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Guiding Sustainable Community Change

An Introduction to Coaching

by Ken Hubbell and Mary Emery



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This monograph emerged from a distillation of the wisdom, insights and experience of a Community of Practice that includes: Alan Barefield, Samuel Cargile, Doug Clement, Ken Cohen, John Cooper, Tony Genia, Harry Goldman, Kenneth Gonzalez, Jody Horntvedt, Jennifer Henderson, Carol Lincoln, Ben Lindekugel, Byron McClenney, Freeman McKindra, Becky Miles-Polka, Cynthia Pilcher, Barbara Radke, Claudette Romious, Ursula Roosen-Runge, Karma Ruder, Sam Scott, Lee Smith, Frank Taylor, Kay Lynn Tettleton, Dianne Williams, Joyce Williams, and Barbara Wyckoff-Baird.

For more information about community coaching, visit www.communitycoaching.com or e-mail Mary Emery at memery@iastate.edu.





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Introduction

This guidebook provides an introduction to both the concept and the practice of coaching for community change. Ken Cohen, a former Horizons coach in Idaho, defines community coaching as, “an adaptive process tailored to unique community contexts to guide systemic change via participant empowerment.”

The guide begins by providing an overview of coaching and what makes coaching different from other approaches to community change. The second section discusses how coaching can add value to existing and emerging community capacity building efforts. In the third section we address the skills and competencies needed to succeed as a community coach. Section four focuses on the ongoing journey coaches undertake to improve their practice and increase their impact. The fifth section describes typical community coaching venues and provides insights into what makes some situations more successful than others. Section six details the work of coaching by focusing on the six Rs—readiness, relationships, reflection, results, reach and resiliency. In section seven, we look at the practice of coaching, particularly in regard to framing questions and providing feedback. The last section focuses on evaluating the work of coaching and strategies for improving the practice.

This introduction to coaching is a first step in the development of a more comprehensive field guide. We invite you to join us in this ongoing effort by providing success stories, sharing tips and tools that work well in coaching work, and participating in our community of practice. For more information on how to be a part of this work visit the following Web sites or contact Mary Emery at memery@iastate.edu:


<http://www.communitycoaching.com>

<http://communitycoaching.ning.com>

Guiding Sustainable Community Change: An Introduction to Coaching is one of four publications emerging from the Kellogg Coaching Initiative. Other titles include:

- *Facilitating Successful Change Initiatives: An Intermediary or Delivery Organization’s Guide to Coaching for Community Change*
- *Engaging in Sustainable Community Change: A Community Guide to Working with a Coach*
- *Investing in Sustainable Community Change: A Funder’s Guide to Coaching for Community Change*

These publications are the result of two roundtable convenings on the work of coaching in a community change context. The Boise, Idaho, convening in 2005 brought together coaches, funders and representatives of intermediary organizations to describe and define what coaching is and how it works in a



community context and to outline possible roles for coaches, intermediary organizations and funders. A second convening in San Antonio, Texas, in 2007 included a number of coaches from a variety of community change initiatives and focused in on the roles, competencies, skills and insights that make coaches successful in supporting and sustaining community change work.

The field of community coaching is alive with possibilities and opportunities! Coaching is becoming an important component in responding to four key trends in supporting and sustaining successful community/organizational change initiatives:

1. **Rapidly Changing Communities.** The rise of the Information Age has required changes in the practice of community economic development and organizational development. No longer can we rely on the expertise of others to guide us and external resources to support us. Communities, organizations and their leaders must identify and build on existing assets and find ways to continually expand their ability to learn from one another and the world around them; ways that are place-based and address the unique challenges and opportunities of that place. *Coaching offers communities a way to make use of best practices and outside expertise by learning how to adapt them based on community assets and capacity and by using local wisdom.*
2. **New Leadership Structures.** Foundations, corporate structures and agencies have poured millions of dollars into succession planning as boomers retire and the organizations restructure around new leadership strategies. *Coaches aid people in recognizing the assets of traditional and non-traditional leaders, while at the same time framing the work in ways that lead to the co-creation of new leadership structures that are more fluid, adaptable and engaging.*
3. **Increased Emphasis on Impact.** The fields of life coach, executive coach and personal coach are growing as people struggle with ways to achieve their goals and adapt to our rapidly changing world. Similarly, communities and organizations are looking for ways to learn about change, apply what they have learned and reflect on that process. *Coaching offers a different approach, one that facilitates leaders' ability to energize and mobilize people around a change agenda and help community institutions become learning organizations.*
4. **Increased Return on Investment.** More foundations are supporting coaching as a way to increase long-term benefits of community change initiatives. *Coaching increases the return on investment in capacity building, leadership development and economic development efforts for outside funders and local investors.*

Unlocking Local Knowledge

Communities, like people, need to learn and grow from their problems. To do so, community members must see issues and concerns from a broader perspective, as an opportunity to learn from one another and expand their options. Thus, the work of a community coach is to help people get out of their ruts, stop sharing all the stories as to why they are stuck in the rut and replace negative recollections with river stories—stories that speak to their strengths. Coaching for communities means offering an empathetic ear, finding the coachable moments and engaging in joint learning. Coaches are not the answer people; they support capacity building by helping community members learn from one another and from their own experiences.

Successful coaches focus on outcomes, but not at the expense of process. They are attuned to the need for balance. These coaches approach their task with an eye to the hoped for ripple effect of their work in capacity building; they strive for the time when the synergy of coaching and capacity building becomes part of the community’s way of learning together. They hope to see individual capacity gains reflected in those of the team and subsequently in the community. The successful coach models this synergy between individual change and community change by looking forward to new learning from every encounter with the community and the team. Thus, coaches ready to succeed focus on expanding their own understanding and their reservoir of resources as they work with others to increase the capacity of participants and the overall community.

Coaching is both an art and a craft. Coaches succeed in communities because of their respect for the implicit wisdom emerging from local people and their belief in human and community agency. Successful coaching requires that all four elements of the equation (funders, intermediaries, coaches and community team members) be in harmony on the goals and the processes involved in the project. As one Roundtable participant commented, “There is a need to triangulate between the personality and skills of coach; the personality, skills and assets of the community leaders; and the agenda of the funders.”

What is Coaching?

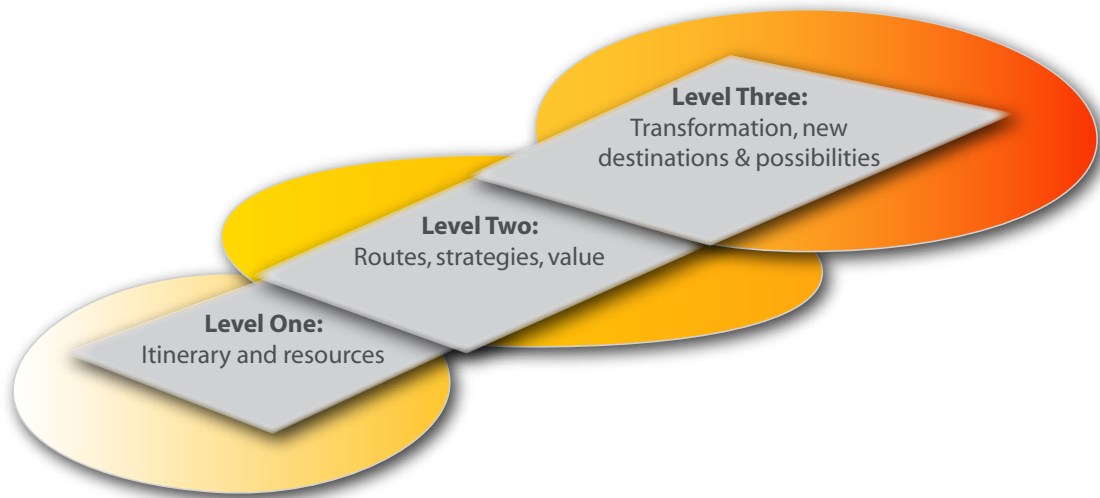
Sometimes it is easier to list what community coaching is not than to say what it is. It is not facilitating, counseling or providing technical assistance, although the coach may play one of these roles if necessary. It is about providing a guide on the sidelines. The coach’s role is not to do things for the community, but rather to learn with community members about how to build community capacity to do things more effectively.

The core distinction about coaching is that coaches help unlock what is already present in people and groups and help unlock what is already present in people and groups and help them frame their own solutions!

Coaching is a complex process. It is something we almost all do daily, yet the description and philosophy can be elusive. Today, coaching has become very popular, particularly in the world of business where companies struggle with maintaining morale and trying to innovate while at the same time having to streamline and downsize. The coach is often an external resource who facilitates internal processes or is one who coaches personal growth opportunities. In other examples, the coach is an internal leader who uses coaching as an effective tool for creating teams, setting and achieving stretch goals and nourishing innovation. In community change work the coach is more “the guide on the side,” a person not directly involved in the process but one who has a commitment to its success. From the observer’s point of view, the coach helps teams work through issues, monitors processes and offers encouragement.

Coaching can occur at three levels, which we like to think of in terms of a map. At the simplest level a coach can help you shape your itinerary and identify resources. At the second level, the coach may help you identify alternative routes as well as strategies to avoid construction and add to the journey’s value. At the third level—transformational coaching—the coach and community team may discover new destinations, destinations that fit better with a vision of the possible. Transformational coaching helps address the “elephants” in community living rooms, see beyond and above the ruts that confine local vision and authentic conversation and create the “a ha” moments when new possibilities appear.

Figure 1. Three Levels of Community Coaching



Robert Hargrove (1999) identified several related features of what he called “transformational coaching” that describe the soul of coaching in community:

1. Altering the underlying context that shapes, limits and defines the way people think and act.
2. Showing people how to transform or stretch their vision, values and abilities.
3. Helping groups learn how to elicit greater commitment, creativity and flexibility.
4. Providing the organization’s vision or direction while leaving plenty of room for people to pursue their own passions, personal interests and projects.
5. Unleashing the human spirit and expanding people’s capacity to achieve stretch goals and bring about a real change.



Early Examples of Coaching to Stimulate Community Change: A Historic Perspective

In our research into the field of coaching applications in a community context, we observed that the practice dates to the mid-1980s when MDC, a nonprofit research and development organization in North Carolina, began providing community-based technical assistance as a support intervention to increase the pace and success rates of local communities that were reshaping educational reform across the South.

Impressed by the early benefits, MDC began incorporating coaching into other change initiatives: reshaping the workforce development system in the Mid South and expanding the capacity of rural community colleges to guide economic and education reform in highly distressed places. As more community colleges in the south, midwest and southwest joined the Rural Community College Initiative, the Southern Rural Development Center and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development brought Extension specialists into the practice of community coaching. Several major foundations supported early change initiatives using coaches including the Ford Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, the Foundation for the Mid South and the Pew Charitable Trusts. During the next decade, many rural development and Extension faculty also brought a coaching approach to the work of community change.

Since 2000, other foundations that have used coaching to expand leadership, education reform and sustainable community development initiatives include the Northwest Area Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Duke Endowment. Both the Ford and W. K. Kellogg Foundations continue to support rural development models that draw upon coaching to guide the local change efforts.

Initial research for a 2005 coaching roundtable generated a list of more than 220 American communities where coaching had been used as a strategic support tool for organizational development or broad-based community development. These communities were involved in various initiatives such as Horizons, Montana Ventures, Reservation Ventures, the Rural Community College Initiative, Tribal and Native Serving Colleges as Catalysts for Rural Development, the Mid South Delta Initiative, Kellogg Leadership for Community Change, Achieving the Dream—Community Colleges Count, Program for the Rural Carolinas, Community Based Forestry Programs and ongoing community development coaching through Louisiana State University Extension and MDC (to universities in Namibia and South Africa).

Adding Value to Community Building

Coaching involves a sort of stewardship or a focus on working for a positive future for the community. Good coaches listen well and ask good questions. They are respectful of others and attentive to their own processes. In his book *Masterful Coaching*, Robert Hargrove describes coaches as people who are “vision builders and value shapers”—focusing on the future, not the past. Coaches are attuned to opportunities to empower individual and collective transformation. They assist in fostering and securing communities of commitment and team collaboration so that many people share in inventing and nurturing that future. Finally, coaches work hard to expand people’s capacity to take effective action to create a desired future state.

Coaching is Associated with Five Types of Community Work

Communities and groups find coaching assistance particularly helpful in the following stages of an initiative:


1. **Assessment:** Coaches ask questions and suggest strategies to help groups and individuals assess their strengths and weakness, as well as the opportunities or threats in a situation. Coaches search to understand how groups and organizations view their situation and use that understanding to engage them in new ways of seeing and thinking that will lead to new ways of doing. Coaches help communities both identify and build on their strengths.
2. **Strategizing:** Coaches help people and groups determine what strategies could make a difference by:
 - a. analyzing the information to find the “opening” or coachable moment,
 - b. working to make a connection on a meaningful level, and
 - c. creating the “ah ha” moment.
3. **Gaining Commitment:** Coaches help people and groups make a commitment to move forward, set urgent compelling, stretch goals and achieve a first success.
4. **Taking Action:** By working with people and groups to develop new skills and perspectives and to alter or expand their way of looking at a problem by focusing on solutions and opportunities, coaches can encourage people and groups to find their way to action steps and pay attention to timelines and accountability issues.
5. **Reflection:** Coaches help people take the learning and understanding they get from their work to the next level by continually reflecting on what works and what doesn’t, adding new knowledge and perspectives, and creating opportunities to see and do things differently.



“Community coaching helps people rebuild a sense of shared connection to one another.”

Ken Hubbell





Coaching is not a simple linear activity, but rather a complex cycle of interactions that feed back upon one another. Coaching as an approach to community work also offers a unique opportunity for personal and professional development.

Practitioner Strategies and Techniques

Good Coaching is Intentional Coaching

Successful coaching is intentional rather than accidental, requiring one to consciously step out of other roles to take on the mantle of coach. As a coach we listen more than we speak, and we ask probing questions gracefully. In this role, we don't give answers. Instead, requests for opinions and reflection are thrown out to the group. We listen hard to grasp the underlying rationale behind the group's thinking, and we help make explicit the connection or gap among facts, analysis, opinion and judgment. We make the silence work.

Coaching Requires a Degree of Detachment

As coaches, we want to think carefully about the questions: What is my role here? What does the group need me to focus on? What does the group need to better understand its own process and situation? How is the group working? As we work with the group, we want to think of ourselves as being outside the group where we can observe both the group's work and our role. Effective coaching requires us to detach from our own agenda and interests and to focus attention completely on what the group is doing.

Coaching Is Essentially a Reflective Activity

Effective coaches are perpetually in the learning mode. Every coaching event is an opportunity to learn more about our work and ourselves. Effective coaches build in reflection time by keeping journals, working with mentors and/or developing supportive networks among fellow practitioners. In situations where community members have the opportunity to learn from one another, coaches focus on the generation of new wisdom from within the group and don't "steal the learning" by telling people what that learning is as so often happens in the expert model.

Coaching Is Catalytic

Coaching is a valuable nutrient and catalytic agent to any groups' efforts that require innovative ideas, shared leadership or participation, and comprehensive or integrative approaches across boundaries or economic sectors. Alone among other strategic approaches, effective coaching provides the gestalt and enabling environment for collaboration, problem solving and shared learning for the common good. Coaching is an extremely effective tool for helping groups to reframe their operating systems, practice inclusion, unleash new ideas, transition to new leadership and negotiate partnerships, all critical competencies for successful community building.

Successful coaching is not formulaic; successful coaches understand intuitively and concretely that there is no "one size fits all." Each community is unique, and each community must discover and nurture that uniqueness as they build capacity and get things done.

Building a Wide Range of Skills and Competencies

Coaches don't have to know everything. In fact, it is important to know our limitations. Successful coaches do, however, need to have a basic set of competencies and need to develop a wide range of skills over time.

Basic Coaching Competencies

We have identified six key areas of competency that we believe all coaches should have:

1. improving communication
2. resolving community conflicts
3. identifying and connecting to resources within and without the community
4. providing opportunities for individual and collective learning
5. strengthening relationships
6. responding to change

All community coaches must be grounded in cultural competency in order to relate to and engage with diverse people in a community.

Skills

Because each phase of coaching requires a different set of skills, we have created a list of skills often associated with coaching. Similarly, effective coaches should subscribe to a code of conduct or Principles of Good Practice. We have begun to develop these lists for community coaching. Additional information on skill sets is included in two excellent books on coaching that are recommended resources for anyone coaching in a collective effort: *Coaching—Evoking Excellence in Others* by James Flaherty and *Masterful Coaching* by Robert Hargrove.

Principles of Good Practice

- Avoids enabling
- Assists community teams in setting compelling, urgent and achievable short-term goals
- Focuses on change
- Assures attention to inclusion, equity and the less-often heard voices
- Respects relationships
- Focuses on process and relationships, not only techniques
- Builds trust
- Fosters mindfulness
- Facilitates opportunities for free and informed choice
- Lifts up stewardship and long-term sustainability
- Commits to learning
- Offers opportunities for reflection
- Honors confidentiality
- Asks for help



Community coaches need a basic understanding of community and group process and project initiation and management, which include:

- how groups operate
- how non-profits operate
- how community development works—its process/systems and language
- how to guide strategic thinking
- how projects are designed and implemented over time
- how to measure accountability and assess results

The basic core competencies of an effective coach in a community change context also depend on specific skills. These might be considered to be part of the job description of a community coach.

What a Job Announcement for a Community Coach Should Consider

Coaches identified the following skills related to basic preparation, as well as those connected to each of the R's (results, relationships, reflection and reach):

- **Laying the Groundwork for Success** includes skills in working with multiple stakeholders, understanding successful rural, community and/or organizational change processes and strategies, co-learning, communications, facilitation, reflection and using strength-based/appreciative inquiry processes.
- **Coaching for Results** involves negotiation, reflective questioning, meeting management, conflict management, program development, and ability to do situational analysis and “work around detours.”
- **Coaching for Relationships** includes skills in expanding social capital, building collaboration, networking and evaluation. Successful coaches also have tools to foster inclusion and boundary spanning. “It is not sufficient to simply create a space; we need to help them know their voice is valuable by affirming/ validating their point(s) of view.”
- **Coaching for Reflection** may involve story telling, giving and receiving feedback, deep listening and facilitating reflective processes.
- **Coaching for Reach** invokes the art of finding, developing and using “coachable moments,” and the craft of using those moments to help people expand both their view of the possible and their understanding of the present.

Coaching Helps Community Teams Overcome Barriers to Change

Getting Your Group Out of a Rut

How often have we found ourselves in a meeting where everyone can only state the reasons why things won't work, why the community won't change or why nobody really cares and where most interventions end up as an invitation to an even gloomier round of negative reasoning? Groups like these are stuck

dead center in a rut of negativity. Every potential solution leads back to the refrain of “nobody cares” or “we tried that before.” These discussions loop around back to the starting point and always end with everyone firmly fixed in the rut.

Coaching strategies to help break free from these types of circumstances include:

- Look for ways to reframe the “we can’t get anything done because nothing gets done” situation to a different picture. One strategy is to discuss the normal curve of adopting new practices or adapting to new conditions; that adopting change is like other human characteristics such as height and weight, where people’s characteristics fit into a normal curve. A few very short people make up one extreme end of the curve, and a few very tall people are at the other extreme end of the curve. While some short people and some tall people are towards the ends of curves, most people are in the middle. Similarly, the curve tells us that at one extreme end we have the innovators who always want to do something new while at the other end of the curve, there are those who will never change. Next in the curve are early adopters on one end who will take advantage of a good idea when they see it. On the other end are those who will change, kicking and screaming along the way. In the middle are those who go along with change once it has a proven record.
- Help the group change their mental picture of the situation. When groups are caught in the rut of negativity because they can’t see how something can be accomplished, they often have a mental picture of the people at the extreme “won’t ever change no how” end of the curve.
- Craft an “ah ha” or “teachable moment.” What happens to the possibilities for action when we concentrate on the people at the innovator, early adopter end of the curve? Often this new way of looking at the problem can result in a dramatic “ah ha” moment where groups can immediately see do-able actions when they focus on those ready to try something new.

“Coaching eases tensions and conflicts. As tension disappears and people gain confidence, then the dynamics of the group begin to change.”

Joyce Williams

Moving from Discussion to Action

Many groups and communities are pegged with a no-go label. Well-intentioned people struggle to find effective ways to help their community or group improve with lots of enthusiastic discussion and idea generation that goes nowhere.

Coaches can help by:

- **Observing and understanding group behavior.** For example, a coach listening to a group talk about all the good reasons to do something might interject a comment to the effect that, “We seem to all be agreed on the need to do something.” This comment will test the appearance of consensus, and if consensus exists, focus attention on what needs to happen next.
- **Assisting others in setting compelling goals.** Coaches can help a group move from general discussion to what needs to happen to make changes or can implement good ideas by asking questions such as, “What has to happen first to move forward? How will you know you are successful?”



Attending to Cultural Competency

The coach's role as an outsider provides a useful vantage point from which to observe and provide feedback on issues related to diversity and cultural competency by:

- **Helping the group listen to one another.** Coaches can remind the group of minority concerns or suggestions when those ideas get lost in the general discussion.
- **Transforming unproductive discussion to generate collaborative conversations.** Coaches can restate the minority opinion when it is overlooked or ask the group how to respond to different perspectives or problems that emerge from different contexts.
- **Facilitating active participation.** Coaches can empower missing voices by asking for input from those who are often not heard.
- **Reflecting group behavior.** Coaches may also reflect back to the group observations of how they see the group reacting to new and/or different voices.
- **Reminding the group of the minority position.** Sometimes a minority position is stated that does not click with accepted dogma. Coaches can remind the group of those statements and the group's desire to take minority voices seriously. Sometimes the group needs to be reminded several times, which provides an opportunity to help them think about how they hear these voices—they may not listen or attend to them—and to identify ways to improve their group practice.


Fostering Inclusiveness

Often, major players in communities and groups can get very enthusiastic about projects and programs and mistake silence for agreement. Coaches can help address the need to understand the true meaning of that silence by:

- **Asking who is missing.** Coaches can ask questions about what groups or individuals might be impacted by the project and program and how they are represented in the process.
- **Providing alternatives to Group Think.** Coaches can suggest group discussion and decision-making strategies that allow less active members an opportunity to participate in a non-threatening manner, such as participation in small group work, nominal decision making, paper ballots, etc.
- **Encouraging participation.** Some of the best coaching occurs outside the meeting where coaches can support participation by reinforcing the value of people's ideas and suggestions, empowering people to engage in group conversations and giving constructive feedback.

Additional Tools Coaches Might Employ or Adapt

Several good process tools that coaches might implement during team work sessions or retreats include:

- Community Capitals/Assets Focus
 - Appreciative Inquiry
 - System Thinking
 - Scenario Building
 - Theory of Change
 - Paradigms/Mental Models
 - Managing Complex Action
 - Gracious Space or The Art of Hosting Community Dialogues
 - Mapping
- 

The coach's work involves participating in new learning and then creating or supporting transformational learning experiences for the teams. The coach must be open to learning, changing and being the transformation agent that the teams are also becoming.

It is important that coaches review their own values to determine if they can operate initially from a bias-free position without preconceived notions of what is possible in the community. The line between providing good coaching and inappropriately influencing the group requires assessment and reflection on an ongoing basis. Coaches need to regularly remind themselves, "It's not about the coach. It's not their personal agenda or community or group." One strategy coaches have used to help navigate this line requires continually asking, "Whose needs am I meeting?" Coaches also need to stay alert to opportunities to help people travel the continuum from the abstract to the concrete and vice versa as they engage in their community change work. Another part of the internal work successful coaches undertake includes shaking off unrealistic perceptions and expectations of what community development processes can accomplish in short timeframes.

The Inner Building Blocks of Successful Community Coaching

There are six facets that a good coach must bring to the coaching experience in order to stay disciplined about being a coach. Ken Hubbell uses this list, which he refers to as the Inner Building Blocks.

Values:	Bringing honesty, integrity, compassion, love and respect to the coaching.
Spirit:	Honoring the forces that animate our being.
Reflection:	Examining the meaning of changing communities.
Vision:	Envisioning new possibilities and inspiring others to dream and "do."
Goodwill:	Aligning your personal gifts to benefit others.
Resolve:	Taking action and accepting personal responsibility for the outcomes.

Following is a set of questions that can help us begin to consider or reconsider the ways these Inner Building Blocks bring themselves to the practice of community coaching.

Values

- How do you bring your personal values into this work?
- What are your continuing challenges as you carry on the work of coaching for change and leadership in the community?
- Where are your core values?
- How do you coach in a community when competing values are in play?

Spirit

- Where are you shining a light or casting a shadow in your coaching activities?
- Where are you encouraging and empowering others and where does your ambition or ego interfere and create a shadow over people or the group?
- How do you bring your life's purpose into the everyday work of coaching?

Reflection

- How well are you personally managing the change process in groups and in the community? What help do you need?
- Have you recognized that transforming organizations and communities requires personal change and transformation?
- How do you manage uncertainty and ambiguity as groups work through ambitious change efforts?

Vision

- What is your own dream for what is possible in the group and in the community?
- How do you inspire others? What fuels your own inspiration?
- Where does this coaching fit in with your personal vision?

Goodwill

- How do you align your personal “gifts” to benefit the team?
- What else can you do?
- Is the spirit of “goodwill” present in your coaching?
- How can you recognize the assets and gifts of people around you?

Resolve

- What are your current commitments to the work of change and community transformation and in other areas of your life?
- How or where have you accepted personal responsibility for outcomes?
- How is your sense of personal resolve made visible to others?



Serving Multiple Stakeholders During a Community Change Effort

Coaches usually come to communities or groups in one of three ways: as part of a foundation-supported change initiative, through an intermediary that is receiving foundation support to manage a technical assistance or capacity building program that involves coaching, or because a community group determines the need for a coach and secures a coach for their efforts.

Regardless of how community coaching is initiated, the coach soon encounters a very diverse ecosystem in which the coaching unfolds. This is a living system shaped by interactions among many stakeholders. Typically, the coach has intensive connections with a coordinating team and a coordinator or staff member who is playing that role. During the coaching experience, coaches may interact with other community stakeholders and agencies as they participate in the change effort. Figure 3 illustrates the way a coach may participate in this diverse ecosystem, providing different shades of feedback, support and encouragement, as well as acknowledging the need for different kinds of perspectives, questions and celebrations among the many stakeholders.

Figure 2.





Coaches Manage Multiple Relationships

Coaching works best when the community sees their use of and work with a coach as an opportunity to help achieve its own goals and ambitions. Thus, a first challenge for the coach in a funder-supported effort is to build a bridge with the community between funder expectations, including coaching, and community plans and processes.

What can the coach do to ensure a fit between his/her skills and the community or team? How does the coach know if his/her skills fit the program/community? These questions tend to haunt coaches as they consider how best to frame their work. Roundtable participants suggested several strategies that can help coaches prepare for their coaching assignment.

From an external point of view, coaches can get to know the key people with whom they are working and can learn about the community's issues and patterns of work in order to consider how best to approach the coaching opportunity. As coaches learn about community expectations and existing capacities and strengths, as well as potential capacities, they can design strategies to help communities not only understand, but also frame and shape the ever-changing economic and social conditions that impact everyone.

A second piece of the external preparation requires the coach to work carefully with funders/sponsors to encourage trust in the coaching process and to identify realistic expectations. Coaches often work with intermediaries with whom they interact to access resources for successful coaching for community. Often intermediaries themselves face a steep learning curve in regard to coaching for community. One of the most important steps in forming a coaching relationship is for the community and coach to clarify expectations of each other together in regard to coaching and the services the coach should provide, including the level of feedback and onsite coach participation and kinds of expertise the coach should offer. Whatever the source of funds for coaching services, a written contract between the coach and community or group provides an opportunity to discuss, clarify and document expectations (see an informal example on page 17).

Coaches Work on a Variety of Issues

As noted previously, a coach can assist an organization, coalition, agency or very informal grassroots group through a change process aimed at improving the community. While coaching can occasionally be short term, most coaching occurs over a longer period of time. This is because creating new possibilities, relationships or sustainable organizations is complex and requires a long-term perspective.

Community coaches often provide a wide array of support. The examples on pages 17 and 18 were lifted from a list of coaching targets generated in 2002 by Ken Hubbell as a part of the Rural Community College Initiative, a national effort supported by the Ford Foundation.

East Carroll Parish in northeast Louisiana straddles US Hwy 65 and is home to Lake Providence and other recreational and natural assets. Residents of this rural Louisiana parish are challenged by a declining economy and barriers to change that include racism and hopelessness. A group of concerned community residents organized the East Carroll Cultural Tourism Initiative (ECCTI) and began working to bring the races together through planning and organizing cultural and tourism events— events that also enhance the image of the parish and create economic opportunities through tourism development. In 1999, the ECCTI was chosen to be a member of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Mid South Delta Initiative.

As part of MSDI, the group received a project implementation grant as well as the assistance of a community coach, Ken Hubbell. Team members negotiated with Ken and developed a service agreement based on what the team members felt they needed to be successful and what Ken felt he could provide. After the document was signed, it helped the team and coach manage their relationship and expectations. The agreement was reviewed annually and terms were renegotiated based on the team’s progress and capacity and the changing circumstances in the community.

Example of a Community and Coach Agreement

After several discussions about the types of coaching assistance the MSDI team is most interested in as they move into the project implementation phase and the specific ways the Coach might serve the community team, we generated this list:

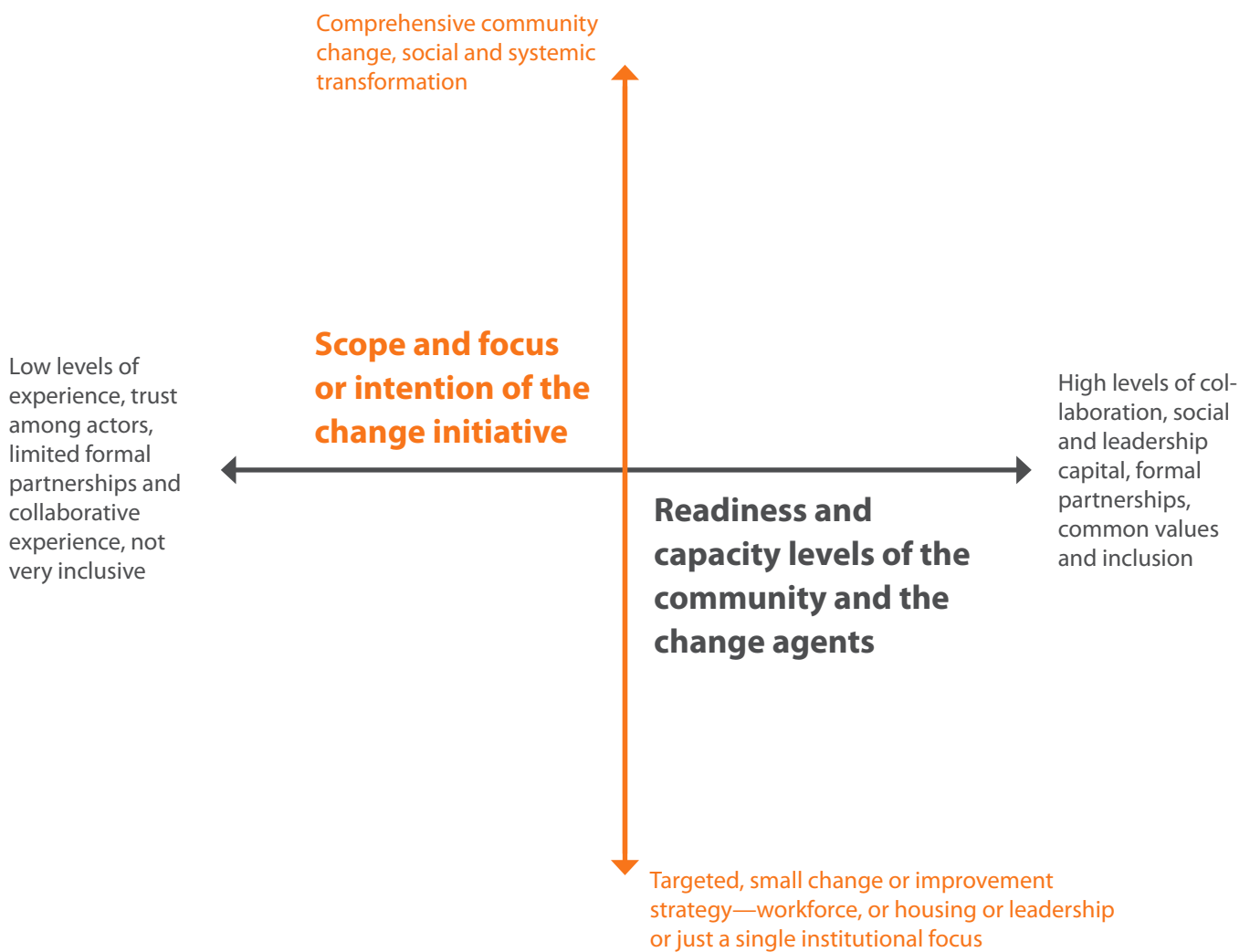
- Help the group stay on task with their proposal concepts, strategies, action plans.
- Help the group master project management when there are several inter-related activities involving multiple stakeholders that must be managed by a small staff and a busy volunteer board.
- Help build the team’s capacity in facilitation, team collaboration and leadership for change.
- Help the team identify and locate resources.
- Provide a “mirror” to the team that reflects insightful observations and challenges about their collaboration, shared leadership and capacity building.
- Assist the incoming Director in understanding the history of the Initiative—the expectations of the Kellogg-MSDI systems, principles and related strategies—and organizing and managing an effective work plan to steer the project activities, and developing a set of working relationships with the broader community team.

This list represents an informal “Coaching Plan” for 2002-03, which we all agree will be a guide for the Coach’s service to the team during this time.

Community	Prospective Coaching Activities
Coahoma County, Mississippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring existing Action Plan and general coaching for Team Leader in keeping the team on track with its plan.
Meridian, Mississippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guiding reflections and refinements on their RCCI local leadership program. General coaching for Project Director in balancing multiple projects and in expanding the collaborative group of RCCI partners.
Prestonsburg, Kentucky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping clarify the rationale and objectives of a regional summit. Leading reflections on process and action planning with new expanded RCCI Core team.

Coaches often collaborate with a community, an organization or a community coalition to determine possible approaches for accelerating community change. In some cases, a funder or community serving intermediary may be interested in assessing the best ways to support a change effort. Here is an example that has been used by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development to frame a range of coaching interventions in a community.

Figure 3. Assessment Tool for Determining Coaching Approaches





Understanding the Six R's of Coaching: Community Coaching Flows through Multiple Dimensions Over Time

A Framework for Community Coaching: The Six R's

A very diverse community of practice has been formed by the Community Coaching Initiative to gather the best practices that “change coaches” have utilized in collaboration with community to help community leaders transform themselves and their communities. We have distilled the emerging coaching approach into a basic framework called The Six R's of Community Coaching. Several practitioners who were providing intense community coaching for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Mid South Delta Initiative (MSDI) developed the first version of this concept in the Mississippi Delta. It was later expanded into the current model from convenings with coaches who brought a diverse set of coaching experiences. This section includes examples and brief case summaries of how some of these tools were used. Readiness, Relationships, Reflection, Results, Reach and Resilience are all important and interrelated aspects of effective Community Coaching.

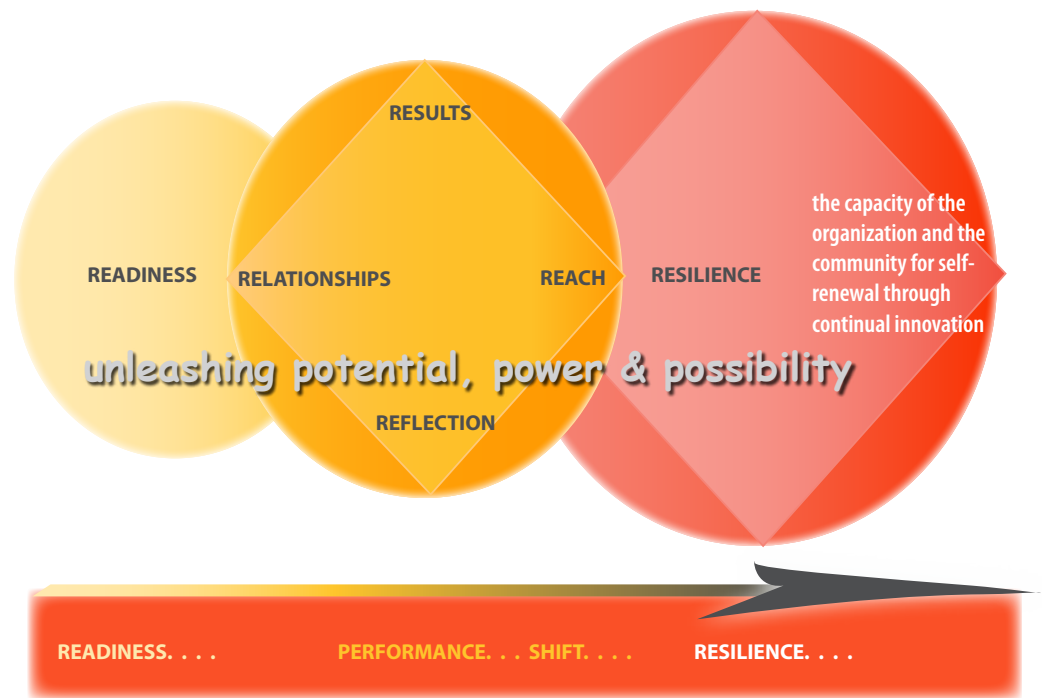
The Six R's framework encompasses all aspects of a successful coaching experience, from preparing a community for the challenges ahead to testing the resilience of the community as the coaching effort nears completion. **Readiness** begins with an assessment of assets and reflection on past community building efforts. Coaches working with communities around readiness assist in generating an extended list of networks that can support the community in reaching its goals. The coach may also take the participating individuals on a journey of exploration into what is possible.

As community leaders begin to organize around their goals, the coach helps them consider how they will work together by expanding and strengthening **Relationships**, both personal and professional. Coaching around relationships will strengthen the capacity for collaboration and collective action as leaders create new approaches and strategies.

Coaches also provide opportunities for **Reflection**, allowing leaders to celebrate their accomplishments and discover ways of improving relationships, decision-making processes and other aspects of their work together. Successful projects succeed by generating consistent **Results**. Coaches assist groups in putting measures in place so that a continuous glimpse into what is working and what is not will steer the group toward achieving their milestones.

To **Reach** beyond what one may believe impossible is to fully embrace the process and the possibility of transformative change. Coaches help individuals and groups through experiential exercises so they can reach beyond current thinking and strategies. Coaching also helps groups reach out into the community, leading to greater age, economic and racial diversity in the change effort. Finally, coaches help leaders move toward **Resilience**, encouraging reflective practice and the development of skills to coach each other so that community groups and their leaders can find answers within themselves. These answers come from considering a deeper set of questions framed and answered both individually and within the group on a regular basis. The resulting new innovations and emerging “best practices” will propel the team and community forward faster!

Figure 4. Community Coaching: Six Connected Pieces



Community Coaching Project/Ken Hubbell 2007

Coaching for Readiness

Readiness is often a blend of individual, group and community level acceptance that new ideas, behaviors and coalitions are necessary to energize community change. Readiness to coaching begins with a personal decision to undertake a new process of self-development. Whether we are speaking of a one-on-one coaching relationship or a community project that involves a group of people seeking guidance, openness and willingness begins with one’s self. This focus on readiness is very important because it will be difficult to find common ground or openness to coaching if readiness is not addressed in the beginning.

There are specific things that ensure readiness. How could we, as coaches, help a community assess and get ready for or take advantage of coaching?

We could:

- Have a pre-readiness conversation about current assets and the local history.
- Have a full discussion on the Six R's to get clarity in each area.
- Lay out possible roles for coaching engagement.
- Invite individuals to share concerns and talk in length about them.
- Assess the openness to sharing and learning together.
- Focus on the discovery and appreciation of local assets.
- Understand the spirit for collaboration. Are the local groups connected and do they trust each other?
- Fill out quick surveys to assess the need for a community coach.
- Identify a committed coordinator or leadership group to guide community building. Has the group agreed to collaborate with a coach to advance its work? What would be the best way to make the arrangement operational?
- Discover the group's competencies to organize, share and develop new approaches to improve the community and determine what the team will need to go forward. What assets are in place and what will the members and group need to strengthen?
- Assess the openness and seriousness of the coordinating to seek new and lasting solutions to the community's issues. Determine what is driving their interest in coaching.

This assessment process could be the most important first step to successful community coaching outcomes. It lays the groundwork for the hard work ahead and allows everyone to become more clear about the ultimate goal/s that might not be anywhere in sight.

Coaching for Relationships

Relationships are the foundation of any successful coaching experience, no matter what type of coaching is taking place. Coaching for relationships includes skills in expanding social capital, building collaboration, networking and evaluation. Successful coaches also have tools to foster inclusion and boundary spanning. It is not sufficient to simply create a space; we need to help all community members know their voice is valuable by affirming and validating their points of view.

Important questions that should be asked to lay the foundation for the community coaching process include:

- How are people connected to each other and to the "leadership" group/team?
- How is this group connected to the broader community?
- What are people's assets? What can they build together and how will they work successfully?
- What kind of leadership is possible?
- Is there a spirit of cooperation and a commitment to some basic operating principles among the coordinating group? Has the group devised effective ways to work together that provide for a variety of roles to share leadership?
- Is the group in good relation to its community? Is it representative, linked and accountable and what assistance would it need from the coach?
- What kind of relationship will the coach likely have with individuals, selected leaders, the coordinating group and its community partners?

Case Study

Antoinette Green began work with the Mid South Delta Initiative as a coordinator of one of the community teams funded by Kellogg. Antoinette was involved in a coaching experience she described as "unique and good for the community." Coaches came in and set up listening sessions. The point of these sessions was to hear the voice of the community and receive feedback from enough participants so that everyone was comfortable with and understood the diversity of perspectives within the room. This listening process was emblematic of the Foundation's own mission: "helping people help themselves."

Case Study

Kellie Chavez Greene, who worked with the Mid South Delta Initiative, described her role as a coach as bringing a diverse group of people together. This focus on diversity was not limited only to race but also included welcoming people of different ages, education levels and economic status. These individuals were brought together to create a strategic plan for community change in their region. Initially the lack of trust among group members created too much tension for the group to succeed in reaching its goals.

Creating the foundation for powerful relationships was crucial to the success of the strategic plan. The process began with conversations about what each participating individual loved about the community and what was important to them as residents of the Delta. Kellie believed that this process would help participants recognize a common ground of family, faith and the Delta culture that was shared across the group, from the very grassroots person who may not have graduated from high school to a person on staff at the local university. "We built a foundation for our relationships from core values."

Relationships are at the core of coaching. A focus on relationships begins building trust and confidence among individuals and opens the discussion for new places of possibility.

Successful Coaching for Relationships

The most successful stories about coaching for relationships centered on the role of the coach in helping the team become more inclusive and in recruiting, welcoming and involving people from all segments of the community and from all walks of life. The work of creating relationships crosses many boundaries, many codified in decades of tradition, and it revolves around helping people listen to one another in order to seek common ground. Coaching that goes beyond this stage helps participants create sustainable bonding and bridging social capital. Success leads to communities creating new traditions that value multiple traditions and cultures.

A second aspect of coaching for relationships focuses on helping community members find their voice and helping others listen to and respect that voice. With successful coaching, those who have been disempowered come to the table as equal partners. Many coaches also told stories about bringing the voices of younger people into the community decision-making process.

Successful coaching for relationships also addresses the need for communities to build bridging social capital to resources and institutions outside the community. In this context team members can be coached to learn and apply skills related to communicating clearly, cooperating fairly and collaborating successfully. Furthermore, successful coaching for relationships also involves looking for those "coaching moments" when the right question or comment can help a team find the inspiration they need to pull together and make things happen. These experiences help the team continue to inspire one another into the future.

Finally, coaches mentioned that successful coaching for relationships also means accessing and supporting the coach's own network. These coaches find inspiration from sharing stories with one another about successes and overcoming roadblocks; they look for ways to help each other "work around the detours." They participate actively in their coaching network and attend to those relationships.

What Coaches Need to Know about Coaching for Relationships

Again, coaches occupy a bridging role between funders and communities. One funder at the 2005 roundtable commented, "We need to listen to you in your language, not have you talk to us in one way and to communities in another,"

Helping communities create and support relationships is often at the core of coaching. Almost every roundtable participant talked about how a significant coaching focus revolves around helping communities to expand who is at the table and to build new relationships with disenfranchised populations.

Coaching for Reflection

The opportunity to recall things that have worked and have not worked in their cause can be a rich experience for individuals. This time of reflection includes such things as storytelling, giving and receiving feedback, deep listening and facilitating other reflective processes. This process gives individuals the opportunity to find in themselves answers to their own questions. It is also important that they are given the opportunity to reflect back and celebrate their progress. Sharing stories can be a powerful experience; it also requires patience and a commitment to let new things “bubble up.” This process also lets individuals create a holding space for deeper dialogue around hard issues.

A great way to facilitate this part of the community coaching process is by asking the following questions:

- What worked and what didn't? Why?
- What is the broader history of change in our context and how does our current work fit?
- What are the learnings from our work to date and what might need to change?
- What approach to learning and assessment has the group developed? Does it have or need regular methods to step back and reflect on its purpose, mission, goals, partnerships and impacts?
- How does the group collect, share and analyze the wide array of feedback or analysis generated by periodic or annual reflection, and what could the coach provide that would spur learning and “sense making” among the team?
- To what extent does the group make time for and encourage personal reflection on the challenges of leading community change?

Asking these questions could open the door to a meaningful dialogue about their specific issues. Reflection is important in any coaching experience so that individuals may be able to move on and create new ways of being and doing.

Successful Coaching for Reflection

“If I had known then what I know now... Learning is a hindsight that is a bridge to the future.”

Successful coaching is mindful that community work emerges from a way of thinking about things and doing things. These community ways are social constructions that become part of the community wallpaper; framing the work but basically untended. Community coaching helps communities change the wallpaper to frame their work in more inclusive, collaborative and thoughtful ways. Coaches engage communities in reflection by asking for feedback, suggestions and evaluation strategies and by encouraging discussion on what is being learned. While funders and project managers often have evaluation built into the program, successful coaches search for the reflection opportunity to help teams and communities create a community of practice approach to their work.

Case Study

Jennifer Henderson is a community coach who focuses on social justice organizations, foundations and businesses that want to be socially responsible. Jennifer was working with a lesbian cancer group as they were trying to figure out why they couldn't keep women of color as employees. Part of Jennifer's work as a coach was to have the group reflect on the situation to see what had happened in the past. She used time mapping, which allowed the group to recall when and why women of color were most involved in their initiative and why that ended. The group found that a long-term commitment to diversity was what the business needed, not spurts of diversity when a particular initiative called for it. They made it part of their business to actually be diverse, which meant that resources, both time and focus, were now given to all kinds of communities that had not been consistently involved before.

“Silence is very important and learning how to be with that is equally as important.”

Jennifer Henderson

Successful coaches are always on the search for the coachable moment or reflection opportunity when the right question or observation can trigger a new way of seeing and, hence, a new way of thinking and doing. These coaches are likely to respond to a question with another question, framed so that the community members can reflect on their own experiences for insight and answers. These coaches work to see how communities and teams frame their work as building on the groundwork already in place rather than as something new and apart from the community. Reflective processes also encourage our co-learners to consider how their current efforts can work in concert with other initiatives or programs in the community. Successful coaching for reflection helps communities structure opportunities for evaluation and reflection on expectations and the possibilities.

Reflection is also about voice. Through the process of reflection we learn to hear other voices differently and to know our voice, enhancing it with new understanding and learning. “It is not sufficient to simply create a space; we need to help them know their voice is valuable by affirming/ validating their point(s) of view.”

Coaching for reflection plays a critical role in the ability of groups to move from being stuck in the rut to seeing the possibilities on the horizon. Coaches need to be alert for the coachable moments that increase the capacity of the group to raise their consciousness and move into a transformative mindset. One coach suggested that at the same time, “We need to have the COURAGE to bring the reality of the issue to the people. It IS poverty. Name it and bring understanding about it.”

Among the important inputs coaches can add to successful reflection is the ability to create an environment where people are comfortable with a variety of vocabularies. Coaches help level the playing field so all can participate in reflective activities. Coaches can also look for the openings for thoughtful questions that encourage reflection. Several offered their experience in using Appreciative Inquiry to frame these questions so that community members are encouraged to revisit their history in order to find examples of success in the areas where they are struggling. For example, when people get stuck on finding a way to bring people together in a successful community meeting, asking how it has been done in the past asserts local strengths and encourages people to consider how to build on them.

Coaching for Results

The ability to see results is very important to individuals, communities and organizations. Identifying the critical steps and results that must occur if goals are to be reached is key to a successful community coaching experience. Understanding what actual work has to be done, between setting goals and getting results, is the hardest part to accomplish. This component of the Six R's should come early in the process.

Several ways to get to the desired results include thought provoking questions such as:

- What can or has the group achieved?
- What is the critical work and what will it take to get it done?
- How will it manage and invest its resources, communicate and partner?
- Does the group have effective roadmaps to guide its efforts? Is it effective in meeting targets, producing results and communicating with members and the community?
- How is the group measuring its progress and what help could a coach provide?
- How strong are the operations and management functions of the coordinating group or organization? Is it a strong performing group or does it need project management coaching?

Successful Coaching for Results

Among the descriptions of successful coaching for results, participants mentioned the important role coaching can play in assisting the team or the community to set realistic expectations and to clearly describe the parameters within which they will shape their work. Coaches work up front with community leaders to help them avoid setting themselves up for failure. Conversely, many coaches described the need to coach funders on their expectations, and roundtable participants talked about their role in helping communities move from inaction to action with a well-placed question.

What Coaches Need to Know about Coaching for Results

According to participants, the coach's role in helping communities or teams find ways to move forward often revolves helping them be mindful of the differences between an agenda and program objectives or direction. Coaches in these situations ask thoughtful questions to help community members identify the barriers or thinking ruts that keep them from making progress, as well as the unseen opportunities that can lead to new possibilities. As coaches help the community to own the problems, they must constantly reevaluate the agenda from which they are working so that it does not become a barrier to their process and progress. In doing so, coaches often find that getting results means first translating between the community and the funder. The coach's ability to bridge the gap between the funders and the community provides an essential bridge between local decision making and external resources in ways that reinforce the community's ability to make progress toward its goals.

Coaching for Reach

This part of the process invokes both the *art* of coaching as coaches find, develop and use coachable moments and the *craft* of coaching as coaches use those moments to help people expand their view of the possible and their understanding of the present. It is imperative that a community coach remains neutral and does not get sucked into a power struggle as h/she firmly guides the group past familiar, but often ineffective, ways to engage new people and groups.

Important coaching questions that can generate powerful dialogue include:

- How can the group make a lasting difference?
- What are participants searching for in this effort?
- Where is the potential for individual, organizational or community transformation?
- What is the preferred future and what do people have to learn or change to make it happen?
- How will people “be” the change while “doing” the work?
- How will the effort lead to community inclusion, shared leadership and inclusion?

Case Study:

For Tony Genia of the Northwest Area Foundation, results are imperative in order for the communities in which he works to get funding. Tony works with Native American reservations in developing community-building processes and strategies as they plan and implement the Reservation Ventures model supported by the Northwest Area Foundation.

At the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation reservation, for example, many people have lived in poverty for seven or eight generations. Some of the people feel they are so far in the hole that they don't have relatives; they don't know of anyone who has succeeded in moving beyond poverty. There are few jobs on the reservation.

Tony worked with the reservation's Tribal Ventures program to provide basic and detailed learning events, helping people understand that there is an economic system out there and preparing them to find and retain a job. A key success of Tribal Ventures was setting up earned income tax credit programs and entrepreneurship training. From Tony's perspective, approaches to coaching are different for each reservation. It requires trust building and reflection before you can produce results.

Case Study:

With a background in community health improvement, Becky Miles-Polka coached two competing constituencies as they came together around the specific goal of improving access to health care for an underserved population in the community. She helped these groups find a way for everyone to feel there was value in their participation in this larger initiative.

In addition to managing conflicts, she also helped the group expand their ability to manage conflict. She helped them be reflective around some very difficult issues and often became the voice of their collective conscience. Because of the controversy over who was going to take the lead, she assisted them in learning to effectively manage relationships.

As a result, the collaborative succeeded in getting the grant, which has resulted in strengthening the safety-net infrastructure that supports improved access to care for vulnerable populations.

- Is the group vision-oriented and focused on a long-term idea of what it really wants to create in the community and is there a shared commitment to this among the whole group or team?
- Does the group tend to recycle current or old ideas rather than expanding to emphasize bold moves? Is the group focused more on transactional or transformational ideas at this stage of its life cycle?
- What historic or persistent barriers does the group identify as key to accelerating change in the community and what would work to address these more effectively?
- How do new people bring their voices, creative skills, ideas and networks into the group? What is standing in the way of deeper community engagement?

What Coaches Need to Know about Coaching for Reach

Successful coaching for reach often involves transforming the question of inclusion from a counting game to a community norm that appreciates and values differences, where people see the new environment as one that holds benefits for all. Our coaches described this as, “Create a space for all to show up and be, with their own heart, mind and spirit.”

Coaching for reach is often associated with transformation coaching. Transformational coaching invariably involves challenges to the status quo, perhaps most often a challenge to the traditional view of leadership and leaders. Successful coaches work with the team and the community so that the challenges come from within, based on the real and felt experiences of community members.

Successful coaching for capacity occurs when the group has moved from participants or observers to actually doing the coaches “job.” In short, coaching for reach stretches communities and teams beyond their view of what is possible.

Having a clear focus on where the group wants to go provides an essential framework for “reach.” One roundtable participant queried, “How do you challenge the status quo if you have no ‘agenda’???” Coaches provide a safe space to allow the group to “challenge the ‘status quo’ for a valid reason—Does it meet their needs?—

not just because you have ‘an axe to grind.’” Because challenging the status quo means something different to different people and communities, coaches need to be alert to help them find common definitions and in that process treat all those differences with respect. Well-prepared coaches can “reveal the hidden dimensions of social problems.” These coaches also act as a “Guardian of the Parameters” and facilitate the process that allows communities to seek transformation

To prepare for this work, successful coaches have found it useful to learn about community change processes and examples of success, as well as discovering more about how the transformation process can unfold. Successful coaches keep an inventory of success stories, examples and activities and often rely on one another to augment their inventory by sharing insights and interventions.

Coaching for Resilience

Finally, the Resilience component comes when individuals are ready to take a stand for what matters, making it a *collective* principle. Attaining a resilient group fiber comes only after a great deal of time is spent in communication so that a shared view is valued and is operative. There is an appreciation for how everything works together to make the whole.

For a community coach to foster resilience with the group in which they are working, the following questions could be beneficial:

- What is the group's current thinking about sustainability for its vision and its main ideas and programs?
- How well equipped is the group to bounce back from failure, disappointment or a reliance on outmoded strategies?
- Does the group build and support leaders and intentionally provide means for renewal and enrichment?
- Where is the untapped potential in the group and in the community that could be harnessed to support the change agenda?
- Is the group connected to a set of strong and flexible networks that provide energy or security for long-term community building?

Community coaching is uniquely positioned to meet the challenge of achieving sustainability for organizations and communities; these communities may be geographic or communities of interest. The nimbleness associated with coaching can transcend traditional capacity-building approaches. By building the competencies and skills of people within the community, community coaching recognizes and builds upon the human assets of organizations and communities. Effective community coaching can help transform communities and organizations into high-performing sustainable entities where generations of homegrown talent become part of the community infrastructure.

Case Study:

Ken Hubbell of Ken Hubbell and Associates works with community coalitions, organizations and higher education institutions that are deeply engaged in developing a surrounding community or region. Resilience for a group is the capacity to maintain a long-term vision, to take what they have learned from each other and to add a regular focus on personal renewal and creativity to generate innovation. This approach helps the group become not only creative problem solvers but creative thinkers as well. A high level of resilience helps the group and community achieve momentum so they don't slip backward in the face of loss or disappointment.

Ken coached the University of Namibia's Northern Campus leadership group for five years under grants from the Ford Foundation. A key element in the final phase of coaching for that project was helping the group assess their capacity to sustain the innovative approaches they had practiced with Ken. He helped the team build a learning process for each individual to increase either the facilitation, design, system diagramming, scenario development or coaching skill sets so the group could continue the momentum that was generated during the coaching relationship.

Type of Challenge	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>Build a team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we get to know and trust each other in order to become a group that succeeds and makes a contribution to our region? • How will we identify what we all are especially good at, what we know, and what we don't know but want to learn? • How will we organize our meetings, our notes, our work and information? • How will we develop a way to meet that is convenient for most or all of the team and how can we all contribute to make it happen? • How can we become better leaders in our community? • What kind of commitment do we have for deep change and finding new ways to work positively with others? • What stories should we tell and share about our lives so we can remind ourselves that a better community is possible—and needed?
<p>Build a shared vision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it that we really want to create together in our community? • What will the community look like in 2025 as it relates to youth, grassroots communities? • What will the future leadership look like? • How can we do something that has never been done in the community without losing our way? • How can we uncover the greatness and spirit that we know is present in our people? • How can we light a path that others will follow? • How can we communicate this to more people this year?
<p>Develop an understanding of the current situation in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of policies are shaping the current situation? • What is excellent and working well in some places already? • What does the community have to build on that has gone unnoticed? • What have we learned over the past five to 50 years that can be used to carry the community forward toward the vision? • What is standing in the way of a better future? • What big forces impact your community right now, creating uncertainty and/or opportunity? • Do we have what it takes to save what needs saving and change what needs changing?

Examine the mindsets and attitudes that shape the community and limit change; explore the positive and the cautious forces of change.

- How can we create a real shift in the mindsets of people and those leading organizations, businesses, agencies, churches and towns or cities so that our vision can become a reality?
- How can we see new possibilities that lead to the vision so we don't get stuck in old habits?
- How can groups doing good work connect instead of compete?
- How can leaders add focus on a long-term vision to the current improvement projects?

Develop clear strategies or solutions and generate a plan with a set of clear goals and recommended priority solutions

- What must change—what are the big goals?
- How will we identify our progress toward the new future?
- What are the best actions to activate the goals?
- Which things will create the biggest impact and which will only create small change at the margins?
- How will people, organizations, agencies and groups act and carry out the priority activities?
- What kinds of people and financial or physical resources will it take to fund the first priorities?
- How should we communicate the purpose and opportunities that we describe in our plan?
- What audiences need to hear about our ideas, and what do we need from them?
- How should we select milestones, benchmarks and ways to evaluate outcomes and impacts?

Develop a structure to guide your plans

- How will we steer the work of this plan?
- Do we need a formal organization with a board that will last for a while and that needs funds and procedures?
- Can we invite existing groups to help carry out the plan?
- What kinds of roles should the planning team have once the plan is solid and ready?

Establish a good way to learn and sustain your efforts

- How will we continue to learn ways to innovate so that the same people don't always lead the community, or so that leaders don't keep trying the same old ideas?
- How will this approach carry on for 20 years?
- How will we attract new volunteers to help create a happier place to live, work and play?

Coaches Provide Reflective Feedback to the Team to Maintain Momentum and Lift Up New Behaviors

Coaches often provide regular feedback to the team to help it stay on track, practice new behavior or engage stakeholders in new ways. This feedback should reflect the coaching agenda agreed to between the team and the coach. These reports should be regular enough to maintain a focus on the challenges around which the coach is helping with team. A steady rhythm of feedback also helps keep learning on the group's collective mind or radar screen.

The coach might produce a monthly or quarterly memo to the team or the team leader that includes the coach's perspective and identifies new or continuing challenges. Below is an example that we used with a community college team in eastern Kentucky that participated in the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative:

Sample Coaching Dialogue

I'm very impressed by your determination to push through all the frustration and delays in your RCCI project that could have grounded a lesser group. I think you have the foundation for great success in your twin goals of building innovative regional development networks.

I hope you continue throughout 2002 to build on the recent momentum, using your remaining Ford Foundation funds to launch meaningful educational access pilot programs and serious workforce development strategies. If you do, I think the region's stakeholders will help you do the heavy lifting that will be required to sustain this work.

Current Strengths

Growing out of an organic planning process, the college and key partners across all three sectors (public, private and nonprofit) forged a promising regional economic alliance. This alliance has great promise for working regionally on development opportunities; especially noteworthy is the commitment to the alliance of up to seven bank partners and five county judges.

The college used an extensive regional planning process to create a wide network of 30 education stakeholders such as involving numerous local school systems. While their implementation projects stalled out in 2001 due to lack of a committed champion, the network is in place, and these new relationships provide a strong asset for future efforts.

Continuing Challenges

Your challenge or "stretch" goal is to think broader than ever before about regional development and to target investments in highly skilled trainers, custom technical assistance staff and innovative entrepreneurial leadership. If the region continues to under invest in regional development, you probably won't be able to get the traction and momentum necessary to break free of the old limited-resource view that defined the region's economic reality.

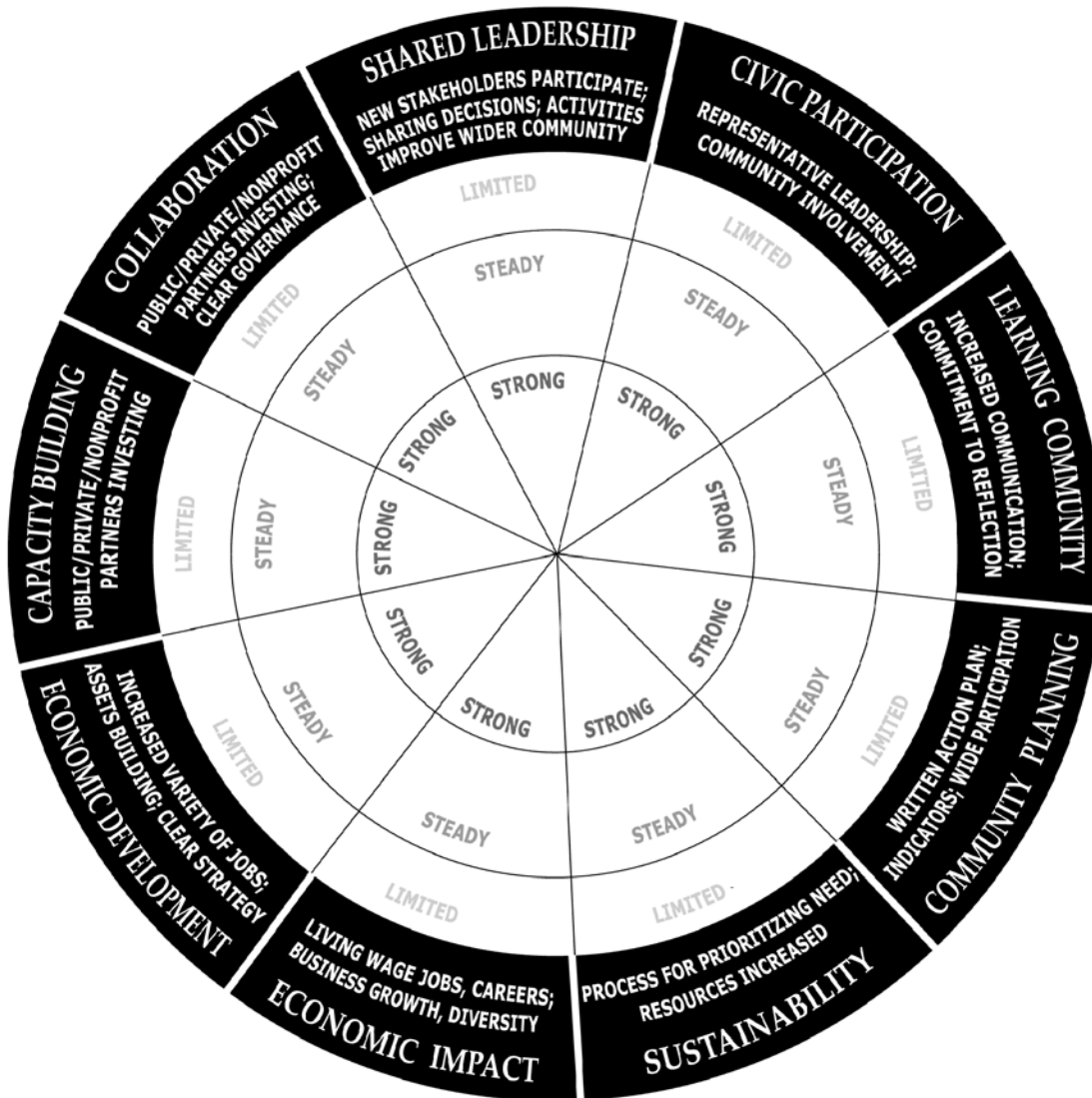
I believe you can make this transformation.

Providing Tools for Increasing a Group's Capacity

Often, a coach will devise tools to help a community team conduct a self-assessment. Such an assessment can lead to discovery and strategic rethinking for new groups or to informal alliances among those who are pursuing a change effort with less organizational structure supporting the effort.

Following is a capacity assessment tool used for grassroots groups in the Mississippi Delta. It was also incorporated into MDC's manual, *Building Communities by Design*.

Figure 5. Capacity Assessment Tool



Coaches Generate Insights for Funders or Sponsors to Illuminate Progress and Complement Evaluation

If coaching services are supported by a foundation or are a strategy embedded in a more complex change initiative, the coach generates insights and feedback on a regular basis to chart progress, new capacity or learning, and to capture highlights of the community change process.

Following is an example of a monthly report from a community coach working in the Mississippi Delta with a W. K. Kellogg Foundation initiative.

1. What actions did the team carry out during the last month? Did they meet their objectives related to the core competencies and their action plan?

During the team's November meeting, a great number of interest areas were generated. The team was divided into four committees to further explore the areas.

The tourism committee met in December 2, 2002.

Committee members generated a long, comprehensive list of assets that are available to support tourism business in the area. The committee identified community economic development and quality of life improvement needs that could be met by tourism.

The newly formed team is still in the forming stage. The planning process has just begun. Specific core competencies will be incorporated into the team's work as the planning process unfolds.

2. What does the team intend to accomplish next month?

- Organize to establish ways to get its work and business done
- Begin team building and development
- Focus on and determine which of the generated ideas will be developed into a work plan
- Include additional team members who were not included in the first two meetings
- Conduct a productive focus session

3. What coaching assistance has the team asked for during the next month?

I was asked to clarify information for one organization's board concerning the funder's "Team concept."

4. What assistance from other coaches or consultants does your team need in order to continue implementing its projects? What coaching assistance do YOU need to help the team function effectively and to carry out the core Principles? What lessons have you learned as a coach?

The team and I need other coaches' ideas and assistance in operationalizing the reflection and planning tool introduced at the last gathering to help with:

- Community problems/challenges and new opportunities
- Strategies and approaches to be selected to solve problems and create new opportunities
- Key goals/outcomes to be implemented with funders' support

I have relearned that the process of becoming a viable team is one that happens in phases. Important foundation building is happening to help this team and this initiative to be all it can be.

5. Describe any obstacles or challenges.

The blazng challenges now are to narrow the team's focus in order to bring clarity to its implementation plans and development of a reasonable planning timeline. Race continues to present major challenges in this and other Delta communities.

6. Can you share any recent stories, issues, new resources or news events that influenced the environment in which the team works?

Not at this time.

7. Other Comments:

One concern is the unwillingness of the community residents to work in an inclusive manner for the good of the community without regard to race. White citizens in one city who were not city employees chose not to attend the mayor's inauguration.

Several hundred people attended the event and five were white. Two were city employees, three others were political officers or in similar positions.



Evaluating and Improving a Coaching Practice

Coaching offers unique benefits to funders, intermediaries, communities, and to coaches themselves in that successful coaching provides opportunities for all to expand their learning. However, there are no identified metrics for measuring the results of a coach, nor any thorough evaluations to help assess the impact of coaching itself. When asked how they knew they made a difference in the community, coaches reported these indicators:

- Communities used new ways to live and work together.
- Community teams uncovered new ideas that led to successful community change.
- People came to see the reality of different perspectives so they could work with others more effectively, reduce conflict, and create the conditions for a learning community.
- Leaders included the whole community rather than a select few or the traditional elite.
- Groups successfully challenged the status quo.
- Community groups were able to generate self-direction to decide for themselves what will work, how and why.
- The group found a way to get unstuck and connect or reconnect their strategic work to their vision.




“Coaches have to let people storm.”

Kellie Chavez Greene



Most coaches say they just know they made a key difference in a community change process; their intuition tells them that the work they have done with communities was critically important to the change effort. Yet, we often feel we need data and other information to back up that intuition. Coaches can evaluate their work in a variety of ways. Generally, framing any feedback request or evaluation effort using Appreciative Inquiry is a good idea as it provides a focus for a productive, yet critical, conversation. Beginning with a request for a story or example of how the coach has made a difference, the coach and the community can then look at the story to identify the factors that contribute to successful coaching.

The follow-up revolves around questions such as: What would it look like if we could do even better? The answers help people consider how everyone has a role in making things work better. The subsequent discussion can then focus on specifics of who will do what to ensure that both a coach and community team are all working to make things better.



You can access additional information, questions and approaches regarding Appreciative Inquiry at their common site, <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

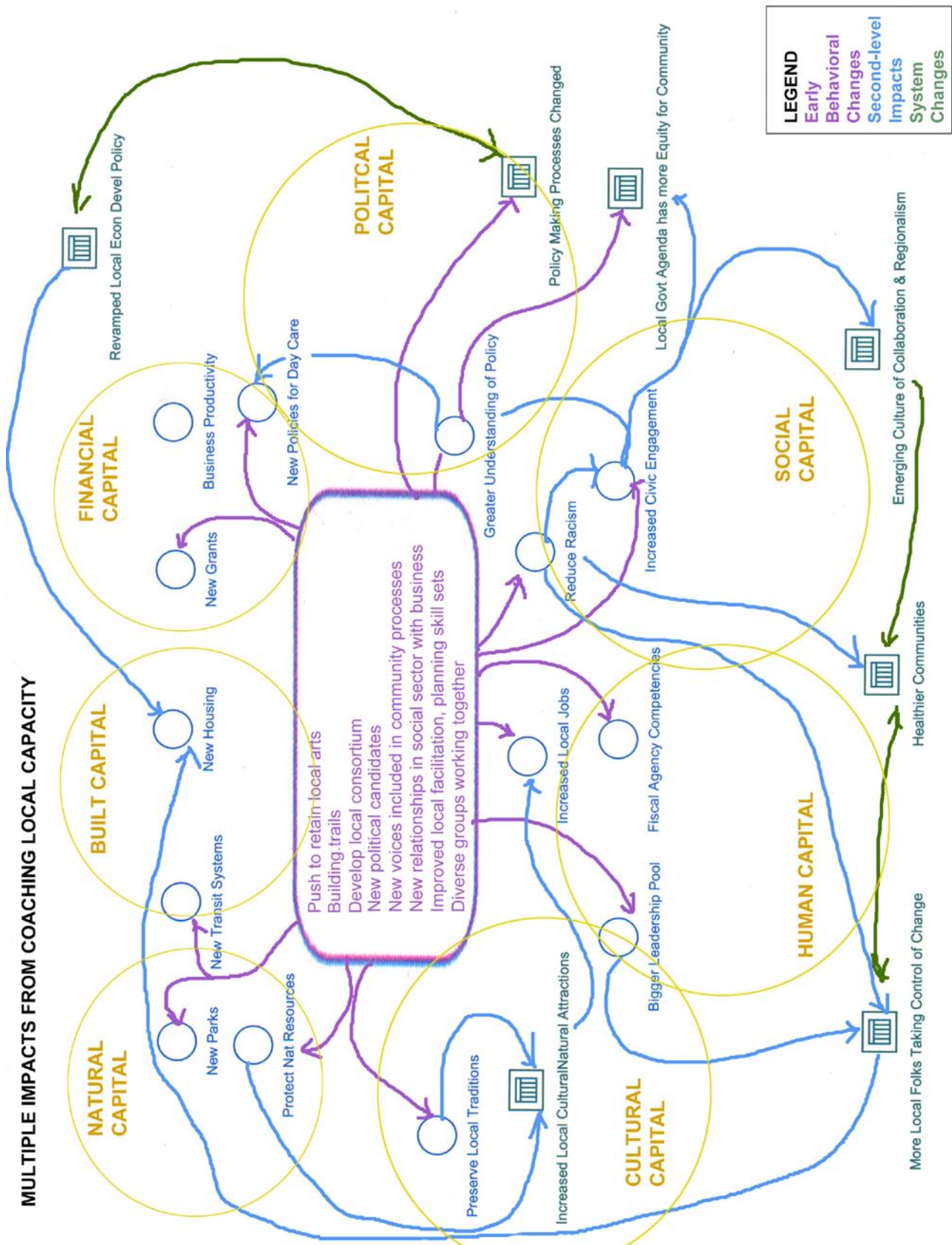
Three ways coaches can seek feedback on their coaching role include:

1. Using a community contract, the coach can seek feedback on how well he/she has addressed the items in the contract, as well as how well the contract has worked for both the community and the coach. Further discussion can illuminate changes that will better support the community's efforts.
2. Coaches can seek feedback from supervisors by using a similar methodology. This evaluation work is often less about approaches and successes with coaching and more about how the coach has helped the community reach certain milestones to achieve goals.
3. Coaches can engage other coaches in discussions about coaching experiences and what can be learned from them to increase the efficacy of future coaching.

Most coaches also want to see how their contribution has aided the overall change initiative. Working with community members, coaches can look at the role of coaching in overall system change. In the second phase of RCCI, college teams were asked to map the impact of the project and the coach on the college and community. Using the Community Capitals Framework and Most Significant Change technologies, a group can map how their work has influenced how people do and think about change, how these differences have led to changes in other parts of the community system, and what impact these changes have on community systems. These mapping activities provide opportunities for reflection and refocusing change efforts, as well as showing where coaching has played a key role in the change process.

On the following page, we provide an example of the capitals impact mapping in 2007 of the collective impacts in more than dozen communities where coaching was used as a change strategy in the previous decade.

Figure 6. Example of Capitals Impact Mapping



Other Indicators of Successful Coaching


Coaches who participated in 2005 and 2007 learning events sponsored by the national Community Coaching Initiative generated an additional list of indicators that suggest a positive impact from coaching.

- When the *community* defines needs and requests coaching.
- When a group naturally can look outward to see a bigger picture.
- When the group has a new platform for respectful and meaningful dialogue.
- When the group has moved from participants or observers to actually doing the coaches “job.”
- When the community can challenge the status quo in an indirect or direct method.
- When the group is outcome focused but also process related.
- When the coaching function spreads out: the coach builds his/her own capacity to work with the team, the team builds its own capacity to work with community and the community builds capacity, and so on.
- When the group inspires individuals and also brings different groups together to build coalitions (individual level and community level).
- When the group generates alignment with other goals the community has on its collective agenda.
- When the group has a heightened awareness for a guiding framework or philosophy; a clear purpose.

Evaluation Questions: One Kellogg Example

Here’s an example used by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Mid South Delta Initiative of reflective questions that a coach might consider to evaluate the success and impact of coaching. Such an inquiry works best when done collaboratively with the team.

1. What have we learned about coaching/consulting for the Mid South Delta Initiative?
2. What are we leaving behind in the communities within the context of our mission and vision statements?
3. Did we have enough time to spend within each community?
4. How did we use that time? Was the time we spent effective?
5. How did we offer our opinions and recommendations to the community team members?
6. Did we solve problems or did we help community teams build their capacity to solve their own problems?
7. Did we coach the team members rather than fix problems for the community teams? Were we coaches or technical specialists?
8. What else are we leaving behind?



As we described previously in this guide, community coaching requires ongoing experimentation and learning on behalf of the coach. Each coach continually works to uncover his or her innate inner resources; create a centered outlook and curious nature; and expand skills, competencies, and techniques (conceptual or facilitative) en route to improving the coaching practice in community settings. The bottom line is that great coaching takes lots of practice and cannot be rushed.

When we surveyed more than 30 community coaches, they collectively generated this list of practices to stretch their coaching muscles:

- Studying storytelling and approaches using metaphor.
- Trying to coach and learn by doing it and reflecting on it.
- Examining frameworks like Community Capitals and resources from the field of community psychology.
- Looking into literature on collaboration and high-performing teams.
- Developing a better understanding of intuition as a tool for coaching.
- Learning about partnership development.
- Exploring new community technologies such as YouTube and digital storytelling.
- Journaling and exchanging insights with other colleagues.
- Participating in convenings.
- Undertaking continuous personal development and working with a life coach.
- Linking the community capitals and integrated frameworks.
- Connecting with colleagues to exchange ideas.
- Developing new tools each time you coach.
- Reading intensely about change.

Helpful Resources to Expand a Coach's Knowledge Base

We recommend that every community coach carefully read and keep these books on hand:

Resources on Coaching as a Practice

Masterful Coaching: Extraordinary Results by Impacting People and the Way They Think and Work Together
by Robert Hargrove

The Heart of Coaching: Using Transformational Coaching to Create a High-Performance Coaching Culture
by Thomas G. Crane

Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others by James Flaherty

The Handbook of Coaching: A Comprehensive Resource Guide for Managers, Executives, Consultants and Human Resource Professionals by Frederic M. Hudson, Ph.D.

The CCL Handbook of Coaching: A Guide for the Leader Coach by Sharon Ting and Peter Scisco



Resources on Change and Leadership

The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization by Peter Senge

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler

Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change by David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney

Community: The Structure of Belonging by Peter Block

The Change Handbook: The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems by Peggy Holman, Tom Devane and Steven Cady

Leadership from the Inside Out by Kevin Cashman

Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky