit that will better the community. This shared vision can motivate partners and avoid confusion, while simultaneously working towards the common results desired for the community.[4]

Finally, encourage those involved in the collaboration to increase their understanding of the people they aim to serve. Members are more motivated to work together when they hold a strong commitment to resolving the target problem for the population they serve.[7] A collaboration working with military members and their families should encourage everyone who is in the collaboration to gain a better understanding of military culture by speaking with service members and/or their families, participating in activities attended by military members and their families, and reading materials published by military sources. (e.g., Military OneSource is a military-sponsored website that provides information on topics relevant to military service members and those who serve them.) A basic understanding of military culture, military life, and available military resources is needed to provide the most effective and helpful support to military families.

Be open to new ideas: Through the process of working with and collaborating with others, innovative and effective ideas will emerge. Many times, tackling community needs requires the skills, talents, ideas, and energy of multiple agencies. Each agency may have ideas that increase the capacity to confront significant issues in the community.[1] Be receptive of new ideas and open to learning from others. One way to do this is to learn about similar situations in other communities and how they addressed the issues. Draw on the experiences of others and learn from their mistakes. This will enable you to make better decisions when addressing your community's needs. One useful resource to find existing programs similar to what you want to establish in your community is Operation Military Kids. Its website, http://www.operationmilitarykids.org, provides information about existing programs in the U.S. and U.S. territories. (Click on "State Information" or "Get Involved" on the homepage and select a state or U.S. territory.)

After programs have been implemented, teams can begin to monitor the effectiveness of the program. Be open to constructive feedback that community members provide through your monitoring efforts. Use this information to improve upon existing initiatives and develop new approaches to meet the community's needs.[1] In other words, be flexible and adapt to the community's needs when necessary because needs change over time. It may be necessary to adjust activities and programs to better address the evolving and changing issues and contexts of the community.[8,9] Use the collaboration measurement tools found in the *Tools* chapter at the end of the manual (The Partnership and Collaboration Index and The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory) to monitor the group regularly and take steps to ensure it remains flexible and effective.

Establish clear roles and responsibilities: One of the key ingredients of a successful collaboration is clarity over what is and what is not within the scope of services for each agency and for the collaborative team. The roles of the collaboration should be clear to those inside and outside of the partnership.[1] This is an integral step in creating a partnership because the process of collaboration requires agencies not only to share resources, but also share in the decision-making, critiquing, and praising.[10] Creating clear roles and responsibilities can often avoid certain types of conflict.

Although many factors contribute to having or developing clear roles and responsibilities, a collaborative team can use the list below as a starting point:

- Become clear about the vision and function of each agency that desires to be a part of the collaborative.
- Have open dialogue as a team to clarify the vision of the partnership.
- Specify each agency's strengths and what they will be responsible for in regards to the task. Define contributions clearly, but also keep roles flexible enough to meet needs and assignments as they evolve.
- Specify the collaboration's contributions and limitations through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) (See the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual to learn how to develop a MOU). These written understandings provide a record of what the collaboration has agreed upon and provide clarity about the boundaries of each agency's service to the collaboration.

Promote collaboration accomplishments: There will be many accomplishments and successes along the way. So share those successes with others. Spread the word that you're making a difference in the community. This will increase awareness about the collaborative efforts, get buy-in and support from others in the community, and give people the opportunity to offer new ideas, skills, resources, and connections that could help.

Promotion can occur in many ways. One way to promote collaboration is to interact with decision-makers and important stakeholders at public meetings and conferences. These events also provide a forum for you to garner additional support for your efforts. Share what your initiative has achieved and how it is improving the lives of families.

In addition, communicating successes in larger venues or at community-wide events, meetings, and conferences can prove to others that the collaborative partners have the skills to address and confront community issues.[5]Attending relevant events provides opportunities to share with other people the good work the collaboration is doing in the community. This enables members of the collaboration to become a familiar face to people with whom they typically may not connect.

Assure time devoted to meetings is productive: Meetings are often the only time that partners are all together. Meetings are intended to be productive, engaging, and worthwhile to all members who attend, so they need to be dynamic and focused on taking action to achieve results. Meetings should end with a clear delegation of tasks and priorities related to achieving desired results.[1]

Although a meeting typically has only one leader, each collaborative team member can play a role to ensure efficiency and to make the best use of everyone's time and energy.

- Request a copy of the agenda before each meeting, or offer to create an agenda for each meeting if one does not exist.
- Review the agenda, thinking of how each individual's unique skills or resources can contribute to actions and solutions.
- Prepare a personal agenda for decisions that you feel need the input of the full team, including strategies for problem-solving and needed resources.
- Discuss timelines, during the meeting, for task completion and set dates for when members will update the group about their progress.
- Use the time *between* meetings for updates, which can be handled by email.
- Advocate for sub-committee meetings about issues or tasks that do not need the full group's attention.

Successful Stories from the Field

Essential Life Skills for Military Families (ELSMF) - Collaboration between Cooperative Extension and National Guard

National Guard and Reserve families have more difficulties accessing military programs and resources because they are widely dispersed among civilian communities. In North Carolina, a collaboration was formed between family and consumer science agents from the University of North Carolina's Cooperative Extension System and representatives from the Family Assistance personnel from the National Guard because both organizations saw the need to help Guard and Reserve families increase their access to military programs and resources. Meeting that need became the shared vision for the desired results.

This proved to be a beneficial partnership because both organizations were able to pool their unique knowledge, resources, and personnel together to implement a program that met the needs of Guard and Reserve families. Members from the Cooperative Extension System applied their resources on current, research-based information concerning family well-being, while the Family Assistance personnel applied their knowledge of Guard family's needs, as well as utilized resources that were currently available through military avenues. This partnership led to the development of the Essential Life Skills for Military Families (ELSMF) program, which was tailored specifically for the needs of citizen-soldier families. Both groups' expertise was invaluable in the plan for program implementation.

Before developing the program, the collaborative team held two separate workshops to learn about each other. One workshop introduced the community-based model of support for citizen-soldier families, while the other workshop introduced each other's history, culture, and goals. In summary, this collaboration between the formal systems of Cooperative Extension and the National Guard worked in part because each had a shared vision for their desired results, pooled their resources to meet that goal, and took the time to understand each other's culture and strengths.[11]

Assessment of Collaborations between Formal Systems

Partnerships and Collaboration Index[12]

The Partnerships and Collaboration Index assesses how agencies function both within their organization and with other organizations. This section focuses on the 15 factors *between* organizations that lead to effective collaborations. This assessment is easy to administer and is intended to be a guiding framework, designed with the knowledge that agencies must possess specific characteristics and effectively collaborate in order to successfully impact communities.[12]

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory[4]

Partnerships that are interested in assessing interagency collaboration will find The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory a useful tool that captures a current snapshot of how the collaboration is functioning overall. The tool is comprised of 20 factors shown to be important for the success of collaboration. Although the language is slightly different from what is presented in the CCB modules, the concepts are the same. These 20 factors are grouped into categories of Environment (e.g., the social context), Member Characteristics (e.g., organizational culture differences), Process and Structure (e.g., roles/responsibilities), Communication, and Purpose and Resources.

To learn more about the *Partnership and Collaboration Index* or *The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory*, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Conclusion

When formal systems build strong collaborations, there are numerous benefits for the agencies themselves, military service members and families, and the larger community. To start, strong collaborations avoid and reduce the duplication of services, so resources are maximized.

Collaborating agencies are able to combine resources and fill more gaps in services. This results in the needs of military service members and their families being more fully met.

When collaborating partners incorporate the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the Community Capacity Building perspective, benefits grow exponentially. Collaborations create shared responsibility and collective competency among the formal systems mobilizing the agencies to accomplish a common goal together. Successful collaborations increase the odds of success by strengthening the interactions of formal systems with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of military service members and their families. Successful collaborations are integral to the Community Capacity Building approach.

To strengthen collaborations between formal systems, each agency must focus on factors related to the success of the collaborative team and the success of relationships within the team. The following two assessments, The Partnerships and Collaboration Index and The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, give insight into the collaboration's functioning, to help ensure that the team is moving toward the shared vision of desired results.

Glossary of Terms

Attitudes – are the beliefs and values that members of an interagency collaboration hold in regards to fostering collaboration.

Behaviors – are the desirable actions of members of an interagency collaboration towards collaborative relationships.

Collaboration – is the partnership between agencies and organizations to address community needs.

Collective competence – is a group of people employing their varied skills to address community needs and take advantage of opportunities to improve well-being.

Organizational culture – are patterns of relationships, attitudes, and worldviews organizations that develop over an extended period of time, often closely tied to an organization's identity.

Knowledge – is the overall awareness that members of an interagency collaboration have about the functioning of their agency, about the needs of community members, and about other potential collaborators in their community.

Shared responsibility – is the feeling of investment community members have for one another to improve the general welfare of the community.

Social capital – is the pooled resources (information, opportunities, and instrumental support) that arise from relationships.

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6. Mobilizing Informal Networks

Contents

Summary

Informal networks are the voluntary relationships people have, such as those with extended family members, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and support groups. Strong informal networks lead to increased social support, a greater sense of belonging within a community, greater physical and psychological well-being, and improved quality of life. Informal networks are a major contributing factor in developing community capacity. When informal networks focus attention and direct support around important issues, they exert influence to change the way their community functions.

Informal networks exist alongside formal systems. Formal systems include organizations, service agencies, military unit leaders, and other institutions in which there is a sense of obligation attached. Success in positively impacting military service members and their families largely hinges on the relationships that formal systems develop with informal networks of support.

Building community capacity by strengthening informal networks is explained through the concepts of Levels of Effect. Level One effects occur within a single formal system or informal network (e.g., a particular unit) and increase what Robert Putnam calls "bonding." Bonding experiences lead to cohesion, trust, positive regard, and consensus on how meaningful change can occur. Level Two effects involve interactions between similar formal or informal groups (e.g., across neighborhoods in a community). Level Three effects extend Putnam's idea of bridging which involves relationship ties among people across dissimilar groups, such as when formal systems and informal networks work together.

Formal systems that invest in building informal networks and partnering with them to reach desired results are likely to see more involvement, partnership opportunities, and commitment from diverse sectors of the community. The programs "Defiant Gardens" and "360 Family Support" are excellent examples of formal systems working to increase capacity in informal networks.

Researchers and program professionals often use assessment tools such as the Community Connections Index (CCI) and the Informal Social Connections Index (ISCI) to help them better understand informal networks. When an organization understands and values informal networks, it gives them strategic advantages in achieving their desired results.

Engaging Informal Networks

Informal networks are the voluntary relationships people have with each other, such as those between extended family members, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and support groups.[1] Informal networks are loosely structured citizen groups that have contact with each other and are committed to the larger well-being of others around them.[2] Mancini and Bowen see informal networks as relationships that are characterized by choice. Individuals choose the informal network members with whom they interact.[3] Informal networks, therefore, are comprised of friends and neighbors and other groups that people maintain relationships with on a voluntary basis. Specific examples of informal networks include chosen relationships with people at work, church, community gardening groups, local unit-based support groups, local rotary clubs, or extended family members. Some informal networks are maintained through regular face-to-face contact (e.g., colleagues at work or peers at school) while others are maintained through periodic meetings (e.g., volunteer association meetings) or electronic means (e.g., phone, e-mail, video conference, etc.).[4]

Informal networks are the "civic infrastructure" and "bonds of trust" that help people experience meaningful relationships in their daily lives.[2] Belonging to informal networks not only fosters personal well-being, but these networks are also vital to the well-being of the larger community.' The strength of informal networks in a community makes community capacity come alive.[1] Informal groups in the community give life to community capacity when they share responsibility and put their collective competence to work supporting formal systems and their missions for the public good. For example, a visible strength exhibited by informal networks is civic involvement through participation in community issues.[5]

The strength of informal networks in a community makes community capacity come alive.

Strong informal networks in a community fulfill the basic need of human beings to belong and feel connected to others,[3] which leads to:

- Increased social support
- Greater sense of belonging, which helps individuals feel a sense of ownership about their community
- Greater physical and psychological well-being
- Improved quality of life[2,4]

Informal networks are often an untapped resource. However, informal networks are what change communities—people themselves are the drivers of change.[3]Network members have natural energy that can greatly strengthen the efforts of formal organizations and systems. When informal networks gather support around important issues, they exert influence to change the way their community functions. Informal network members help themselves and others face life transitions and challenges. They provide an opportunity for people to belong, share common resources, build trust through give and take, and ultimately, ease life transitions and challenges through a context of support. The greater military community recognizes the importance of identifying and strengthening informal networks in their own communities.[6]

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The benefits of formal systems working with informal networks
- ✓ The elements of informal networks
- ✓ Ways to include informal networks within an organization's work
- ✓ Methods for assessing organization's work with informal networks

Why are Informal Networks Beneficial?

Informal networks are all about friends, neighbors, and the other people and groups we come in contact with in our everyday life. These networks are a natural part of community life. Utilizing this natural camaraderie and sense of community to achieve results is a powerful way to affirm community strengths. Formal systems and organizations are better able to access people in their natural setting when they know how and where informal networks such as friendship groups, social interest groups, and volunteer associations operate in the community. Ultimately, these informal networks are pivotal players in military and civilian community well-being. They play an active role in the day-to-day life of service members and families and can help different elements of the community work together more effectively.[2]

Informal networks exist alongside formal systems (e.g., organizations, agencies, military unit leaders, and other institutions in which there is a sense of obligation attached) in aiding community life.[3] Strong informal networks can also influence formal systems to work more efficiently. Knowing how to energize and collaborate with local informal networks can be a powerful way to motivate formal systems to achieve desired community results. Encouraging participation and fostering group relationships not only helps to achieve desired results for community members, but also improves the overall well-being of those involved.

Strong relationships between formal systems and informal networks positively impact military service members and their families. When formal systems (e.g., community service providers, schools, military unit leadership, and government agencies) develop good relationships with informal networks (families, neighborhoods, local clubs, and faith communities) positive things happen for military families. A complementary, balanced relationship between the formal and informal sectors helps achieve the primary results of building community capacity and enhancing the well-being of military service members, families, and the community.

What Do Informal Networks Look Like?

Because people have a great deal of choice in how they form and maintain informal networks, they can be difficult to identify. Sometimes these networks are unclear, even to their own members.[5] Informal networks are able to build community capacity when network members exhibit specific knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Knowledge is the overall awareness that network members have about community strengths, resources, and needs and how to use strengths and resources to meet needs.

When informal networks work to build community capacity, community members:

- Are aware of their own needs for community connections
- Understand the benefits of informal community connections for themselves and others
- Understand the role and responsibility they have in building community connections
- Know actions they could take to have a positive effect on others in their community[5]

Attitudes are the individual and collective beliefs and sentiments of residents in a community. Perhaps most importantly, attitudes are the sense of shared responsibility that drives residents to respond to community needs and value results that support military service members and their families.

When informal networks work to build community capacity, community members:

- Value the skills, backgrounds, and experiences of other community members
- Feel it is important to interact with others around everyday life issues and concerns
- Feel a sense of responsibility to connect with other community members[5]

Behavior refers to the translation of shared knowledge and attitudes into on-the-ground action in the community. Change in communities happens through concrete actions taken by community members, often in partnership with formal organizations. Formal systems have a role to invest in and foster informal networks. And informal networks have a role to inform and support formal systems.

When informal networks work to build community capacity, community members:

- Provide support to others on a regular basis
- Welcome newcomers and help them learn about the community

- Interact informally with other community members and participate in community events
- Cooperate with others to address community issues, sharing knowledge and resources
- Exchange resources with others, including knowledge and information[5]

Functions of informal networks

So, what is special about people coming together? What is it that they do for one another? Relationships and connections in informal networks serve multiple functions for individuals and families. They provide:[3]

- *Emotional support:* Encouragement, celebration, help in dealing with despair and worry
- *Practical help:* Assistance in accomplishing tasks
- *Information:* Help in making better decisions
- *Companionship:* Time spent together, having fun, developing a context for support
- *Validation:* Help in feeling worthwhile, competent, and hopeful

Levels of effects: Combined power of formal systems and informal networks

According to Small and Supple, psychological and social connections within communities influence peoples' lives, above and beyond the physical location of their residence.[7] Formal systems, informal networks, and the interaction between the two create mechanisms for positive community change that influence families. Military service members, families, and the formal systems that work with them are parts of a complex system of interactions that directly influence their lives. In our model of Community Capacity Building, we incorporate Small and Supple's three **levels of effects**.[7]

First-order effects (Level One) involve interactions within a single formal system or informal network.[8] Level one effects build community capacity by increasing what Robert Putnam refers to as "bonding." **Bonding** experiences within a particular formal system or informal network lead to cohesion, trust, positive regard, and mutual agreement on how meaningful change can occur and what that change would look like. Level One effects occur when members of a formal agency, like the Boys and Girls Club of America, work together to better understand military children, their strengths and unmet needs. An example of a Level One effect in an informal network is a group of civilian spouses of service members in the same unit who come together to help other spouses and families.

Second-order effects (Level Two) involve interactions between similar formal or informal groups.[8]Level Two effects contribute to community capacity building by increasing bonds between and among formal systems or, between and among informal network groups. An example of a Level Two effect among formal systems is when the Cooperative Extension and 4-H, Boys and Girls Club of America, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, K-12 Education institutions, and

PTA groups work together in support of military youth and children. An informal networks example is when civilian spouses across different military units. Such connections likely create a positive synergy in which these combined efforts have a greater probability of achieving positive results.

The process of bonding and bridging provides a context for mutual sharing of ideas, expertise, and unique insights.

Third-order effects (Level Three) involve interactions between dissimilar formal and informal groups. Level Three effects build community capacity by developing partnerships between formal systems like Cooperative Extension and 4-H and informal networks such as civilian spouses of service members supporting military youth and families in a particular military unit.[8]Level Three extends Putnam's idea of **bridging**, which involves bonding and relationship ties among people from dissimilar groups. Level Three effects occur when formal systems and informal networks work together to achieve desired results for military service members and their families. When formal systems and informal networks work towards agreement about desired community change, the shared resource base for mobilizing a community dramatically increases. Shared visions promote shared action. Agreement on desired results increases the willingness to openly discuss differences of opinion and reduces resistance to change among people involved in these Level Three interactions. Putnam refers to bonding as the "sociological superglue" (cohesion, trust, positive regard) and bridging as the "sociological WD-40," which "lubricates" community action.

Building Partnerships with Informal Networks

Formal systems should make it a priority to partner with informal networks and create opportunities where bonding and bridging can take place for community members.[3]The ongoing processes of bonding and bridging among members from various parts of the community provides leads to the sharing of ideas, expertise, and unique insights that strengthen community capacity toward achieving desired results.[3]

Formal systems that encourage and build informal networks increase community connections and are likely to see more involvement, partnership opportunities, and commitment from others in the community. Local organizations may already have their own partnerships and outreach efforts, but formal systems can and should partner with informal network connections in their communities by following these guidelines.

Connect and engage with informal networks

When service agencies and other formal systems invest time in listening and connecting with informal groups, they develop a better understanding of the capacities of local networks and are better able to achieve desired results. Formal systems should invest in and partner with informal networks in their community because they recognize that informal networks are an important venue to encourage inactive members to become active in the community. When these networks become connected, build and share ideas, and have access to resources team members are better equipped to reach desired results.

A community that shares responsibility and makes good use of collective competence encourages actions and interactions between and among members of formal systems and informal networks. Community capacity increases when activities and programs include intentional bonding (within a group and/or between groups of similar type) and bridging (between formal systems and informal networks). Linking people within similar groups and across different formal and informal groups provides momentum for cooperative action providing a cornerstone for achieving community results that strengthen family support. This process requires identifying, valuing, and connecting with informal networks within both military and civilian communities.

Here are just a few ways organizations can connect with informal networks in a community:

- Invite informal networks to use your facilities. Provide a community space for meetings, social gatherings, and public events. This makes groups aware that you're invested in the community and that you want to work with them.
- Create opportunities for community members to participate in voluntary activities, groups, or associations.
- Be intentional about the design of interactive opportunities. Being in the same place at the same time does not ensure connecting or linking. Some gatherings can be more targeted information sessions, introduction to new initiatives etc., while others can encourage more general communication about the community and shared interests. The primary goal is to help people connect and get to know each other.
- Advertise and market opportunities where various groups can come together.
- Employ both high-tech campaigns (e.g., social media, local military radio network, listservs, presentations at different venues and events) and low-tech campaigns (posters, flyers, word of mouth, door-to-door invites) to increase community member participation.
- Hold events at a number of locations in the community like community centers, unit locations, and housing areas.

Focus on collaborating with informal networks

Formal systems provide direct assistance for community members, but they often need the help of informal networks. Partnering with informal networks can create change and help to achieve desired results. Make sure that you involve members of informal networks as part of the planning team. Doing so will greatly increase community capacity.

Collaboration within and among informal community networks generates new ideas and more accurate information. In other words, residents have better and more current information about their community. Their organic knowledge can help provide better understanding of issues and ways to intervene through the appropriate channels. Community members are more likely to invest in and take ownership of desired change when their ideas are part of a free flow of information between participating network members. Over time, collaborative relationships that integrate the input and ideas of community members strengthen member's ownership of change.

The processes of bonding and bridging promote sharing of ideas, expertise, and unique insights. According to Scott London, "when people join together and discover common purpose, they create a kind of synergy that builds collective capacity." Interactions across various informal networks gives access to better information and greater resources. Such interactions also increase the key elements of shared responsibility and collective competence.

Successful Stories from the Field

360 Family Support for Marine Corps Families in Jacksonville, North Carolina

The Family Support Network (FSN) of North Carolina, a non-profit civilian agency, works with families with children who have special needs. Through a grant with the US Department of Health and Human Services, the FSN initiated a project to reach out to military families at Camp Lejeune, NC. The Strengthening Military Families Project partners with the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) at Camp Lejeune and other community organizations to integrate military and civilian support systems to support military families with children who have developmental disabilities. The FSN includes family advocates in the planning process and supports activities that promote the functioning of informal systems to support families.

Parent-to-Parent matches are one example of the use of informal networks. These matches offer one-to-one emotional and informational support to a parent of a child who has special needs by a trained support parent who has had similar family and disability experiences. The *referral parents* benefit from the experience and knowledge of trained *support parents* who have learned how to advocate for their child's needs and how to access services.

Parent-to-Parent support has proven highly beneficial to families with children who have special needs and has been identified as a promising practice for this population.[9] Such peer support impacts parents' ability to care for and advocate for their child's care. Further, confident and knowledgeable parents are better able to partner with providers from the child-serving system.[10] The Parent-to-Parent program increases protective factors that reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment by increasing parents' confidence, increasing acceptance of their situation, strengthening their sense of being able to cope[11] reducing their anxiety, and enhancing their perceptions of social support.[12]

The FSN plays an instrumental role in recruiting parents for the Parent-to-Parent matches, maintains a data base to search for appropriate matches, trains support parents, makes appropriate matches based on the needs of the family, and provides information and technical support to parents involved in the matches.

The Strengthening Military Families project is an excellent example of how formal systems can mobilize informal networks to achieve desired results for military service members and their families.

Defiant Gardens

Defiant Gardens is an example of a program focused on strengthening informal networks of military service members and their families. The program was developed through the collaboration of the Department of Defense and Cornell Cooperative Extension's branch of the youth development organization 4-H. As a community gardening program, Defiant Gardens connects military members serving overseas with youth in the United States through the exchange and gardening of native plants.[13]

The program began at Fort Drum Army Installation and the surrounding community in New York State with military service members and military youth gardening native plants from Afghanistan. While youth garden on the military installation, deployed military service members spend time working on container gardens in Afghanistan. Also soon-to-be-deployed military service members work to prepare container gardens to be sent overseas. The participants benefit from the soothing nature of gardening as well as from the informal networks formed while gardening with others in their community. As families and community members create common ground through gardening, the community as a whole is strengthened.[14]

As part of the Defiant Gardens program, military youth are given the opportunity to participate in summer camps and 4-H activities as well as visit local farms. They learn how to plan and care for their gardens from local 4-H county youth development supervisors. Additionally, military service members work on the container gardens not only while they are deployed, but also while awaiting deployment on the military installation.[15]

Since the Defiant Gardens program began, it is now implemented on military installations around the world. The program has expanded beyond connecting youth and military service members to aiding military youth in transitioning into new military communities.[15]

The Defiant Gardens program is also an example of formal systems strengthening informal networks in order to benefit not only military service members but also their families. Through this program, military service members and their families are able to connect across the world with individuals in innovative ways.[13]

Assessment of Community Connections

Researchers and practitioners often use assessment tools to help them better understand informal networks. These tools provide a description of the people in a community and how they are connected to each other.

The following assessments provide information about individual perceptions and evaluations of community surroundings. The first assessment, the Community Connections Assessment (CCA)[16], developed by Bowen, Mancini, and Martin, focuses on the extent to which people come together, provide support, and work collectively in the community. Another assessment, the Community Connections Index (CCI), developed by Mancini, Bowen, Martin, and Ware, attends to a sense of community through engagement. The CCI assesses both actual behaviors of connecting, and subjective evaluations of how people feel about their ability to connect in their community. Additionally, the Informal Social Connections Index (ISCI) by Bowen and Martin focuses on the level of confidence individuals have in receiving support from those around them.

To learn more about the Community Connections Assessment, the Community Connections Index, the Informal Social Connections Index, please visit the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Conclusion

The intuitive and natural way that communities operate is to rely on the power of informal networks. Research has shown that people turn to their neighbors and friends to help them get through challenging times and celebrate positive moments.[3]Formal systems must be intentional about involving, supporting, and relying upon informal networks. When an organization understands how informal networks work and partner with them, it gives them strategic advantages to achieve desired results. The potential for a community to achieve its desired results is all about relationships; and relationships are all about connections; and connections are all about networks.[3]

Glossary of Terms

Attitude – are the beliefs and values of the residents in a community, which drives them to respond to needs in the community.

Behavior – is the translation of shared knowledge and attitude into on-the-ground action in the community.

Bonding – is the interactions within network types that lead to greater cohesion. Robert Putnam referred to bonding as the "sociological superglue".

Bridging – is the interactions between dissimilar network types in the community (i.e., between formal systems and informal networks). Robert Putnam referred to bonding as the "sociological WD-40".

Informal networks – is the voluntary relationships people have, such as immediate and extended family members, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and support groups.

Knowledge – is the awareness that community members have about the various needs within the community, as well as the resources and opportunities for addressing them.

Levels of effects – are the degrees of effect that result from interactions between and within formal systems and informal networks.

> **First-order effects (Level I) –** occur within either a single formal system or a single informal network.
>
> **Second-order effects (Level II) –** occur when similar formal systems (organizations) come together, or when similar informal networks come together.
>
> **Third-order effects (Level III)** – occur when there are interactions between dissimilar and diverse network types that contribute to community capacity building; for example when formal systems and informal networks come together to address a problem in the community.

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7. Engaging Military Leaders

Contents

Summary

Military leaders have a fundamental responsibility and commitment to promote and sustain the well-being of military service members and their families. They nurture and sustain ties between and among service members and their families, provide support in dealing with life transitions and challenges, encourage involvement in civic activities, and connect service members to support services. In recent years, both military and civilian organizations have shifted to relying more on local community resources for assistance and support for serving military populations. Current and former military leaders play a key role in this equation as an intermediate support system between formal systems on the one hand and informal networks on the other.

The involvement of military leaders in the planning process is vital to a community capacity building initiative. Military leaders occupy positions that have significant influence on the morale, commitment, and attitudes of service members and their families. They are informed about needs and assets and are decision makers who have power to make decisions. Leaders who have the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors associated with community capacity building are beneficial in collaborative efforts. Collaborative organizations must reach out and involve military leaders as part of the planning team and work with them to achieve desired results for service members and families.

Organizations can create and sustain relationships with current and former military leaders by networking at conferences and civic events and participating in community and local military social activities. Civilian professionals can encourage the involvement of military leaders with their organizations by sharing information and resources, being considerate with meetings, and partnering and communicating frequently. Engagement is not a "one-time" event. Rather, it is a process that evolves over time.

The Role of Military Leaders in Community Capacity Building

Military leaders have a fundamental responsibility and commitment to promote and sustain the well-being of military service members within their organization. They consist of both current and former members of the military community with power, position, influence or access to resources. Military leaders provide both instrumental and emotional support to service members and families. In terms of family assistance, they provide instrumental support by assisting military service members and their families in dealing with life transitions and challenges, encouraging their involvement in formal and informal civic activities, and connecting them to support services.[1] Military leaders provide social and emotional support by helping nurture and sustain ties between and among service members and their families.

The positive relationships that current military leaders develop with their service members directly influences the cohesion of their unit, the amount of social support available for all members, and the general well-being of members.[2,3] Leaders that show concern, responsiveness, and supportiveness tend to have service members that are more capable of handling work demands, have less work spillover, a greater sense of community, and greater commitment to their organization.[1,4]

Military leaders also include former military members who have credibility and connections, like a well-known retired officer who is active with local veterans' groups. A leader could also be someone who is closely associated with the military, like a spouse with particular influence in the community. They could be current or former civilian employees in the military sector. All of these are people who have an investment in bettering the lives of services members and their families. Such leaders are essential partners for any CCB initiative for military families.

Current research describes the strategies that organizations can employ to form stronger alliances and partnerships with military leaders. The aim is to support involved leadership—leaders with the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that are associated with effectively supporting military service members and their families.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The characteristics of involved military leaders
- ✓ Ways that civilian **formal systems** can support and engage military leaders

Characteristics of Involved Leadership

Working alongside military leaders can naturally create partnerships that positively impact military service members, their families, and the communities in which they live. Effective leaders, whether in the military or civilian community will demonstrate certain knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the Community Capacity Building approach.[2] Often these indicators are intertwined. A leader demonstrates knowledge through his or her attitudes and behaviors. All three indicators communicate his or her investment and concern for the military community's welfare.[4] When leaders have a working knowledge of the needs and strengths of the community and available resources accompanied by attitudes and behaviors that promote the well-being of service members, there is high community capacity. Through targeted efforts, each of these domains can be strengthened.

Here are some examples of the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that military leaders who are working from a Community Capacity Building approach hold.

Knowledge refers to the overall *awareness* that leaders have about the various strengths and needs of their community, in which military members and their families are embedded.

When military leaders work to build community capacity, they:

- Understand the importance of informal networks in family well-being
- Understand their responsibility for promoting relationships and connectedness[2]
- Know the value of collaboration with other formal system and informal network leaders
- Know the needs of families and the local resources to use to promote well-being for service members and families[4]

Attitude refers to *values* and *beliefs* held by leaders that reflect a recognition of the strengths and vulnerabilities of military service members and their families.[2] Their attitude will also reflect the belief that connections with formal systems and informal networks benefit people and the community. The most effective leaders show a genuine interest in the well-being of service members and their families.

When military leaders work to build community capacity, they:

- Reflect a real interest in the well-being of members and their families[2]
- Believe that community involvement is important for both family and community well-being

Behavior refers to the translation of knowledge and attitude into on-the-ground *action*.

When military leaders work to build community capacity, they:

- Seek out new ideas and opportunities to strengthen well-being of members and families

- Help new members and their families get connected to informal and formal resources in the community, encouraging, sponsoring and participating in social and educational events
- Exchange knowledge and lessons learned with other formal leaders in collaborative efforts to support of military service members and families
- Recognize and address family problems with sensitivity and support[2]

How to Build Partnerships with Military Leaders

Military leaders who demonstrate these positive indicators of knowledge, attitude, and behavior are those we most need to involve in collaborative efforts. Strong collaborations increase network reach, pull together resources, and effectively share information to create positive outcomes for individuals, families, organizations, and communities. But support for a military leader cannot occur until a relationship with that person exists. Organizations can do the following things to develop relationships with military leaders.[2]

Interact with military leaders

Many organizations that serve service members and their families already involve military leaders in the work they do. However, finding ways to become acquainted with leaders who are not yet involved can benefit your efforts as well. Participating in community and local military events that support military families presents occasions to strengthen established relationships and create new ones.[2] You can find events listed on social networking sites, on military websites, and in community advertisements.[5] Participating is a good opportunity to learn about local concerns, meet people who are active in area informal groups, and identify leaders in both the community and in military family organizations.

There are organizations and groups all over your community that are affiliated with the military. Besides installations themselves, there are facilities like military service organizations and family support centers that the planning team can look to to find leaders who are active in the military community and could become planning team members.

Make sure you go through the appropriate channels to connect with military leaders.

Develop and sustain working relationships

Organizations should go beyond waiting on an invitation to collaborate with military leaders and instead be proactive and strategic when developing and sustaining working relationships.[2]

To develop and sustain working relationships with military leaders, organizations must:

- Allow for a variety of collaborations with military leaders because, even when the goals or methods may not perfectly align, the relationships developed during such partnerships can be an asset for future endeavors.
- Periodically be in contact and demonstrate a desire to foster partnership with military leaders.
- Communicate with military leaders frequently. This can keep leaders in the know while also reinforcing relationships. Be sure to encourage face-to-face interactions when possible.
- Become familiar with their organizational culture, for example, the military.

Partner with leaders to offer support

The next step in creating important allies of military leaders is collaborating with them to provide resources and support to their service members and their families. Get military leaders involved as a part of your planning team. As part of the planning team, discuss what each of you sees as the needs and assets of service members, their families, and the community. If a community assessment has already been done, share the information that was discovered. Agree on what is needed for the community and develop a shared desired result. You must decide together how you can accomplish it. Hopefully, those leaders will not only become involved with the planning process itself, but also they will spread information about the organization to service members.[2] Their input, expertise, resources, and connections will help you achieve results. A few other partnering tips include:

Share resources and information: Partnering with military leaders as well as other agencies to combine resources and information on available human services can build a resource collection that can benefit the organization as well as those being served.[4]The organization can offer unique resources to military leaders and in return these leaders can offer information and expertise to the organization.[2]

Be considerate with meetings: Partners are more likely to take part in events and meetings if program planning is considerate of people's time and overall availability. Time is a precious commodity for most people, so meetings should optimize time to allow for the involvement of military leaders. One simple way to do this is by preparing an agenda and having someone keep the meeting focused. Hold teleconferences, or break into smaller task groups to avoid frequent meetings. Be intentional with the timing and location of meetings and events, so they are most convenient for those involved.

Successful Stories from the Field

The Community Readiness Consultant Model

Family Readiness Centers (FRCs) are the focal agency for addressing the support needs of service members and families. These centers (formerly Family Support Centers) operate with a goal to strengthen service members and families through enhanced and targeted community efforts. To enact this goal, the Community Readiness Consultant (CRC) model has been implemented. This is a hallmark initiative to expand outreach efforts to units (typically at the squadron level), as well as to encourage interagency collaboration and build informal community networks that foster a sense of community and promote individual and family adaptation.

More specifically, Community Readiness Consultants (CRCs) are trained to assist military leaders in meeting their leadership responsibilities for the health, welfare, and readiness of service members. CRCs work in partnership with military leaders to identify and prioritize needs that compromise readiness and retention. CRCs capitalize on the availability of formal systems and informal networks in planning and implementing responses to issues. Networking and collaboration are the cornerstones of this community-based approach to practice. Although CRCs work within the scope of their agency's mandates, they are trained to help military leaders locate resources for needs that fall outside the scope of their centers.

The CRC model is an excellent example of how organizations can work in partnership with military leaders to achieve desired results for service members and their families. This service delivery strategy is both strengths-based and results-focused.

Conclusion

Military leader involvement is an important component in the CCB approach. Connection and partnerships with military leaders can bring about better results. Without military leaders participation and buy in, CCB efforts within military communities would be less effective. Engaging and working in partnership with military leaders involves having relationships where people work together to address specific needs affecting the well-being of military service members and their families.[6] However, engagement is not a "one-time" event. Rather, it is a process that evolves over time. As people become more invested in the well-being of the overall community, there will be an increase in their willingness to work together to strengthen the sense of shared responsibility and collective competence in support of military service members and their families.

Glossary of Terms

Attitude – are the beliefs and values that reflect a military leader's recognition of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the military service members and their families.

Behavior – is the translation of shared knowledge and attitude into on-the-ground action in the community.

Formal systems – are public and private agencies and organizations that provide services and support community needs.

Knowledge – is the overall awareness that military leaders must have about the various needs of their military service members in the context of the mission of their unit and the larger community.

Military leaders – are individuals who are current and/or former members of the military community with power, position, influence, or access to resources.

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8. Monitoring Results and Activities

Contents

Summary

Monitoring is a process of continually tracking a programs progress to determine whether efforts are making a difference for service members and their families. Monitoring allows organizations to improve upon efforts and to learn about areas they excel in and what may need improvement. Monitoring can also be used to share information on the progress of a program with stakeholders and financial partners to secure future funding. Therefore, monitoring is essential at all stages of the planning process. Organizations must monitor both the way their programs are implemented and the progress towards desired results.

There are two ways of monitoring a community capacity building program: implementation monitoring and outcome monitoring. Implementation monitoring gathers feedback on how well programs are being carried out compared to the program's original design or what was originally planned. Implementation monitoring looks at the performance of partners and planning team members and discovers both what is going well in programs and barriers to their effectiveness. When performing implementation monitoring, it is best to get input from both program staff and participants on how operations are performing. This information allows planners to improve the program by correcting things that need to be changed or modifying things that can be enhanced.

The second way of assessing programs is outcome monitoring. Outcome monitoring provides information on whether progress is being made towards desired results— by measuring if changes are taking place. To gauge progress being made, start with the measurable results identified in the action plan and then identify indicators and gather information that show progress toward those results.

After completing either type of monitoring effort, planning team members should summarize and discuss the findings and make recommendations for the future. Discussing findings with the organizational team, the community, and stakeholders, is a way of demonstrating the transparency of the program efforts. This continual process of learning about what is working and what can be improved can assist in ensuring future funding of a program and lead to more sustainable, long-term benefits for service members and families.

What Does it Mean to Monitor Results and Activities?

Monitoring refers to the continual tracking of whether efforts are working as they should and are making a difference for the people it was intended for.[1] Monitoring is a process that involves the participation of program staff and participants, the planning team, community members, and stakeholders.[2] Often monitoring efforts can discover areas where interventions excel in serving military members and their families. However, it can also uncover areas that need extra attention or efforts that fail to reach desired results.[3] Organizations should make sure that the work they do continually moves them toward achieving their desired results and enhancing community capacity.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The importance of monitoring
- ✓ How to monitor a community capacity building program, and
- ✓ How to analyze, discuss, and share findings to sustain benefits to service members and their families.

Why is Monitoring Important?

Monitoring plays a crucial role in the operation and improvement of programs that serve military members and families.[4] It confirms whether programs are being executed according to plan and whether they provide benefits for those they are intended to serve, which can provide accountability to those implementing the program.[5] Consistently monitoring efforts increases the likelihood that benefits for service members and families will be sustained over time.[6] Without monitoring, the planning team and the community lack adequate information about the organization's efforts, its accomplishments, and about how much impact the services are having.

By monitoring programs, organizations will:

- Understand what is working well and what areas need improvement.
- Know if resources are being used effectively.
- Determine if efforts are being implemented as planned.
- Provide guidelines for planning future efforts.[7]
- Determine if efforts are making progress towards desired results and improving the community—or if plans need to be changed to reach those results.[8]
- Gain information on project progress and results to share with stakeholders and financial partners.[9]

How to Monitor a Community Capacity Building Program

Organizations need to know as soon as possible if a program is not being implemented as it was intended or if resources are not being used effectively. Gathering this information allows for early detection of problems and can inform changes to the program efforts.[10] However, if the plans *were* executed effectively, but the activities are not yielding positive results, then the team needs to reconsider those program activities.[1] If the team concludes that activities are achieving their intended results, monitoring is a way to make sure that these activities continue to be executed as planned. There are two ways to think about monitoring: (1) Implementation monitoring and (2) Outcome monitoring.

Monitor efforts throughout implementation – Implementation monitoring

Implementation monitoring provides feedback about whether a program is being carried out as intended.[11] Throughout program implementation, it is important to monitor the process and the delivery of efforts.[10] Implementation monitoring compares the original plans to what has actually occurred in program operations.

It is essential to have a clearly documented program plan, such as an action plan, before beginning. As discussed in *Results Focused Planning* (Module 3), without an action plan many groups do many activities without knowing whether the activities actually help accomplish their goal. Organizations should make sure that the work they do continually moves them toward achieving their desired results and building community capacity.

An action plan is an effective way of documenting the desired results and the steps that should be taken to achieving those results. In essence, it lets people know what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, who needs to be involved, and how to do it.

To begin the process of implementation monitoring, planners should ask questions about how the program is being implemented. This is accomplished by asking the staff about how the program is being carried out, by getting input from participants in the program, by looking at the performance of partners who have agreed to work together to accomplish a common goal, and by looking at planning team members own performance in orchestrating the action plan. This information allows planners to improve the program by correcting something that needs to be changed or modifying something that can be enhanced.

Monitoring should start at the beginning of the initiative and continue throughout its existence.[12] Monitoring a program from the beginning can help ensure progress is made towards desired results. Starting monitoring early helps to discover whether or not a program is being carried out as intended as soon as possible. However, it is never too late to start a monitoring initiative and to gather information that can improve efforts.[11,13]

There are two steps involved in implementation monitoring:

1. Develop questions that assess whether the program is running well and as planned.
2. Collect information that will answer those questions.

1. Develop questions: To improve program efforts, it is necessary to get information on how well the program is working from multiple perspectives. It is important to gather information from individuals who work in program efforts *and* those who participate in the activities. Stakeholders, staff members, partners, planning team members, volunteers, and program participants all have unique perspectives on the program. Their input helps the initiative continually improve to best meet community needs.[4]

The overarching question in implementation monitoring is “Is the program being implemented as planned?” If it isn’t, then find out why it’s not. We recommend developing key questions to ask staff, participants, and community members based on three areas: (1) awareness of the desired results of the program, (2) availability of and appropriate use of resources, and (3) hurdles to completing a program action plan as initially designed. Monitoring efforts should create a participatory atmosphere for community members, staff, and stakeholders, empowering them by involving them in the planning process.[5,14]

The following questions are examples of the key questions to gather from the partners, staff, and volunteers who work on a program:

- Are partners doing what they said they were going to do?
- Are planning team members doing what they said they were going to do?
- Are staff members carrying out activities as planned?
- Is there enough equipment and resources to accomplish activities?
- Are the current resources being used effectively?
- Is the program being delivered to the intended audience?
- Does the intended audience continue to participate? If not, why are they dropping out?
- What makes implementation difficult?
- What makes implementation easier?[15]

Below, are additional questions to assist in gathering information from the people who take part in the program:

- What has made it easier for you to participate?
- What has made it difficult to participate (e.g., transportation, costs)?
- What aspects of the program do you find more / less satisfying?
- What aspects of the program do you find more / less helpful?
- What suggestions do you have for improving the program?
- Do you feel like the program is helpful to you? Why or why not?

2. Collect information: Once a planning team has decided on the information they want to gather about the program, the next step is to find the best means of collecting that information. The planning team can use a variety of ways to gather this information: surveys (either anonymous or allowing people to self-identify), interviews, focus groups, direct observations, and/or informal discussions.[16] Involve key members in the collection process to give them a say in improving program activities.[14] Have discussions with the staff and volunteers involved in implementing the program activities. Directly observe program activities and staff performance or have program providers fill out surveys about how well they think the program activities are implemented.

In addition to collecting information from program staff, it is useful to gather information directly from participants in the program. Although an organization must decide what type of information collection process to follow, many times, the resources available to planning teams influence the decision about what type of collection process to use. Interviews and focus groups tend to take longer and cost more money than surveys and informal discussions. However, they often provide more information. To assist in deciding which collection process is right for an organization, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual or to table 4.1 in the *Community Assessment chapter*.

Monitor progress towards desired results – Outcome monitoring[9, 17]

Outcome monitoring measures and tracks whether a program is making progress towards desired results.[10] Outcome monitoring provides information that can be used to improve a program so that it is more likely to be effective. Once it becomes evident (through implementation monitoring) that a program is being carried out according to plan, outcome monitoring can generate feedback on whether those activities are positively affecting military members and families.[6] Outcome monitoring cannot prove that program efforts or activities *caused* the outcomes, but it is a useful tool to track the effects, hold people accountable for their actions, and inform decisions to improve the program.[14] Ideally, the team monitors results throughout the implementation of activities, although it may not take place until the activities are completed.

To gauge progress made towards desired results, start by defining measurable results. Next identify indicators that show when progress is made towards those results. Decide how to collect information on these indicators. Finally, the planning team should discuss the findings of the monitoring effort and decide how to use this information in the future. If that effect has been positive, then the team can focus on sustaining those results or plan to achieve additional gains.

There are three steps in outcome monitoring:

1. Develop performance indicators that show progress toward desired results
2. Develop questions

3. Collect information on these indicators

1. Develop performance indicators: How do program professionals know when they have achieved their desired results? Because they set measurable desired results, they must decide what data to collect to determine if they have made progress toward those results. What changes should there be in people's knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors? **Indicators** are the benchmarks that show achievement toward desired results. Indicators identify what to measure throughout the monitoring process.[9] They are what need to fall in place in order to reach desired results.[5,]

An indicator should be specific, observable, and measurable changes that represent achievements toward the results.[8] Indicators should be written as target numbers or percentages.[18] For example, if the goal is to increase families' financial stability by decreasing unemployment for the spouses of military members, then a possible indicator might be: "The number of unemployed spouses has decreased by 5% by the end of the year." Refer to Table 8.1 for additional examples of indicators for outcome monitoring.

Table 8.1

Examples Outcome Monitoring Indicators[10]

Knowledge	An increase in awareness of the resources available on-post by ___%.
Attitude	An increase in reported "sense of community" for service members and families by ----%.
Behavior	An increase in the number of people who attend family-focused special events by ___%.

Note. During the results-focused planning phase of the community capacity building effort, the planning team identified their desired results. Make sure that the link between program activities and these desired results is relevant and measurable.

Some indicators are fairly simple to measure. For instance, the desired result may be for service members and their families to have robust, naturally-occurring informal support systems. The planning team may have decided to try to increase family participation in special events on post to help families connect and develop relationships with others. To measure the effectiveness of this activity, one indicator might be to keep track of how many families come to each event and how frequently each family comes to events. To do this, the organization can simply count the number of families at these events. Another indicator might be to have people complete pre- and post- surveys of their degree of involvement with other families before and after holding "family events."

Other desired results may require more consideration and multiple methods of measurement. For instance, if an effort's desired result is to improve the physical health of active duty military members, pre- and post- medical exams and tests may be needed to ensure an accurate depiction of the change caused by an intervention. Moreover, because "health" can mean many different things, it would be necessary to specifically define what measures would indicate that a person was "healthier." Participants could keep journals to track their workouts and eating habits as a way to look for changes, or they could complete brief surveys. With this in mind, remember to define results that are realistic for the team to track and measure.

Once the indicators are defined, ask the following:[8]

- Does the indicator tell us if we're making progress towards desired results?
- Can the indicator be observed and measured? (Do not exclude an indicator just because it seems simple).
- Is it written as a specific number or percentage?
- Does it tell us specifically what we will count?
- Is another indicator necessary? (Some desired results may require more than one indicator).

2. Develop questions: Take the indicators established and determine the questions you need to ask participants to get answers about those indicators. For example, if the goal is to improve health of military families, the planning team may want to ask participants about their exercise habits. A question may include "How many times a week do you exercise?"

3. Collect information: In the same way information was collected for implementation monitoring, similar methods can be used for outcome monitoring (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.).[4,11] However, the goal is now to chart progress made toward desired results. For more information on different methods of collecting information, please see the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Results and activities should be continually monitored to assess whether progress is being made in the target population. If possible, start by collecting **baseline information**, which describes what the situation is like before the program activities begin. For instance, suppose a program wishes to increase graduation rates for military high school students by providing tutors for struggling students. The program has set and indicator of "increasing Grade Point Averages (GPAs) by 10% by the end of the first grading period." So first, record the current GPAs of students as a baseline in order to determine if any change occurs after the implementation of the intervention.

The program must regularly assess the impact of its activities during the initiative, and measure the effect again toward the end of the program.[6, 19] Refer to Table 8.2 for a guide that will assist with outcome monitoring development.

Table 8.2

Outcome Monitoring Chart: Looks at impact of efforts on desired results

EXAMPLE: An after-school program is being opened on a military post. In doing a needs assessment, they found that many youth in military families do not have access to computers to do their homework. This lack of access to computers was shown to lead to poorer academic achievement (e.g., grades on homework, quizzes, and tests). The program leaders decided that they would aim to improve the academic performance of on- and off-post youth in military families (desired result) by providing computers and tutors in the afterschool program to help the youth with their homework. The following table provides an example of how to get started with outcome monitoring efforts.

What are the outcomes you hope to achieve? *(desired results)*	**How will you know you have reached them?** *(Indicator)*	**What information source will you use?**	**How often will you gather the information?** *(Timeline)*	**Who will be the responsible for collecting the information?** *(People or team)*
EXAMPLE: An increase in academic performance.	___% of children have improved grades.	Participants provide their grades pre- and post-intervention.	At the beginning and end of each grading period for the local schools.	One staff member will be assigned to gather the grades of participants.

How to Discuss and Share Information from Monitoring Efforts

Discuss monitoring findings with the planning team

After information has been collected, an organization must spend time learning from the information. The planning team should look for main points or common themes that come from information collected, and be sure to include both positive and negative findings. Too often, a planning team does not use the findings from monitoring efforts to confirm what is going well or to change program activities that are not having the effect intended.

Completing the hard work of monitoring the program lets the team recognize both small and large successes along the way. Take the time to celebrate successes as they are discovered – this can inspire and encourage partners and staff to keep up their momentum! The following questions prompt group discussion, with the intent of helping the team to think about ways to use the findings for program improvement.

1. Thinking back, are there aspects of the monitoring process that did not go well? For example, were there problems gathering the information needed?
2. Is the team able to say that the program is making progress towards desired results? If not, what seems to be the weak link?
    a. Was the action plan implemented as planned?
    b. Has there been sufficient time to see progress?
    c. Were the right partners engaged?
    d. Are additional resources needed?
3. Is there reason to believe that the original desired results might not be realistic? Should that goal be modified?
4. Is there reason to believe that the program activities being employed are not a good match with the results?
5. What do the monitoring findings suggest should or should not be changed? Which efforts should be continued, terminated, expanded, or replicated?

Once conclusions have been drawn, those findings should inform any changes that must be made to the action plan. The team might need to reassign some of the activities and look at what hurdles exist.

Share information

After analyzing and discussing the information with the planning team, it can be helpful to communicate findings and next steps with other team members, collaborators, and community members by developing a briefing or overview of the findings.

A briefing is a written summary of the findings from implementation and/or outcome monitoring that can communicate what has been learned to everyone involved in the community capacity building efforts. In a briefing about monitoring efforts, describe the methods used to obtain the information and what the organization will do to improve and sustain the benefits that have been achieved. It is especially important to distribute information about how the efforts are enhancing the lives of service members and families to reinforce community support for the effort.

A briefing about implementation or outcome monitoring should include:

1. *An introduction:* A single paragraph summary of monitoring efforts
2. *Main points in logical sequence*
    - *The type of monitoring effort:* Implementation, outcome, or both
    - *Questions you were trying to answer through your monitoring efforts,* including the indicators measured if you conducted an outcome evaluation
    - *Methods used to collect information:* Surveys, interviews, review of records, etc.
    - *A timeline for tasks:* Who collected the information and when tasks were completed?
3. *Closing*
    - *Conclusions:* What was learned from the findings?
    - *Recommendations*: What the organization will do differently based on the findings? [19]

For more information on how to *communicate findings through briefings*, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

Conclusion

Monitoring is a way to "take the pulse" of community capacity building activities. It enables the team to have confidence in what they have done so far, gives a clearer sense of where the program should head, and provides the information needed to make corrections in current program activities. Monitoring allows an organization the opportunity to receive input from its staff, community members, volunteers, and collaborative partners. This lets the team know if the program was put into operation as it was intended and if progress is being made towards desired results. Continuous monitoring allows program activities to evolve based on the results and on the community's changing needs. This continual process of learning about what is working and what can be improved leads to programs that are sustained over time. Using monitoring information can strengthen community capacity building efforts and sustain benefits for service members and families over time.

Glossary of Terms

Baseline information – is the information collected before an initiative begins to understand the conditions before the intervention is implemented.

Implementation monitoring – provides feedback about whether a program is being carried out as intended through monitoring the process and the delivery of efforts. It compares the original plans to what has actually occurred in program operations.

Indicator – are measures of project effects, results, products, and efforts monitored during project implementation to assess progress toward project objectives. It can be used to help to identify problems during implementation that can block project objectives.

Monitoring – is the continual tracking of activities to improve programs and outreach, while learning whether the program is addressing the need that was identified.

Outcome monitoring – are measures and tracks whether a program is making progress towards desired results and provides information that can be used to improve a program so that it is more likely to be effective.

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9. Sustaining Desired Results

Contents

Summary

Sustainability is the capacity to maintain the benefits of a program to a community over time and to adapt to meet emerging needs. How can organizations keep successful programs going? To sustain an effective program, organizations must maintain a focus on its original goals: providing benefits to, and positive results for, the individuals, families, and communities it was intended to serve. It is more important to sustain the benefits of programs to families and communities than to sustain particular program activities themselves. From the beginning, program planning should include efforts to maintain the program's benefits. Research finds that seven factors are essential to sustaining a program: demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff involvement and integration.

Programs must demonstrate their effectiveness to maintain the support of their community and funders, therefore its results must be monitored, measured, and shared with stakeholders. Understanding the community is necessary because programs are more likely to be sustained when they have substantial connections with individuals and families in the community and recognize the political, cultural, historic, and economic circumstances in which they operate. Program flexibility is the ability of an organization to adapt its various programs to meet changing community needs, which is crucial to sustainability. Effective collaboration involves engaging stakeholders, those with an interest, involvement, and/or investment in the initiative or program, to work together at all stages, from design to evaluation. Leaders play a critical role in overseeing the quality and effectiveness of a program. Planners must also develop a range of possible funding sources to increase their chances of long-range survival. Programs have resources other than funding that are often overlooked in planning for sustainability, including their physical resources (buildings and equipment) and the skill sets of their staff. Program staff who are members of the community have a strong commitment to the program's success. When these committed staff are involved and invested in all aspects of decision-making, programs are more likely to adapt and flourish over time.

Why Think About Sustainability?

Community programs can make an important difference in a community, yet very often their benefits are not sustained. Over time, programs may become ineffective and unable to continue meeting community needs. An important step in community capacity building initiatives is planning for how to sustain the positive results of your efforts. Programs that are successful should be maintained, so that the valuable benefits they provide will continue over the long-term. Even programs that are initially successful may ultimately fail if a sustainability plan is not developed early and revisited regularly. Particular programs and activities may change over time, because of changes in the local community's needs and resources. However, from the beginning, program professionals should plan ways to sustain their positive results. Activities are not the essential component of programs; rather it is the relationships that are created through the interactions of informal networks and formal systems that help achieve desired results.

Individuals and families spend a great deal of energy finding programs that are beneficial, but this process can be difficult and take a lot of time. If a program fails and the people who were using it still have needs, they are left to begin this frustrating process all over again. Program support for community members should be continuous and trustworthy. Individuals and families should know that programs will be there when they need them. Responsible family support professionals are not only committed to developing programs that make a difference, but are equally committed to sustaining the benefits of those programs.

This chapter will explain:

- ✓ The meaning of sustainability
- ✓ The factors that increase the likelihood of sustaining desired results
- ✓ A method for rating your organization on the factors that sustain benefits

What is Sustainability?

A sustainable program maintains focus on original goals: providing benefits to the individuals, families, and communities it serves. The emphasis is on providing continued benefits, regardless of the particular activities delivered, or the format by which they are delivered. Some programs will grow or adapt their activities over time, while others will maintain original program activities for many years. **Sustainability** is the capacity of programs to respond to community members' needs and maintain those benefits long-term. It is more important to sustain benefits to families and communities than to sustain program activities. This definition of sustainability is an important part of the Community Capacity Building approach and reinforces the focus on results.

Factors in Sustaining Benefits

What does it take to keep a program thriving and effective over time? A multi-year research project looking at several hundred community programs found that seven elements are essential to sustaining a program: demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff involvement and integration.[1,2] Figure 9.1 is a visualization of how these seven factors are part of an interconnected web.[3]

Sometimes a program has limited life because of factors beyond its control, such as state or local budget shortfalls or the emergence of other programs. But in general, these factors are within the control of program leaders and stakeholders. If programs plan from the beginning to collaborate, diversify, and adapt, efforts remain productive even when the unexpected happens.

Figure 9.1: Characteristics of Sustainability

Demonstrating program results

Program results refer to the results that occur because of the direct influence of the program. Community members participate in designing a program or activity to achieve desired results. The community maintains its support for a program only if it demonstrates results. Programs that produce desired results demonstrate the effectiveness of the organization and the quality of its programs.

Demonstrating program results requires monitoring and evaluating program results using acceptable research methods and then informing stakeholders of the results of those evaluations. This can be difficult for community programs, but monitoring is important for success.[4] The planning team is responsible for tracking the progress that is being made. Monitoring must assess the intervention and any modifications you make to it based on results you can measure.[5] For more information, see *Monitoring Results and Activities* (Module 8).

Informing the public of program results provides evidence of the organization's integrity and supports efforts to maintain the program. Positive, measurable program results help secure current and future funding. Talking about a program's success helps establish program professionals as effective community assets and advocates. The program can also use its results to help guide needed modifications and recommendations for practice, policy, and future innovative programs.

Understanding the community

Communities have needs, but they also have natural assets that can support community well-being. Understanding the community means having knowledge of both its needs and assets. It includes a realistic assessment of factors that are important for sustaining programs, such as economic resources and challenges, current political circumstances, and community member participation in programs. It is also important to honor community values, consider cultural relevance, and cultivate key community leader support.[6] Program success hinges on understanding these ever changing influences on community environment.

A program is more likely to be sustained if it has considerable commitment from, and substantial connections in, the community.[7] This includes hiring members of the community being served in staff positions. Programs that are unable to "connect" with the community fail to help the very people they want to serve.[8] Those who truly understand a community have respect for its members, involve key community members in programs, and understand the context in which programs function. Many researchers suggest having active community participation at all levels of project design and implementation.[6, 9] To learn more about ways to understand a community, see *Community Assessment* (Module 4).

Program flexibility

Program flexibility refers to the program's ability to adapt to meet changes in community needs and take full advantage of community assets. All programs must be able to adapt to continue to exist and remain productive. They must adapt to changes in community priorities, changes in funding and staff, and changes in community needs and assets. Successful, sustained programs are ones that are dynamic rather than static and flexible rather than rigid.[5,9]

Programs must maintain their overall goals, but the activities and priorities may need to adjust to address evolving issues and contexts.[10, 11] As a program is being developed, consider how much the activities can be modified to meet changing community contexts.[12]

Effective collaboration

The best way to achieve the results your community desires is through effective collaboration with important stakeholders. **Stakeholders**, or persons with an interest, involvement, and/or investment in a cause, really care about positive results, and must be identified and invited to become involved. These persons are the most likely to actively support program goals and ongoing efforts to those goals. All organizations and individuals involved must have a shared vision of the results they want to see for military service members and families.[13] Stakeholders should share responsibility for the welfare of the community and have the collective competence to actively support program and community goals.[9]

Relevant, important stakeholders should be actively involved in all phases of a partnership, from program design and implementation to program monitoring. The involvement of agency professionals, community leaders, collaboration partners, as well as program participants is key to creating effective and enduring programs. Collaborative efforts build a broad base of support in the community and among key stakeholders, which increases the likelihood that the program will succeed and be sustained.[8,9] To learn more about effective collaboration, see *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration* (Module 5).

Leadership involvement

Because program leaders are the professionals who begin new initiatives, manage ongoing activities, and oversee quality control, their competence (or lack of it) affects efforts at all levels of the organization. Leadership is responsible for the activities that contribute to high quality programs. They must:

- Develop and explain to others a clear vision and objectives
- Perform regular needs assessments
- Account for community assets and resources
- Oversee ongoing planning and adaptation
- Find ongoing funds and financial support
- Monitor and evaluate programs
- Manage the organization and program budgets
- Support and supervise staff
- Provide staff training ,

Leaders are tasked with the difficult job of considering the short-term needs of their organization as well as the long-term need to sustain the program's benefits. Therefore, leaders must develop clear short and long-term goals and have multiple strategies that allow them to adapt to and counteract threats to their sustainability.[6]

Strategic funding

Community capacity building activities thrive when they are supported by diverse and varied resources. Programs increase the chances that they will be maintained over time when they have multiple funding sources.[5,12] Most sources will fund programs only for a limited amount of time. Therefore, programs that are not part of a larger organization require a plan for continued funding.[14] Begin by analyzing current and long-term funding needs, depending on the organization and the type of work being done. Then, if applicable, plan to fund those needs. This can include, but is not limited to, writing and applying for grant monies and planning fundraising activities. Keep in mind that funding may not apply to all organizations or positions, but having more diverse funding sources increases the likelihood that the program will have sufficient resources for both short-term and long-term program needs.[14] This practice of exploring diverse funding resources is referred to as **strategic funding**.

Many people think only about financial resources like government or sponsor funding when they consider their resources. But programs have other resources that can be used to increase sustainability. These include the program's physical assets, its social and physical environment, professional skill sets, and networking resources. The collaborating partners can leverage and utilize physical assets such as property, meeting space, office supplies, and computers, by trading or leasing their use to others. Aspects of the physical and social environment, like the geography, history, and political climate of the community, might be an asset. The skill sets or expertise of its leadership, staff, volunteers, and collaborative partners are also strengths that an organization can capitalize on. Collaboration and networking connections, like the relationships the program has with people in the media or those with influence in political, financial, philanthropic, and interagency networks are strategic resources that can strengthen and sustain an organization. A good plan for sustainability cultivates and uses as many of these resource types as possible.

Staff involvement and integration

Increasing staff involvement and integrating them into the planning and implementation of the program enhances program sustainability. Staff can be either paid or volunteer members of an organization. An essential element of community capacity building is **shared responsibility** which is the collective feeling of obligation that increases a sense of ownership in the program's success. Shared responsibility is strengthened by including all staff in developing and delivering support to community families.

Organizations must develop a culture that values broad-based participation in working toward success and sustainability. Committed, qualified staff must be included in decision-making about all facets of the program, including its design, implementation, and monitoring efforts.[13] Having staff that are members of the community being served strengthens ties between the program and the community. Community members often have greater awareness of community resources and needs because they are already part of informal networks which can be called upon to support the program goals.

A program is also more likely to last when staff are educated and trained in areas that match the program results and needs, and when staff members demonstrate competence in their fields.[15] To learn more about effective collaboration within an organization, see *Becoming a Community Capacity Building Organization* (Module 2).

Create a Sustainability Plan

What are the indicators that your program is on the path to sustainability? Some possible indicators are that your program goals are being met, programs are being expanded, you are functioning at full capacity, and there is a strong, positive relationship between your organization and your community.[3] Research finds that it is important for a program to be intentional about developing a plan to sustain its benefits. Mancini and Marek developed the Program Sustainability Index (PSI) as a way to help an organization gauge its status on the seven essential factors of sustainability (e.g., demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff investment).[1,2] The PSI has been modified from the original format to better meet the needs of military family support personnel. To learn more about the *Program Sustainability Index*, please refer to the *Tools* chapter of the resource manual.

It is important for a program to be intentional about developing *a plan* to sustain its benefits.

Once the PSI has been completed, a next step toward sustaining benefits is to consider the results of the index in light of the results-focused plan the planning team developed. Your team will want to repeat this exercise periodically to monitor your plan toward sustaining the benefits of your program. When a planning team is developing a program or initiative, it is common to ignore what it takes to sustain the benefits of that program. However, a team should discuss sustainability at the time the program is being developed. These seven factors of sustainability provide the basis for that discussion.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of a community capacity building organization is to sustain the benefits to individuals and families that have occurred because of an activity's efforts. However, there must be a clear definition of "sustainability" and how it will be measured. For example, just because an organization has been around for a long time does not mean that it has been successful.[16] The ultimate result is not sustaining a *program* over time, but sustaining the *benefits* it provides to families and the community over time.

Research finds that the seven factors of demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff investment promote program sustainability.[1]

To sustain important family supports, a program must plan for sustainability when community capacity building programs are initially conceptualized. Sustainable community capacity building efforts provide certainty and predictability to families. Sustainability is a continuous process; once in place the plan needs to be re-visited and re-evaluated. Ultimately, the goal is to maintain benefits for individuals, families, and communities.

Glossary of Terms

Program flexibility – is the ability of a project to adapt programs to meet changes in community needs and to take full advantage of community assets.

Program results – are the results that occur because of the direct influence of a program.

Shared responsibility – is the feeling of investment community members have for one another to improve the general welfare of the community.

Stakeholders – are individuals with an interest, involvement, and/or investment in the initiative or project.[17]

Strategic funding – is having plans and resources to support both current and prospective program needs.

Sustainability – is the capacity of programs to maintain the benefits to a community and continue to respond to emerging community issues.

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10. Building Community Capacity: Going Forward

Contents

Foundational Aspects of Community Capacity Building Programs

An organization that operates from a community capacity perspective:

- Is a part of the community rather than apart from the community. Capacity building requires formal systems to join with informal networks of individuals and families. The integration of networks and systems provides a more powerful and potentially successful approach to achieving important results for military service members and families.
- Is knowledgeable about the various communities that comprise the greater community. Military families are diverse, and the communities in which they function are equally diverse. For capacity building that engages the breadth of families, organizations must be attuned to that breadth. By the same token, community contexts and situations in which families live also vary. The Community Capacity Building (CCB) approach provides many handles for assessing and monitoring those situations.
- Understands and values the importance of connections. Our capacity-building approach is built on the principle that connections become powerful allies in family support. Individuals and families live in social and interpersonal worlds, consequently formal systems designed to improve those social worlds have great relevance.
- Is not satisfied with the status quo. Organizations easily become comfortable with their approaches to family support, and in particular, activities assumed to consistently produce positive results. Vibrant organizations take risks in questioning their own good works, with the goal being to keep focused on what is good for military service members and families, rather than solely focusing on what is assumed to be good for the organization. The CCB approach, with its focus on results, challenges status quo thinking, and encourages new thinking about "end of the day" situations for military service members and families.
- Is committed to intentionally addressing community issues, and to mobilizing the community. Intentionality is enhanced when organizations invoke systematic looks at their processes and the yield from their efforts.
- Is guided by desired results. Programs that have specified "end-of-the-day" results are more likely to be able to show how people's lives are being enhanced.
- Places more effort on *outreach* than on marketing. A not-so-subtle difference exists between outreach and marketing; mainly that outreach moves to where people are, where they live, and where they associate. Services and programs (interventions) are tailored to address the specific needs of individuals and families rather than the opposite. With its premium placed on the intersections of formal systems and informal networks, the CCB approach encourages the integration of systems and networks.
- Values partnerships. Complex issues, such as supporting military service members and families with a combination of civilian and military resources, require complex solutions. A primary vehicle for this is partnership and collaboration.

- Sees community members as partners and community assets rather than as clients and beneficiaries of agency/organization services. Capacity building is about resilience, and in particular capturing the resilience possessed by military families.

Conclusion

Community Capacity Building: Supporting Military Service Members and Families is designed to provide military and civilian family program professionals with a roadmap for making a difference in the well-being of military communities. This roadmap provides a capacity-oriented way of thinking, as well as more specific guidance on how to enhance the capacity of communities to support military service members and families. However, the approach is not a simple "cookbook" for community capacity building. Communities have their own situations, inherent capacities and challenges, and history of developing solutions for solving challenges. Professionals associated with those communities, and the formal systems they are part of, also have unique qualities and experiences. The CCB approach provides the general tools that should prove helpful in accounting for uniqueness. Community capacity building occurs as committed formal systems professionals, military and civilian community leadership, and active and concerned community members connect with one another around shared visions. In the end, community capacity building rests on the foundation of these connections.

11. Community Capacity Building Tools

Contents

Effective Teams Checklist

As discussed in *Becoming a Community Capacity Building Organization* (Module 2)

The Effective Teams Checklist (Kilvington & Allen, 2001) provides a list of factors that are important to the effective management and growth of teams. This checklist is intended to be used by members of an organization to guide their thinking about the key things that make teams work, whether or not they're doing them, and if what they are doing could be improved. This list can be applied to an organization as a whole or to specific teams within an organization. By completing this checklist, individuals are encouraged to reflect on their own performance as well as their work with others. This tool doesn't require a lot of preparation. Simply get a team together and read these series of questions about creating effective teams.

Instructions

To use this tool, team members fill out the checklist individually and then bring it to a team meeting to discuss. Alternatively, a team can collectively discuss the questions and together select the answer that best fits the entire group. This process requires that team members work together to come to an agreement on ratings. The colored dots are used to rate where team members believe the organization stands on each of the factors.

- **Green** means an aspect is well covered.
- **Yellow** means additional conversation needs to occur to address potential limitations.
- **Red** means an item needs to be addressed as it is limiting team performance.

This checklist is a useful tool to help organizations and teams broach conversations about strengths and areas of improvement. When reviewing the checklist as a group, consider the following:

- If an item is rated as "***Green***" discuss: what led to achieving that status.
- If an item is rated "***Red***" or "***Yellow***" discuss: what prevented the team from reaching "***Green***" with this item.
- Lastly, as a team discuss what needs to happen for an item to move from "***Red***" or "***Yellow***" to "***Green***."

EFFECTIVE TEAMS CHECKLIST[1]

Key:

Green	This aspect is well covered
Yellow	We need to think about this as it may be a limiting factor
Red	This factor needs to be addressed as it is limiting to team performance

No.	Task	Rate
1. Results and productivity		
	Does the team regularly and frequently assess how well they are working together?	
	Are the team's successes, big and small, acknowledged?	
2. Team structure		
	Is the team the right size - with the right mix of players for your purpose?	
	Does the team have the flexibility to bring in people and change membership to suit the current project?	
	Does the team have the right resources?	
	Money	
	Time	
	People	
	Does the team meet regularly?	
3. Team operation		
	Does the team have effective leadership?	
	Do team members understand their roles and are they able to carry them out effectively?	
	Does the team have good networks?	
	Internally	
	Externally	
	With management	
	Does the team have useful meetings with clear identification of tasks?	
	Does the team have effective ways of managing conflict?	
	Is the team functioning in a way that people freely express ideas and share opinions?	
	Does the team stay motivated?	
4. Team skills: Does your team have these?		
	Managing meetings - setting agendas, managing time, etc.	
	Documenting progress - keeping minutes, records, etc.	
	Data and information gathering	
	Facilitation - dealing with conflict, managing constructive debates, etc.	
	Innovation - introducing creative ideas	
	Presentation - summarizing findings to relevant audiences	
	Networking - bring comment, feedback, etc. to team	
	Motivation - reminding team of success	
	Task performing - reliably doing relevant tasks	

[1] From "Appendix II: A Checklist for Evaluating Team Performance," by M. Kilvington and W. Allen, 2001, *A Participatory Evaluation Process to Strengthen the Effectiveness of Industry Teams in Achieving Resource Use Efficiency: The Target Zero Programme of Christchurch City Council*. Reprinted with permission.

Results-Focused Planning Worksheet

As discussed in *Results-Focused Planning* (Module 3)

Template for Developing a Results-Focused Plan

Date: ____

Name of Planning Team: ____

Members of Planning Team (Name/Organization):

____
____
____
____

Location/Installation:

____

Step 1: Identify Issues or Challenges

Identify up to three priority issues or challenges faced by military service members or their families in the community.

____
____
____
____

Place an asterisk beside the issue that is considered the highest priority issue. This issue is the focus of this worksheet.[2]

What information led to prioritize this issue? (The community assessment process involves multiple strategies for identifying relevant concerns and issues. This could include administrative data, reports from community or military leaders, or individual data from the administration of an assessment tool.)

____
____
____
____

[2] A Results-Focused Planning Worksheet is completed for each priority issue.

Is the issue or problem increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable? Under what circumstances is this issue occurring?

What is the current impact or potential impact if the issue is left unattended? What is the community's readiness to tackle this issue?

Target Group:

What group or subgroups does the issue particularly impact? Identify up to three target group(s) to focus efforts.

What is the rationale for identifying this/these target group(s)?

Key Community Assets:

List community resources, key members of the community, and highly effective formal systems and informal networks that are most often involved in successful intervention and prevention efforts in the community. These key community assets become potential partners in Step 3 of the plan.

a. ______________________________

b. ______________________________

c. ______________________________

d. ______________________________

e. ______________________________

f. ______________________________

g. ______________________________

h. ______________________________

i. ______________________________

j. ______________________________

k. ______________________________

l. ______________________________

m. ______________________________

Step 2: Define Desired Result(s)

Reframe the priority issue from a problem or challenge into a desired result(s) that is needed for military service members and families. Given the priority issue, what specific result(s) need to be achieved for members/families? Describe what would be seen when success is achieved. Describe the result so that people are not moving away from something negative, but moving towards something positive. Identify one or more results associated with a priority issue (we suggest no more than two).

1. ____
2. ____

Performance Goal:

Make the desired result(s) measurable, by defining *performance standards* in the form of a number, rate, or percentage. (We will know we are successful when the *desired result* is achieved at this level of performance). For example, as assessed by an assessment tool, 90% of married active duty members will report that they can depend on support from their spouse, if they request it. This requires discussion of the current performance level.

1. ____
2. ____

Performance Timeframe:

For each desired result, what is the timeline in months for closing the gap between the current performance level and the performance goal?

1. ____
2. ____

Step 3: Develop the Action Plan

Partners:

List key formal systems and informal networks that could play a potential role in achieving the desired result/specific outcomes. Partnerships involve collaborative working relationships in which people and organizations combine their talents and resources to achieve results that are beyond the capacity of any single person or organization. A variety of partners should be considered: military leaders, military and civilian agencies/organizations, businesses, volunteer groups, local clubs, service members and family members, and the faith community. Members of the planning team may also serve as partners. As a starting point, look back at the list of key community assets in Step 1.

Formal Systems[3]	**Informal Networks**[4]
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
d.	d.
e.	e.
f.	f.
g.	g.

To make the plan more manageable, identify 3-4 of these partners who would be most important to achieving the desired result(s)--those partners that are most critical to the success of the plan. Place an asterisk beside these partners.

[3] *Formal systems* typically involve paid staff or individuals that have a professional obligation to provide services or support, such as military and civilian agencies, organizations, businesses, and institutions created to support people's social, mental, and physical health.

[4] *Informal networks* are voluntary social relationships and connections, like extended family, friends, work associates, the faith community, volunteer groups, and local clubs.

Action Plan:

Describe how these priority partners would need to function and/or interact in order to achieve the desired result(s). These actions will be supported by evidence, knowledge or past success in the community or in other communities. This section of the worksheet needs to be very clear and specific—these actions and interactions are the leverage points for achievement of the desired result(s). Partners own these behaviors, which are associated with the generation of community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence): The partner or partners working together will do what (action), for whom (target group), for what reason or consequence (purpose), and by when (timeframe). Specify this for each partnership or partner interaction.[5]

For example, the Military and Family Support Center (i.e., who) will offer financial management classes (i.e., what) for junior enlisted members (i.e., the whom) to instruct them in how to develop and maintain a budget (i.e., for what purpose) during the next 2 months (i.e., timeframe).

Who Partner(s)	What Action	For whom Target Group	For what Purpose	Timeframe

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________
6. ______________________________
7. ______________________________
8. ______________________________

Notes:

[5] Although the planning team will initially outline the activities it believes the partners should perform to work more effectively together and move the community towards the desired result, it is very important to include all of the partners' inputs and ideas in this process once they are on board. The partners may offer valuable insights about working effectively together that may have been overlooked by the planning team. So, essentially, the action plan is not a "static" document -- it can be modified as partners come on board and offer their own opinions on what they think will work best.

Step 4: Orchestrate the Action Plan

While these partners *perform* the Action Plan, the planning team *orchestrates* the Action Plan. This is the part of the plan that specifies what activities the planning team will complete to orchestrate the Action Plan.

Identify purposeful activities from the planning team that would promote successful functioning and/or interaction of the partners. These are the activities that members of the planning team will assume responsibility for, including information/resource sharing (e.g., contacting the partner and negotiating the request), joint planning/coordination (e.g., helping to develop an MOU between two partners), and resource development (e.g., requesting workplace involvement or applying for grants to support community capacity building efforts from the partners).

For example: "Contact the NG State Family Program Director/Installation Family Programs Director (activity) to encourage outreach to the Orange County Department of Public Instruction to ensure that procedures are in place in local elementary, middle and high schools to identify children of deployed or deploying military parents (the purpose) within the next 30 days (timeframe)."

Activity	Purpose	Timeline

1. ____

____

2. ____

____

3. ____

____

4. ____

____

5. ____

____

6. ____

____

Notes:

Potential Hurdles to Success:

Identify potential hurdles to engaging and motivating partners, including strategies to overcome these hurdles. Remember the four types of hurdles: cognitive, motivational, political, and resource.[6]

Monitoring Plan:[7]

Monitoring Implementation: Describe how monitoring will occur for (a) activities and performance of partners (the community capacity building plan), and (b) activities and performance of the planning team in orchestrating the plan (the implementation plan).

Activities and performance of partners:

Activities and performance of planning team:

[6] Cognitive hurdles are when partners do not understand aspects of the Action Plan and/or what is being requested of them. Motivational hurdles are when partners are reluctant to support the change effort or to perform requested or negotiated activities. Political hurdles are when key people with influence are not "on board" with the plan—people who may block or restrain the requested actions from partners. Resource hurdles are when it is difficult for partners to find the time, energy, money, or people needed to execute the plan.

[7] Monitoring is used to determine if actions were implemented as planned, and whether these actions were implemented in the correct sequence and on time. In completing this section of the action plan, the planning team needs to identify planning team member(s) who will be responsible for ensuring that the action has been performed, including the way in which this will be documented or recorded (e.g., email).

Monitoring Outcomes:[8]

Describe how progress toward the desired result(s) will be determined.

___

___

___

___

Sustainability Plan:[9]

What activities will be required to sustain the desired result(s), if the Action Plan is successful in achieving the desired result(s)?

___

___

___

___

Resource Requirements:

The work of the planning team is conducted in the context of available resources. What resources are required to develop, support, and monitor the plan in the form of staff time and non-personnel resources (travel, training, equipment, materials, communications, and so forth)?

Staff Time (list)	Non-personnel Resources (list)

[8] Implementation monitoring refers to the routine tracking of activities, whereas outcome monitoring refers to the systematic means to measure the effectiveness of these activities on desired results.
[9] Sustainability is about maintaining the desired results rather than the particular activities that led to the results.

Progress Reports:

It is important for the planning team to review the overall action plan every 30 days. Action plans will need to be updated and revised when results are changed, proposed activities cannot be implemented, or when activities are not producing the desired result. A copy of these progress reports should be sent to all partners.

30-Day Progress Report:

60-Day Progress Report:

90-Day Progress Report:

120-Day Progress Report:

150-Day Progress Report:

180-Day Progress Report:

Notes:

Guidance for Developing a Survey

As discussed in *Community Assessment* and *Monitoring Results and Activities (*Modules 4 and 8)

Surveys are a method of gathering information and perspectives from individuals, families, and groups for the purpose of research, planning, or intervention. Creating a survey goes beyond just devising questions, it includes selecting an audience to take the survey, pre-testing and revising the survey as needed, collecting information, figuring out what the results mean, and determining ways in which the survey results will be used. Although developing a survey and gathering results can be time-consuming and sometimes a costly process, the information gathered can often inform an organization's plans more accurately than other existing information sources.

Prior to Developing a Survey

Before beginning to develop a survey, clarify *why* a survey is needed and *what information* it will provide that can help in the planning process. Also determine *who* will take the survey. Make sure they are representative of the larger population you are interested in and can provide the information needed. For example, if the purpose is to study military youth, then be sure the sample includes a range of ages (younger youth and adolescents). Participants would not be representative if they were all between the ages of eleven and thirteen. Be sure that everyone who takes the survey knows from the beginning about the purpose of the survey and why their participation is important.

Survey Questions

All surveys contain a set of structured questions. Questions can ask for demographic information that describes a person (e.g., age, gender, occupation, and any other descriptive information), behavioral information that describes how a person behaves (e.g., how often do you exercise?), and attitudinal information that describes how a person thinks or feels about something (e.g., how do you feel about healthy eating?).

Here are few important points to keep in mind when developing questions for a survey:

1. *Write short and simple questions- do not use jargon:* Use simple everyday language to enhance respondent understanding of the questions. Keep the questions at an appropriate reading level and avoid using jargon so the respondent can better understand the intent of the question and give the most accurate answer.

2. *Know when to use open-ended questions and closed-ended questions:* Both can be valuable. Open-ended questions are those that elicit individualized and in-depth feedback from the respondents. Closed-ended questions provide respondents with answer choices such as true/ false, multiple choice, rating scale, and ranking order.

Closed-ended questions are usually easier for the respondent to answer and they are often easier to analyze after the survey.

3. *Steer clear from leading questions:* Aim to elicit unbiased and meaningful survey responses to the questions asked. Leading questions are those that direct respondents to answer in a particular way. An example of a leading question is "We are proud of our new additions to the program for infants at our day care. What are your thoughts about this program?" One would reframe this to "What are your thoughts on the changes to the infant program at the day care center?"

4. *Limit one issue per question:* Try not to clump two or three topics into one question. Instead of asking about how much they liked the instructor *and* the material for a particular class, an effective survey developer would ask one question about the quality of the instructor and another that focuses on the materials provided for the class.

5. *Put questions in logical order:* For example, ask, "Do you have children?" before asking, "How many children do you have?"

These tips on developing questions are not only helpful for surveys, but also for focus groups and interviews, which are all designed to help gather information and get a clearer and deeper understanding about a topic of interest.

Survey Methods

Depending on allocated resources and the kind of information the organization hopes to gather, there are various methods of surveying that might be right for the organization. When considering which survey method to use, weigh out the costs and benefits.

1. *Paper and pencil surveys:* These are surveys that individuals take by responding to written questions. This form is commonly used and is one of the more traditional methods of surveying. The respondent has a high degree of freedom in answering the questions without the pressure of giving immediate responses as is the case with face-to-face or telephone-aided surveys. Paper and pencil surveys can be distributed in groups or to individuals. They can be completed with a representative from the organization present to guide respondents and assist them with any questions or the survey can be given to or mailed to respondents to have them completed. In some cases, for instance when a survey is mailed, one cannot ensure completion or the return of surveys. While these types of surveys help to cover a lot of ground, it is often time consuming and has printing, mailing, and data entry costs.

2. *Web or online surveys:* In the past few years, web surveys have become a preferred

method for developing surveys and collecting information. With higher access to internet services, web surveys are efficient in reaching a wide range of respondents. This is a cost-effective method but comes with certain caveats. To start, respondents must have computer and internet access, the research team needs to have working knowledge of online tools, and there is always the possibility that respondents may not complete the survey or it may be incomplete due to an incompatible internet connection, browser, or software trouble. Online survey development platforms can be found online since there are many of them out there. Start by doing a quick search on the internet for options. Often platforms provide automatic data collection and filtering methods, which makes the data ready for analysis once the respondents complete the survey.

3. *Telephone surveys:* These are direct one-on-one conversations through a telephone to gather information. This method helps reach an audience without much investment in travel funds and helps to talk to people living in various geographic locations. There is less visual information available and respondents have the ability to end the conversation by simply hanging up the phone. Telephone surveys can be helpful in assisting respondents like those with lower reading levels or developmental disabilities. Monetary costs are minimal for telephone surveys, yet they can be time consuming and require having personnel and access to multiple phone lines to implement the surveys.

4. *Face-to-face surveys:* Similar to a telephone survey, face-to-face surveys are direct one-on-one conversations where a person from the organization asks structured questions and assists the respondent in answering them. The difference is that these are in person. This face-to-face interaction provides surveyors the opportunity to gather otherwise hidden details (e.g., non- verbal messages or environmental descriptions). Responses can vary in length, which acts as a strength (they provide detailed information) and a weakness (can be difficult to summarize large descriptive responses into appropriate conclusions). Additionally, this type of survey can be costly. One needs to have personnel available to conduct these surveys, training sessions to train survey personnel, and the time and equipment to enter large amounts of survey responses.

Once surveys are completed, it is important to organize various responses to develop the larger picture. Describe the various findings for organizational use and for the larger community. The University of Wisconsin provides a great introduction on ways to analyze survey data on their website titled “Using Excel for Analyzing Survey Questionnaires.” Finally, it is important to ensure participants privacy during and after collecting information. Survey information should kept private and only shared as needed. Prior to asking for participants’ information, ensure they are aware of policies in place to protect their privacy (e.g., any identifying information will be removed from what they share).

References

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Innovation Network. (2005). *Data collection tips: Survey development*. Retrieved from http://www.innonet.org/client_docs/File/Survey_Dev_Tips.pdf

Thayer-Hart, N., Dykema, J., Elver, K., Schaeffer, N. C., & Stevenson, J. (2010). *Survey fundamentals: A guide to designing and implementing surveys*. Retrieved from http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary/uploads/resources/Survey_Guide.pdf

Guidance for Conducting Interviews

As discussed in *Community Assessment* and *Monitoring Results and Activities* (Modules 4 and 8)

Interviews are a method of information gathering based on one-on-one conversations with people. The person interviewing provides the context for the conversation often through open-ended or structured questions. The primary interest is in understanding the interviewee's opinions, reflections, and evaluations regarding a particular topic of interest. Although the responses of the interviewee add value to the process of the interview, the person interviewing must be prepared to maximize benefits from this one-on-one interaction by probing and exploring additional areas of interest as they come up in the conversation. Interviews can be time consuming and have extra costs associated with them in terms of energy, travel, and training, but can be well worth the effort to gain an in-depth look at a topic.

According to Gillham, interviewers must be able to clearly inform the respondents about:

- When and where the interview will take place
- The purpose of the interview and why they have been asked to participate
- The time commitment
- Whether the interview will be recorded

The two most commonly used modes when conducting an interview include face-to-face and telephone. Face-to-face interviews give physical closeness, access to non-verbal cues, and immediate feedback to the questions that are being asked. On the downside, face-to-face interviews may make respondents uncomfortable, especially if the interview is about a sensitive topic, like war related trauma of service members. Additionally, they can be expensive and time consuming. Telephone interviews are less personal and the interview information is gathered vocally over the phone. The telephone method helps to reach a larger number of people than face-to-face interviews and is less expensive. Although the interviewer does not receive immediate feedback or non-verbal cues, it places less performance pressure on the respondent.

An effective interviewer is one who can listen well, be non-judgmental, help the interviewee feel comfortable, remember details of the conversation, ask follow-up questions, and is adaptive.

Below are few guidelines to help when preparing for and conducting effective interviews.

1. Develop an interview guide to make the interview interaction clear. The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests the following guidelines for developing an interview

guide:

a. Identify specific topic of interest and who is wanted for the interview.
b. Decide on the level of detail and approximate length of the interview.
c. Draft the questions. Think about what is to be found out from the interviewee and then determine what question(s) would help get those answers.
d. Order the questions and make them as conversational as possible.
e. List any probes or additional prompts if the interviewee draws a blank or is unclear about what is being asked.
f. Determine how or where the interview will be conducted (over the phone or in person?).
g. Pilot the questions with others to make sure the questions are getting complete and expansive answers and ensure the questions make sense to the people being interviewed.
h. Revise the questions based on experience and feedback from pilot interviews.
i. Invite people to be a part of the interview and explain the purpose and time commitment upfront.

2. Record the interview. This is a good method to help retain all the information collected and also allows the interviewer to focus on the responses and ask follow up questions. While note taking is not discouraged, it often distracts the interviewer from paying attention to the conversation and instead they are more focused on getting the details of responses written down correctly.

3. Use the recorded interview data (video, audio, notes taking) to find additional descriptions, insights, and leads to answers to the original questions that prompted the interview.

4. Share findings with the appropriate audience.

Different Types of Interviews

Below is a description of the different types of interviews, with additional information about each:

Structured interviews are interviews in which there is a rigid interview structure. All respondents receive the same questions in the same order. The interviewer is in full control of the interview pace. Structured interviews make it easier to compare responses to the same questions to get a broad understanding of the issue. However, respondents' input is limited and they may not have a chance to clarify their reply or even their understanding of the questions.

Semi-structured interviews are interviews that are more thematic and the questions are broader. Although the interviewer may rely on an interview guide, in semi-structured interviews additional questions may be asked based on responses from the respondent. The interviewer and the interviewee are both cooperatively involved in the interview process. With the freedom to probe and explore the topic more freely, semi-structured interview formats can provide substantial and in-depth information. The semi-structured interviewer can be more spontaneous and is able to direct conversations to gain greater insight but does not stray away from the overall theme of the conversation.

Unstructured interviews are interviews with no particular structure but are extremely focused on the conversation that develops between the interviewer and interviewee. This is helpful when one does not know details about a particular topic or issue and is beginning to develop an understanding of the new topic area. The interviewee's responses lead to further questions. While an unstructured interview has its merits in exploring new and unchartered ideas and issues, as a technique of interviewing it is often hard to organize, code, and understand data from unstructured interviews. An example would be a conversation that focuses on what it means to be a military child or adolescent.

Interviews can be an effective way of gathering in-depth, accurate information regarding a particular issue or concern. Based on the needed information, think about who the right respondents are that can give the maximum yield of information. Ensure that the respondents recruited for the interviews are in a position to give the necessary details. Finally, it is important to ensure participants privacy during and after collecting information. Prior to asking for participants' information, ensure they are aware of policies in place to protect their privacy (e.g., any identifying information will be removed from the information they share).

References

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Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Guidance for Conducting Focus Groups

As discussed in *Community Assessment* and *Monitoring Results and Activities (*Modules 4 and 8)

Focus groups are an information gathering tool which gathers opinions, perceptions, thoughts, evaluations, emotional responses, and feedback from organized groups of people regarding a particular issue. It is intended to enhance understanding, insight, and knowledge regarding one or more issues. For example, to understand challenges of military spouses in a local community, an effective way would be to gather 5-8 military spouses for a focus group. Below are guidelines on conducting focus groups.

Prior to Conducting a Focus Group:

1. Decide who should be in the focus group, (ideally, those that represent the issue(s) you hope to understand better). Also think through:
    a. What questions do we need answered?
    b. Who will lead the group and facilitate the focus group?
    c. How will information be recorded (a co-facilitator using video, audio, or note taking)?
2. Determine a meeting space that provides privacy and comfort – an environment that helps the participants feel safe enough to openly share their experiences and perceptions.
3. Invite potential focus group participants to get involved. Be upfront about the purpose and time commitment of the focus group.

Template for Guiding a Focus Group

Make introductions and set ground rules:

To set the tone of a focus group, start by inviting people to introduce themselves. Not only will this help people get to know one another, it will also help make others more comfortable. Remind participants that they are the experts on this topic and their feedback is crucial. It is important to respect each individual's view and opinion about topics. Lastly, set ground rules and take care of administrative tasks (which are rules, how the information is recorded, and how the information will be used after the focus group). In doing this, be clear about the agenda of the interview at the beginning. Consider the following agenda: *Welcome and introductions, review of the reason for the focus group, goals for the meeting, review of ground rules, questions, answers, and wrap-up.*

State purpose and intentions:

Next, state the objectives of the focus group and the reason for asking them to meet. (For example, "the objective of this focus group is to collect useful information about the challenges of military spouses-which will inform future programs for military families"). Explain to participants how information is being recorded (video, audio, no names will be mentioned in final reports etc.). Answer any questions participants may have about the interview process.

Ask primary questions:

During the primary part of the focus group, craft and ask questions that are open-ended and allow the participant to explain in detail about the topic of interest. Through treating each participant with respect and accepting responses with respect, discussion will be further facilitated around the answers provided. It is necessary to continue to probe (e.g., explore further) if no one is getting involved in the discussion. It is also important to ensure that everyone participates by allowing each member to share their views and opinions. If others are having difficulty speaking up or voicing their opinions, use the round-table approach by going around the table for everyone's feedback.

Probe and re-state responses:

After each response, briefly summarize what individuals said and make sure each person has an opportunity to clarify comments or answers. When appropriate, steer conversations away from group debates, especially debates that pivot around why one point-of-view is superior.

Assess and clarify:

Once the discussion ends and everyone explains their views, summarize what was said. In other words, summarize the main points shared by group members. Ensure that all participants played an active role and had an opportunity to respond to the summary. Allow time for group members to clarify anything in the summary or offer additional observations from their perspective.

Make final comments and end the session:

End the focus group by summarizing what has been accomplished and allow time for group members to clarify anything in the summary or offer additional observations from their perspective. Repeat how the information will be used and thank the participants for their time and expertise. Then at this time, adjourn the meeting. Consider having a time for socializing around refreshments.

References

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Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Additional Resources on Focus Groups:

Krueger, R. A. (n.d.). *Focus group interviewing*. Retrieved from http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus.html

McNamara, C. (n.d.). *Basics of conducting focus groups*. Retrieved from http://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/focus-groups.htm

Morgan, D. L. (1998). *The focus group guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, Inc.

Community Assessment Worksheet

As discussed in *Community Assessment* (Module 4)

Template for Summarizing Findings from the Community Assessment

Executive summary (one paragraph summary of the community assessment)

____
____
____
____

The purpose of the assessment (one sentence description of the reason for the assessment)

____
____

Protocol for collecting the information (one paragraph summary describing the sources used in acquiring all assessment information)

____
____
____
____

Demographic characteristics of the *military* community**

- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________

Demographic characteristics of the *larger* community

- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________

**Demographic characteristics could include: population statistics (e.g., the number of people residing in the area), age, marital status, household size/composition, racial and ethnic background, language spoken at home, poverty rate, education levels, employment rates, and health statistics

Target Population

____
____

Community needs

Community needs uncovered in the community assessment (short description of top three priority needs)

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____

Community assets (describe assets in corresponding boxes)

Individuals	Groups
Physical resources	Organizations

Next steps (one paragraph summary describing what the organization will do with the community assessment information to address the needs of the targeted community)

____
____
____
____
____
____
____
____

Communicating Findings through Briefings

As discussed in *Community Assessment* and *Monitoring Results and Activities* (Modules 4 and 8)

Briefings are a commonly used method of communication in military settings. Briefings allow military and family program professionals to share findings and convey information in very clear, concise, and efficient ways. There are several different types of briefings; this document will focus on *information briefings* and *decision briefings*.

The goal of an *information briefing* is simply to share the various findings of community assessment or monitoring efforts as well as any steps taken based on this information. For a *decision briefing* the goal is to share information, but ultimately to stimulate ideas about how to address identified needs and encourage a decision to be made so people can begin to take action. Both types of briefings require a presentation that begins with an introduction, describes the main findings and relevant facts, how the information was collected, why it is important for the audience to know about it, and a conclusion.

The Content of a Briefing

A standard briefing has the following elements:

I. Introduction

a. Greeting/introduction
b. Purpose and scope: Explain the reason for the briefing. For example: "I am here today to talk about… (Provide a brief summary of the reason for presenting). The end goal of this presentation is… (Either to share information about findings and current actions or to make a decision about action steps going forward)."
c. Outline of discussion:
    i. Summarize what is going to be discussed. For a community assessment presentation about, one might say "I will begin by discussing the communities characteristics, then move to the assets and needs of the community and how information was gathered. Finally, I will discuss solutions based on our findings"

II. Main body

a. Logically arrange the main ideas.
    i. For an assessment presentation, emphasize the presence of assets and needs in a community, the role of the community in helping identify these assets and needs, and the various ways the information was gathered. For a monitoring presentation include the initiative and its purpose, the desired results, the activities that were monitored, how information was collected, the results found from monitoring, and include any changes

made to the action plan. Limitations encountered or lessons learned may also be included.

b. If possible, start with the end in mind. This means present the conclusion first and then provide the necessary and relevant information to support the conclusion.
c. Include visual aids as needed. The use of visuals can help drive findings home. Visuals can include bar charts with statistical findings, tables with common themes, quotes from interviews, and images of important community characteristics and assets.

III. Closing

a. All briefings should conclude with a brief summary of the main ideas presented and a concluding statement. For a decision briefing, provide a list of proposed solutions or possible next steps. Lastly, be sure to thank the audience for their time.

The Process of Preparing for a Briefing

The following steps will help prepare a briefing:

Step 1: Plan and create an outline:

When developing a briefing it is important to consider the following:

- Audience and the preferences of the audience. Who is attending? Is there specific language or terminology that should be used or avoided?
- Subject of the briefing. Decide what the most important goals for the briefing are and how much time will be given to each topic being covered.
- Physical facilities and support needed. If the plan is to use a PowerPoint, will the resources be available?

Once these items are considered, prepare a briefing outline. It is important that the main focus and supporting points are mentioned at the beginning to ensure the audience understands the purpose of the briefing.

Step 2: Construct the briefing:

Next, combine the elements of the outline into a cohesive form. As the briefing is created, keep in mind that the goal is to provide information or to help the audience make a decision. It is helpful to use examples and avoid overly technical language and the heavy use of acronyms. Also, some concepts may be better understood through the use of visual aids, examples, quotations, and statistics.

Step 3: Deliver the presentation:

Before the briefing is ready to be delivered, practice its delivery so you are better prepared when in front of others and get comfortable with the equipment you plan to use. Revise the presentation as needed. Prior to and during the delivery, remember:

- The presentation should be brief and to the point.
- Follow the outline, but avoid reading directly from the slides or handouts.
- The presentation should highlight how conclusions were arrived at and provide recommendations based on facts and logic.
- Anticipate questions people may have and be prepared to answer and respond in a professional manner.

Step 4: Follow up:

After the briefing is completed, take note of any feedback received. If it is a *decision briefing*, make sure to record any decisions made to eliminate any future confusion. For some situations, it may be appropriate to create a memorandum for record (MFR) that describes the content of the briefing, any decisions or recommendations made, as well as the time, date, and place of the briefing. This memorandum should also include who was present at the briefing as well as name, rank, and position of the participants. It may be expected to provide the MFR to a leader for review and correction. Additionally copies of the MFR may be distributed to individuals who attended the briefing and organizations or individuals who may be influenced by the decisions or recommendations made.

Reference

UNC Charlotte Army ROTC. (n.d.). *Military briefings*. Retrieved from http://arotc.uncc.edu/sites/arotc.uncc.edu/files/MSL%20401%20Officership%20Section%2005b%20-%20Military%20Briefing.pdf

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Tennessee State Guard Third Regiment. (n.d.). *Preparing for an information briefing.* Retrieved from http://tsg3.us/tnsg_lib/pldc_school/off_advanced/tnsg_158_0020_conduct_briefing/158_g_0020_ho.pdf

Guidance for Creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

As discussed in *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration* (Module 5)

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a signed commitment by two or more organizations about the nature of their collaboration, what they hope to achieve, and how desired results are to be reached. Although not a legally binding document, a MOU concretely spells out any terms of agreement in writing. It can also be used as a reference should any problems arise during the collaboration.

Elements of an MOU

An MOU can provide details about a variety of aspects of collaborations. The most common aspects are the length of the partnership (start and end dates of the relationship), the role of each agency including the services that will be provided, the types of clients and how they will be serviced by each agency, and the necessary resources and skills of all parties involved. Additionally, an MOU describes the type of interagency communications (e.g., face to face meetings, teleconferences), the expectations and responsibilities of the agencies, and how to review performances and when to evaluate. Furthermore, an MOU includes potential financial obligations (e.g., fees, date of payment), the referral practice between agencies, and confidentiality and recordkeeping requirements.

There is no standard MOU format, although some organizations have standard guidelines for the format of MOUs. If none of the organizations in the collaboration have set guidelines, there are still common tips that can be helpful for creating an effective MOU. It is important to write clearly and avoid jargon to make sure everyone involved clearly understands and is in agreement. Any acronyms should also be clearly explained in the document. It is also important to identify key personnel involved in the process, clearly define the hierarchy of this collaboration (e.g., who has jurisdiction, who has oversight, how will votes count), and to make sure the relationships between agencies are fostered so that continued and future collaborations can occur. An MOU will also set realistic expectations about goals and objectives for the collaboration, as well as clearly setting dates for review and evaluation.

An MOU can specify various aspects of collaboration. The following are commonly used sections in an MOU. A template of an MOU is also provided.

Introduction:

This section is focused on the reason for the collaboration (e.g., what is the benefit of this collaboration to achieve a commonly agreed upon result? Why is it necessary? What product(s) will come out of the collaborations? Who will be a part of the partnership?).

Purpose:

This section clearly delineates the purpose of the partnership (e.g., the services that will be provided, expectations, and responsibilities of the agencies).

Scope:

This section clarifies the agencies that are involved in the agreement (e.g. the role of each agency, the duration of the partnership, types of clients and how they will be served by each agency)

Definitions:

This section describes the operational and technical terms associated with the contract (any acronyms, community specific terms, or technical aspects).

Obligations and responsibilities:

This section outlines the obligations of this agreement (e.g., financial obligations, referral practice between agencies, the type and schedule of interagency communications)

Oversight:

This section clarifies how oversight will occur within the new partnerships (e.g., the level of commands, who and when to monitor performances, and confidentiality and recordkeeping requirements)

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Between

Party A: *Enter the full and official name of the party.*

And

Party B: *Enter the full and official name of the other party.*

This is an agreement between Party A, hereinafter called *Enter a shortened name for Party A*, and Party B, hereinafter called *Enter a shortened name for Party B.*

I. PURPOSE & SCOPE

The purpose of this MOU is to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each party as they relate to ... *complete this sentence by describing the nature of the relationship between the two parties. In other words, list the services to be provided and the roles of each agency.*

II. LOCATIONS

The partnership's activities described herein will occur at the sites below.

List the full and official name of each site; include city or town where site is located.

III. BACKGROUND

A. *Enter name for Party A: Describe what the agency does, skills, and resources it possess*

B. *Enter name for party B: Describe what the agency does, skills, and resources it possess*

IV. OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS MOU

A. *Enter name for Party A* shall:

- ☐ *List and describe the duties and responsibilities of Party A.*

B. *Enter name for Party B* shall:

- ☐ *List and describe the duties and responsibilities of Party B.*

V. TERMS OF AGREEMENT/ UPDATES TO MOU

Describe the terms and conditions under which this agreement may be modified or terminated by the parties.

VI. FUNDING

Describe financial obligations, including the reimbursement of funds between the parties and the form that those reimbursements will take. Or enter "Not applicable"

VII. OTHER TERMS & CONDITIONS

Enter any other terms or conditions covered by this agreement such as oversight, referrals between agencies, confidentiality, or enter "Not applicable" here.

VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE AND SIGNATURE

This MOU shall be effective upon the signature of authorized officials of *Enter name for Party A* and *Enter name for Party B.* It shall be in force from *Enter dates of partnership*. Both parties indicate agreement with this MOU by their signatures.

______________________	______________________
Signature	*Signature*
______________________	______________________
Printed Name	*Printed Name*
______________________	______________________
Date	*Date*

References

SAFECOM. (2012). *Writing Guide for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).* Retrieved from http://www.fcc.gov/pshs/docs/clearinghouse/DHS-MemorandumOfUnderstanding.pdf

Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Tracks. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.patracks.org/public/RFP2014.asp

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Johnson, M. L., & Sterthous, L. M. (1982). *A guide to memorandum of understanding negotiation and development*. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/mouguide.htm

Partnerships and Collaborations Index

As discussed in *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration* (Module 5)

The Partnerships and Collaborations Index (Mancini, 2000) looks at specific aspects of collaboration and assesses how an agency functions within their own organization as well as with other organizations in the community. The index is based on the idea that agencies should possess specific characteristics and be able to effectively collaborate in order to more effectively impact communities. This short, easily administered index is intended to facilitate discussions about the collaboration's strengths and areas that could be improved.

Instructions

Use the Partnerships and Collaborations Index as a starting point to begin discussion with leadership, staff, and collaborative members. As members read through the assessment, they must rank each indicator as currently:

- **Not met** (NM): Meaning the collaboration does not meet this goal at all
- **Partially met** (PM): Meaning this goal has been meet in some areas but could still use improvement
- **Fully met** (FM): Meaning this goal is well meet by the collaboration

As the responses are ranked, members should write the reasons why they believe each indicator is ranked the way it is in the "Reasons for Determination" column. For example, the first indicator says: "Partners have developed and support a common vision." If the collaboration has done this, then circle FM: for fully met. If it has never been thought about, put NM for not met. But what if the collaboration is somewhere in the middle? The partnership has a common vision, but the partners haven't talked about it yet. In this instance, the rating would be PM for partially met and in the "Reasons for Determination" column a team member would write that their shared vision hasn't been discussed between the partners. Then at the next meeting the team can have a conversation about creating one together. When members fill out the "Reasons for Determination" they should consider:

- If an indicator is "*not met" or* "*partially met*," what has prevented the team from reaching this status?
- What needs to happen for an indicator to move from *"not met"* or "*partially met*" to "*fully met*"?
- If an indicator is "*fully met*," what led to achieving that status?

This review and discussion is essential. It will allow collaborative partners to have conversations about results and get on the same page about the collaboration.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS INDEX[10]

Indicator	Progress **			Reasons for Determination
1. Partners have developed and support a common vision.	NM	PM	FM	
2. Partners in the collaboration have "partnership" goals, as well as goals that are particular to their respective organizations.	NM	PM	FM	
3. Collaborator roles are defined and there is a clear understanding of the roles.	NM	PM	FM	
4. The community is aware of the collaboration and supports it.	NM	PM	FM	
5. The collaboration is designed to mobilize the community.	NM	PM	FM	
6. The mechanisms for open communication between partners and point of contacts have been determined.	NM	PM	FM	
7. Partners openly communicate about community issues and how they will be addressed.	NM	PM	FM	
8. The collaboration periodically revisits its mission, goals, desired results, and activities.	NM	PM	FM	
9. The collaboration communicates its processes and successes to customer groups, including families and leadership.	NM	PM	FM	
10. Overall, the collaboration is results-oriented and action- oriented.	NM	PM	FM	
11. The collaboration understands the community, including its needs, concerns, assets, and opportunities.	NM	PM	FM	
12. The history of the partners in the collaboration is known, including their successes and difficulties.	NM	PM	FM	
13. Past difficulties between partners have been addressed and resolved.	NM	PM	FM	
14. There are no known political or cultural issues that will jeopardize the partnership.	NM	PM	FM	
15. The collaboration has discussed what is needed to sustain its activities in order to achieve its desired results.	NM	PM	FM	

**Each indicator is ranked as either: "currently not meet" (NM), "partially met" (PM), or "fully met" (FM).

[10] From "Indicators of Effective Programs: Partnerships and Collaboration," by J. Mancini, 2000, *Research presented at the annual United States Department of Defense Family Readiness Conference*. Reprinted with permission.

Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory

As discussed in *Strengthening Formal Systems through Collaboration* (Module 5)

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001) is an assessment tool that helps provide an idea of how well interagency collaboration is doing in areas important to success. It captures a current snapshot of how the collaboration is functioning overall by assessing twenty factors that are grouped into the six categories of Environment, Member Characteristics, Process and Structure, Communication, Purpose, and Resources. The inventory can be used to help identify the possible strengths and weaknesses of individual factors in an organization's collaboration, or can be used to provide an overall score of collaborative success. This instrument is designed to be a concise and simple diagnostic tool that can assess groups' collaboration throughout the lifespan of a project.

Instructions

The inventory is made available to the public free of cost via their website, where it can be taken online or printed for distribution to others (http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Services/Pages/Wilder-Collaboration-Factors-Inventory.aspx). Leaders can create a group that has a unique web link for faculty, staff, and collaborative partners to access the survey. This unique link ensures responses from collaboration members are kept together. Another option is to distribute the survey in an email or printed version for individuals to complete (*See The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory below*).

As individuals from the collaboration take the inventory, they rank the level in which they agree or disagree about each of the statements. If using the website, an average score for each of the 20 factors of a successful collaboration is calculated, based on the group's responses. Responses are also compiled in a final summary report of results (as shown in snapshot of website below). For the printed version, the average for each section is calculated. Typically, scores that are 4.0 or higher reflect strengths within the collaboration, 3.0 to 3.9 could be either strengths or weaknesses, depending on the context, and 2.9 or lower reflect a point of growth within the collaboration. These scores are a starting point to discuss the relationships between partners.

When reviewing the results, consider the following:

- What areas does the collaboration excel in?
- What areas need improvement?
- What can be done to improve the collaboration?

- For items that are low, are any particularly problematic?
- Overall, how strong are the scores?

This tool provides an opportunity to have discussions and get insights from team members on ways to improve the collaboration. It also helps get everyone on the same page. However, the responses are only beneficial if they are used to create solutions and improvements for the collaboration.

Snapshot of Website Inventory Results

Collaboration Factors Inventory

Thank you for completing the Inventory!

The figures below show your average score on each of 20 factors. Averages can range from 1 to 5. To better interpret your scores, refer to *Collaboration: What Makes It Work, Second Edition*. If you do not own this publication, you may purchase it online by clicking on the link.
Bookmark this page to return to these scores later (please note that old scores may occasionally be cleared from this database). You may also print these summary scores or your individual item responses if you prefer.

Factor	Factor Average
History of collaboration or cooperation in the community	3.0
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3.0
Favorable political and social climate	3.0
Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	3.0
Appropriate cross section of members	3.0
Members see collaboration as in their self-interest	3.0
Ability to compromise	3.0
Members share a stake in both process and outcome	3.0
Multiple layers of decision-making	3.0
Flexibility	3.0
Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	3.0
Adaptability	3.0
Appropriate pace of development	3.0
Open and frequent communication	3.0
Established informal relationships and communications links	3.0
Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	3.0
Shared vision	3.0
Unique purpose	3.0
Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	3.0
Skilled leadership	3.0
What is working well in your collaborative? (optional) ***[no response]***	
What needs improvement in your collaborative? (optional) ***[no response]***	
As a general rule... Scores of 4.0 to 5.0 - strengths, don't need attention Scores of 3.0 to 3.9 - borderline, deserve discussion Scores of 1.0 to 2.9 - concerns that should be addressed	

THE WILDER COLLABORATION FACTORS INVENTORY [11]

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
History of collaboration or cooperation in the community	1. Agencies in our community have a history of working together.	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Trying to solve problems through collaboration has been common in this community. It's been done a lot before.	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3. Leaders in this community who are not part of our collaborative group seem hopeful about what we can accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Others (in this community) who are not a part of this collaboration would generally agree that the organizations involved in this collaborative project are the "right" organizations to make this work.	1	2	3	4	5
Favorable political and social climate	5. The political and social climate seems to be "right" for starting a collaborative project like this one.	1	2	3	4	5
	6. The time is right for this collaborative project.	1	2	3	4	5
Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	7. People involved in our collaboration always trust one another.	1	2	3	4	5
	8. I have a lot of respect for the other people involved in this collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate cross section of members	9. The people involved in our collaboration represent a cross section of those who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	10. All the organizations that we need to be members of this collaborative group have become members of the group.	1	2	3	4	5
Members see collaboration as in their self-interest	11. My organization will benefit from being involved in this collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to compromise	12. People involved in our collaboration are willing to compromise on important aspects of our project	1	2	3	4	5

[11] From *Collaboration: What makes it work?* (p. 37), by P. Mattessich, M. Murray-Close, and B. Monsey, 2001, Saint Paul, MN: Wilder Publishing Center. Reprinted with permission.

Members share a stake in both process and outcome	13. The organizations that belong to our collaborative group invest the right amount of time in our collaborative efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
	14. Everyone who is a member of our collaborative group wants this project to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
	15. The level of commitment among the collaboration participants is high.	1	2	3	4	5
Multiple layers of participation	16. When the collaborative group makes major decisions, there is always enough time for members to take information back to their organizations to confer with colleagues about what the decision should be.	1	2	3	4	5
	17. Each of the people who participate in decisions in this collaborative group can speak for the entire organization they represent, not just a part.	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility	18. There is a lot of flexibility when decisions are made; people are open to discussing different options.	1	2	3	4	5
	19. People in this collaborative group are open to different approaches to how we can do our work. They are willing to consider different ways of working.	1	2	3	4	5
Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	20. People in this collaborative group have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
	21. There is a clear process for making decisions among the partners in this collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
Adaptability	22. This collaboration is able to adapt to changing conditions, such as fewer funds than expected, changing political climate, or change in leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
	23. This group has the ability to survive even if it had to make major changes in its plans or add some new members in order to reach its goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate pace of development	24. This collaborative group has tried to take on the right amount of work at the right pace.	1	2	3	4	5
	25. We are currently able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all the people, organizations, and activities related to this collaborative project.	1	2	3	4	5

Open and frequent communication	26. People in this collaboration communicate openly with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
	27. I am informed as often as I should be about what goes on in the collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
	28. The people who lead this collaborative group communicate well with the members.	1	2	3	4	5
Established informal relationships and communication links	29. Communication among the people in this collaborative group happens both at formal meetings and in informal ways.	1	2	3	4	5
	30. I personally have informal conversations about the project with others who are involved in this collaborative group.	1	2	3	4	5
Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	31. I have a clear understanding of what our collaboration is trying to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	32. People in our collaborative group know and understand our goals.	1	2	3	4	5
	33. People in our collaborative group have established reasonable goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Shared vision	34. The people in this collaborative group are dedicated to the idea that we can make this project work.	1	2	3	4	5
	35. My ideas about what we want to accomplish with this collaboration seem to be the same as the ideas of others.	1	2	3	4	5
Unique purpose	36. What we are trying to accomplish with our collaborative project would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish by itself.	1	2	3	4	5
	37. No other organization in the community is trying to do exactly what we are trying to do.	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	38. Our collaborative group had adequate funds to do what it wants to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	39. Our collaborative group has adequate "people power" to do what it wants to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
Skilled leadership	40. The people in leadership positions for this collaboration have good skills for working with other people and organizations.	1	2	3	4	5

Community Connections Assessment

As discussed in *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6)

The Community Connections Assessment (Bowen & Mancini, 2013) is a twelve item assessment. It focuses on the extent to which people in the community come together, provide one another with support, and work collectively to solve community problems. The Community Connections Assessment can help identify areas where informal networks are effectively mobilized as well as areas where informal networking might need strengthening through targeted interventions. It is best to give the assessment to a variety of individuals, such as members of the planning team. This will help to obtain a more balanced portrait of the community and the operation of informal networks.

Instructions

This assessment can be used a starting point for discussion and planning. Respondents evaluate each item on a four-point scale: (1) Not At all, (2) Somewhat, (3) Mostly, and (4) Completely. The reference point is *people in my community.*

To score the assessment, add the numbers for each response. The total will range from 12 (12x1) to 48 (12x4). A score of 36 or higher indicates that informal networks are functioning well in the community. A score of 24 or lower indicates that informal networks may need strengthening. Scores from 25 to 35 suggest potential issues in the strength of informal networks.

Specific items can also be reviewed to locate specific areas for growth or improvement. Scores from individual respondents can be compared and evaluated to get a more complete picture of the community. A spirited discussion may occur when respondents have wide variations in their perceptions of the community.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS ASSESSMENT©[12]

In my community, people:*	Not at all	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
Attend unit, base, headquarters, and community events and activities.	1	2	3	4
Find it easy to meet and get to know one another.	1	2	3	4
Feel a sense of connection with one another.	1	2	3	4
Can be trusted.	1	2	3	4
Care about the well-being of their neighbors and fellow community members.	1	2	3	4
Look out for and show concern for one another.	1	2	3	4
Share information about available family support programs and services.	1	2	3	4
Offer help or assistance to one another in times of need.	1	2	3	4
Feel a sense of responsibility for making the community a better place to live and work.	1	2	3	4
Join together to solve community problems.	1	2	3	4
Work together to make a positive difference in the lives of others.	1	2	3	4
Take action to confront situations that threaten the safety and well-being of community members.	1	2	3	4

* Community refers to the general area in which you reside.

[12] From "Community Connections Assessment," by G. Bowen and J. Mancini, 2013, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Reprinted with permission.

Community Connections Index

As discussed in *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6)

The Community Connections Index (CCI) (Mancini, Bowen, Martin, & Ware, 2003) is a quick and easy tool that provides information related to individuals' sense of community and community engagement. The sense of community is tied to how much an individual is emotionally connected to others, primarily in informal networks. Community engagement describes how much an individual interacts with other individuals and groups in specific community events and issues, primarily through formal systems. An individual's sense of community and community engagement are helpful indicators of how they perceive their community and what activities they are involved in. The specific questions on this assessment assess the relationships that individuals have had with people in their community within the past year.

Having a sense of these two indicators (sense of community and community engagement) helps formal systems establish a baseline for determining the level of effort that may be needed to mobilize informal community networks.

Instructions

There are 15 questions on the Community Connections Index, which makes them easily asked in an interview or via a brief survey. The interviewer says (or the survey asks): "Now I would like to know about your relationships with people in your community other than family members. How often in the past year: *often* (assigned a value of 4), *sometimes* (assigned a 3), *rarely* (given a 2), or *never* (assigned a 1) have you…?" Participants could also be asked to think about a different time frame, such as the past month.

The values attached to the answers are simply summed. Total scores for all questions range from 15 (15 x 1) to 60 (15 x 4). The higher the number, the greater the indication that the individual feels a strong sense of community and is very engaged in the community. Conversely, a lower total score reflects that the individual has less of a sense of community, and is less engaged in the community.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INDEX[13]

How often in the past year ("often, sometimes, rarely, or never") have you:

Item	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Sense of Community				
Spent time with people in your community when you needed a little company?				
Felt like you belonged in your community?				
Felt your circumstances were similar to others in your community?				
Looked after or shown concern for other people in your community?				
Talked with people in your community about your problems or difficulties?				
Felt close to other people in your community?				
Made new friends with someone in your community?				
Community Engagement				
Joined with people in your community to solve community problems?				
Felt like you could make a positive difference in your community?				
Participated in community events or activities?				
Attended club or organization meetings in your community?				
Attended religious services?				
Attended an informational meeting about an issue affecting your community?				
Attended a local government or political meeting?				
Volunteered in your community?				

[13] From "The Community Connections Index: Measurement of Community Engagement and Sense of Community," by J. Mancini, G. Bowen, J. Martin, and W. Ware, 2003, *Paper presented at the meeting of the Hawaii International Conference on the Social Sciences*. Reprinted with permission

Informal Social Connections Index

As discussed in *Mobilizing Informal Networks* (Module 6)

The Informal Social Connections Index (ISCI) (Bowen & Martin, 2011) consists of seven statements that assess the confidence with which military service members feel that they can access support from people in their informal network if they need it. These statements examine informal social connections that people have with others.

Instructions

Respondents have a "not applicable" response choice for statements that do not fit their current situation, such as marriage or involvement with a significant other.

Scores on the applicable statements are summed and divided by the number of applicable statements, resulting in a summary score ranging from 0 to 10. The higher the score, the more likely the respondent can access informal support in times of need.

The Informal Social Connections Index[14]

Overall, on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being "not at all" and 10 being "completely," to what extent does each statement describe you currently? You may answer NA for questions that are "Not Applicable" to you.

	Rating 0 -10
I can depend on support from my spouse/significant other, if I need it.[15]	
I can depend on support from one or more members in my unit (or place of work), if I need it.[16]	
I can depend on support from one or more of my neighbors or individuals who live in my dorm or barracks, if I need it.[17]	
I can depend on support from one or more people that I regularly communicate with via web- based social networking sites, if I need it.[18]	
I can depend on support from one or more individuals through my participation in a local church, chapel, synagogue, mosque, or other religious or faith-based setting in my community, if I need it.	

[14] From "The Support and Resiliency Inventory," by G. Bowen and J. Martin, 2010, Chapel Hill, NC: Bowen & Colleagues. Reprinted with permission.
[15] A "significant other" is a person with whom you are married, engaged, or seriously involved in a romantic relationship.
[16] Unit refers to your squadron or the equivalent level unit in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.
[17] Neighbors refer to those who reside in close proximity to you. For single members living in the dorm or barracks, this refers to others who live in your dorm or barracks.
[18] Social networking sites include web-based chat rooms, blogs, and interactive websites like Facebook and Twitter, which provide opportunities for participants to connect and communicate with others. This does not include email.

Program Sustainability Index (PSI)

As discussed in *Sustaining Desired Results* (Module 9)

The Program Sustainability Index (PSI) (Mancini & Marek, 2004) is a tool to help organizations and planning team members gauge its status on the seven essential elements of sustainability.[19]The PSI has been modified from the original format to better meet the needs of military family support personnel. The index takes into account the elements that research has shown lead to sustaining benefits of an initiative to individuals, families, and communities overtime. It also gauges which elements are strong and which need to be strengthened. The PSI can help an organization start discussions about sustainability and become intentional about including these elements from the beginning of planning efforts.

Instructions

To use the PSI, team members rate efforts toward sustainability on each of the seven elements, treating each item as a program goal. Members decide individually whether they feel the item is "not at all true," "somewhat true," or "very much true" of their initiative. Items rated:

- **Not at all true-** Indicate it is completely absent and needs to be improved.
- **Somewhat true-** Indicate it is more or less present and active in the initiative but has room for improvement.
- **Very much true-** Indicate satisfaction with the current status and that the particular element is a prominent asset for the team.

By answering the questions on the PSI individually and then discussing responses as a team, it becomes clear what needs to go into the plan to sustain benefits. The discussion allows the planning team to appraise its strengths and prioritize areas that need improvement. These strengths and growth areas will become the basis for a sustainability plan. For factors that the team feels are a priority and need the most improvement, have the group answer the following questions:

- What will be done to close the gaps/make improvements?
- Who will do it?
- By what date does it need to be done?
- How will you know you are making progress?

The team will want to repeat this exercise periodically to monitor the plan to sustain the benefits of a program.

[19] The seven elements include: demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff involvement and integration.

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (PSI)[20]

Sustainability Elements and Items

Demonstrating Desired Results	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
1. Monitoring and evaluation plans are developed prior to implementation of the action plan			
2. Desired results are demonstrated through monitoring			
3. Monitoring efforts are conducted on a regular basis			
4. Monitoring efforts are used to modify the action plan			
5. Program successes are made known to the community			
6. Program successes are made known to funders			
Understanding the Community	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
7. Community *needs* are regularly assessed and used by the program			
8. Community *resources/assets* are regularly assessed and mobilized			
9. Program goals are matched with community resources			
10. The program accounts for diversity in the community			
11. Community members are involved in the design of the action plan			
12. Community members are involved in monitoring			
13. The program addresses key community needs			
14. The program has strong local government support			
Flexibility	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
15. Activities are eliminated when they fail to contribute to achieving the desired results			
16. New activities are implemented when community needs change			
Effective Collaboration	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
17. Local decision-makers are program collaborators			
18. Community service agencies are program collaborators			
19. Representatives from businesses are program collaborators			
20. Collaborators are involved in the design of the action plan			
21. Collaborators are involved in implementation			
22. Collaborators are involved in monitoring and evaluation			

[20] From “Sustaining Community-based Programs for Families: Conceptualization and Measurement,” by J. Mancini and L. Marek, 2004, *Family Relations*, *53*, p. 339-347. Reprinted with permission.

23. Collaborators share responsibility for providing program resources			
24. Collaborators share credit for program success			
25. Collaborators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities			
26. There is shared vision among collaborators			
27. Any collaborative issues are resolved			
28. This program is part of the mission of participating institutions			
Leadership Involvement	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
29. Leaders clearly established the program's mission and vision			
30. Leaders planned how to sustain the program within the first two years of the project			
31. Leaders develop and follow a realistic project plan			
32. Leaders identify alternative (multiple) strategies for program longevity			
33. Leaders are committed to the long term program goals			
34. Leaders continue planning to sustain the program			
Strategic Funding	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
35. Current funding is sufficient for program operations			
36. Funding is available on a long term basis (at least two more years)			
37. There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff			
38. There are plans in place for obtaining additional funding			
Staff Involvement and Integration	**Not at all True**	**Somewhat True**	**Very Much True**
39. Staff are involved in the design of the action plan			
40. Staff are involved in program decision making			
41. Staff are committed to the program's mission, vision, and goals			
42. Staff are qualified to work on the project			
43. Staff are involved in monitoring and evaluation			
44. Staff turnover on the project is not a problem			
45. Staff are flexible and creative			
46. Staff are recognized and rewarded for their work			
47. Staff are adequately trained			
48. Staff are from the community that the program serves			