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Capacity Building Toolkit for Victim Services Agencies in Pennsylvania

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November 21, 2008

This project was supported by Grant No. 2005-JG-06-17597 awarded to the National Center for State Courts by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

How to Use this Toolkit..... ii

Introduction 1

I. Assess Your Organization’s Capacity 3

 Steps in conducting the assessment..... 4

 Step 1: Select a capacity assessment tool 4

 Step 2: Decide who will do the work 9

 Step 3: Gather information 15

 Step 4: Identify capacity needs and set priorities..... 17

 Step 5: Create an action plan..... 20

II. Develop a Strategic Plan for Your Organization 23

 What is strategic planning?..... 23

 Steps in strategic planning 24

 Step 1: Identify your organization’s guiding ideas..... 25

 Step 2: Set goals and objectives 28

 Step 3: Generate strategies 29

 Step 4: Implement strategies 31

 Step 5: Monitor and measure progress 33

III. Develop a Technology Plan for Your Organization 35

 What technology capabilities do we have? 36

 What technology capabilities do we want to have? 37

 How do we get from where we are to where we want to be? 39

IV. Evaluate Performance and Strive for Excellence 40

 The role of evaluation in organizational capacity building 41

 Steps in developing a logic model for organizational capacity 44

 Step 1: Define the problem 44

 Step 2: Identify the resources/inputs used to address the problem..... 45

 Step 3: Identify probable outputs 47

 Step 4: Identify desirable outcomes 48

Additional Tools and Resources

Appendix A: Organizational Capacity Building Survey	A-1
Appendix B: A Guide to Acquiring Consulting Services.....	B-1
Appendix C: A Guide to Acquiring Technology	C-1
Appendix D: Introduction to the Delphi Method.....	D-1
Appendix E: Web and Print Resources.....	E-1

Acknowledgments

The National Center for State Courts is thankful for the guidance and professionalism demonstrated by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. In particular, Deborah Almoney and Jennie Seigler made valuable contributions to the design and content of the toolkit. This project benefited from the invaluable participation of an active advisory board. The authors wish to thank the following individuals who shared their expertise and experiences: Barbara Clark and Kathy Bennett (Network of Victim Assistance), Christina Kirchner (Philadelphia Children’s Alliance), Maria Macaluso (Women’s Center of Montgomery County), Shirl Regan (Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh), and Stephanie Walsh (Center for Victims of Violence and Crime).

How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit was designed as an interactive guide to help organizations complete specific tasks associated with organizational capacity. The authors recognize that organizations will be approaching this toolkit from varying levels of capacity. Some organizations may be relatively new to the process of building organizational capacity and may choose to complete the toolkit from start to finish. Other organizations will have most of the tools already in place, such as mission statements and strategic plans, but will have knowledge gaps in other areas, such as how to evaluate program effectiveness. We invite you to use this toolkit as you see most appropriate. Jump to those sections that are most relevant to you. Skim materials that you don't need at the moment. While we encourage you to complete the exercises included in the toolkit, use your own approach to move forward on organizational capacity building. Most importantly, use the resources in the toolkit to take specific actions that will lead you to building a better organizational environment for you, your staff, your volunteers, and your clients.

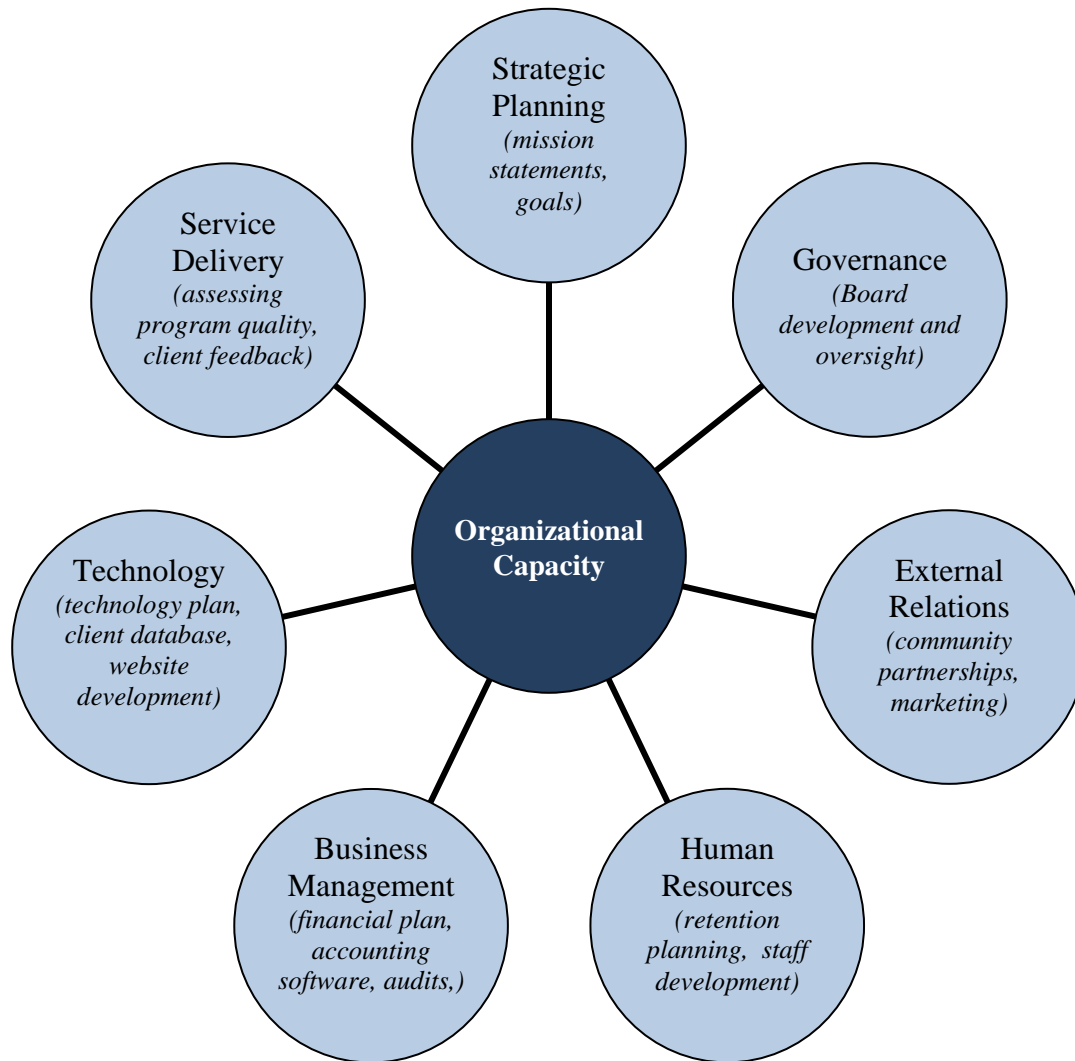
Organizational capacity is the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission in an effective manner.

Nonprofit organizations in Pennsylvania and across the nation provide a broad range of services to address the ever growing and changing needs of their communities. Yet, as the demands for their programs and services have increased, public and private funding has dwindled. In Pennsylvania and around the country, community service agencies must continually strive to do more with less. Building and maintaining organizational capacity therefore is critical for these organizations to sustain quality services for their communities.

As part of its mission to assist victims of crime in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) provides technical assistance to victim services agencies and monitors program performance. One of PCCD's priorities is to enhance the long-term stability and effectiveness of local victim service agencies. Since 1998, PCCD has dedicated significant funding for victim services agencies to engage in a variety of activities aimed at organizational capacity building. This capacity building toolkit is an extension of PCCD's technical assistance to victim services agencies in Pennsylvania. The information and guidance is drawn primarily from the experiences of five victim services agencies implementing capacity building grants from PCCD and other funding sources.¹

Capacity building focuses on the organization—its governance, management, human resources, infrastructure, external relations, resource development, and technology to support all these functions—rather than on the content of programs or services. Victim services agencies in Pennsylvania have engaged in a wide variety of capacity building activities, typically revolving around seven components, as depicted below.

¹ The five agencies participated in case studies of victim services agencies. They include the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, the Women's Center of Montgomery County, the Network of Victim Assistance, and the Philadelphia Alliance for Children.



The number and diversity of capacity building areas and activities can be challenging for any agency to consider, and this can be more acutely so for smaller agencies and more rural agencies. Moreover, capacity areas can overlap, with technology often encompassing several aspects of capacity building efforts. Deciding where and how to start can seem like a daunting task. This capacity building toolkit is intended to prioritize and simplify the process for victim services agencies and other nonprofit organizations in Pennsylvania as they embark on or

continue efforts to improve their capacity to meet the changing needs of their clients and communities. The toolkit presents the essentials of capacity building:

- I. Assess Your Organization's Capacity
- II. Develop a Strategic Plan
- III. Develop a Technology Plan
- IV. Evaluate Your Performance and Strive for Excellence.

The appendix, *Additional Tools and Resources*, is a guide to acquiring technology and consulting services and directs users to web-based and print resources for capacity building.

I. Assess Your Organization's Capacity

Effective capacity building is similar to strategic planning; it calls for a thoughtful review of your organization's mission and an assessment of your capacity to achieve that mission within the context of the entire organization. To maximize the benefits of capacity building, your organization should conduct a capacity assessment as a component of strategic planning or to reinvigorate strategic planning efforts that may have lapsed. The primary goal is to see the big picture: addressing one capacity area without considering the effects of change on other areas can diminish the overall positive effects on your organization's capacity.

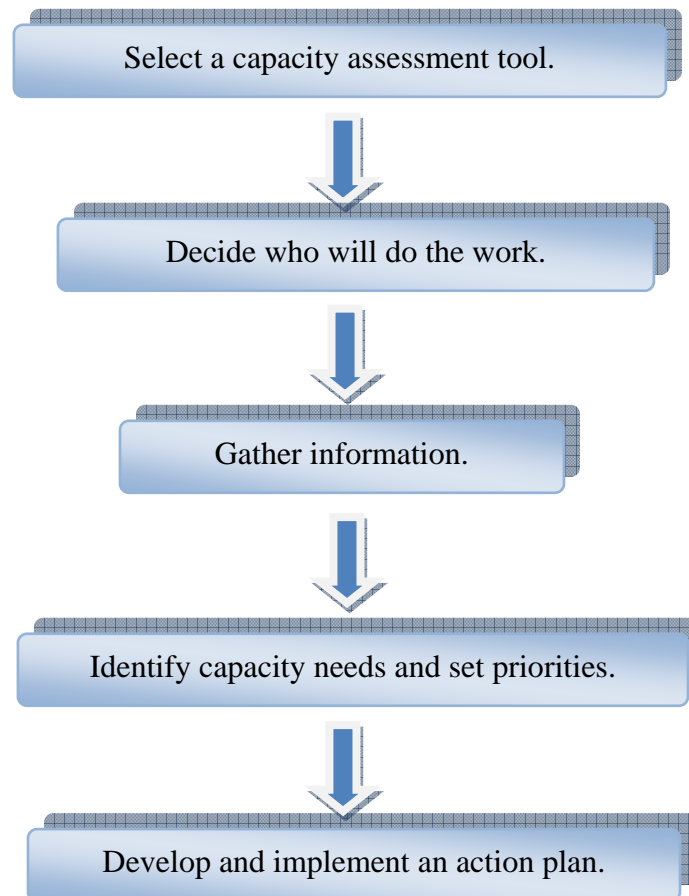
This does not mean that you must address all of the areas you identify at the same time. Rather, part of the exercise is to set priorities and a long term plan for capacity building. The victim services agencies in Pennsylvania that have grown and prospered in tough times have implemented this progressive approach to capacity building.

Although there are no hard and fast rules for conducting a capacity assessment, two elements are critical:

1. The executive director takes the lead and coordinates information gathering.
2. The capacity assessment gathers input from a wide range of sources, including the board of directors, program managers, line staff, clients, and, if appropriate, community stakeholders or partners.

Steps in conducting the assessment

The following flowchart outlines the steps you should take to complete an assessment of your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission:



Step 1: Select a capacity assessment tool

A capacity assessment typically entails the administration and analysis of a self-assessment tool. A number of capacity assessment tools have been developed to guide organizations through this critical component of capacity building (see *Additional Tools and Resources* for an example of a capacity assessment instrument). Capacity assessments can be carried out either formally or informally and can consist of rather basic tools aimed at capturing

general impressions or elaborate questionnaires that attempt to collect detailed information. A good assessment is critical, but not necessarily expensive.

There are four basic types of tools that you can use individually or in combination to help you with the assessment.

1. Informal discussions
2. Semi-structured inquiries
3. Delphi method of inquiry
4. Formal survey

Informal discussions represent the least reliable, but quickest approach to assessments. In this approach, the executive director holds informal discussions and meetings with staff, clients, and stakeholders. Informal discussions tend to be prone to subjectivity and can be difficult to carry out on a candid basis.

Semi-structured inquiries are somewhat more formal, primarily because they rely on standardized open-ended questions. Ideally, the responses can be submitted anonymously, thus encouraging respondents to be forthcoming.

Sample of Open-Ended Questions

*What is our organization's greatest strength?
What is our organization's greatest weakness or challenge?
What can the organization do to make your job better?
How can we improve the quality or content of our services?*

The Delphi method is a qualitative and exploratory forecasting methodology that has the advantage of gathering expert opinions to identify and reach consensus on issues. A brief description of this approach can be found in *Additional Tools and Resources* at the end of this toolkit. The Delphi approach provides much stronger findings than either informal discussions or semi-structured inquiries. In addition, the Delphi method can be used as a tool to improve communication among staff and to create a sense of teamwork when conducting the assessment.

Three Phases of the Delphi Method

- Phase 1 is a series of topical open-ended question. Responses to Phase 1 are then compiled and listed in Phase 2.
- Respondents are asked to show their level of agreement with each statement in Phase 2 using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., “1” being strongly agree” to “5” being “strongly disagree”).
- In Phase 3, respondents are asked to rank their top three priority areas/issues using the same responses from Phase 2.

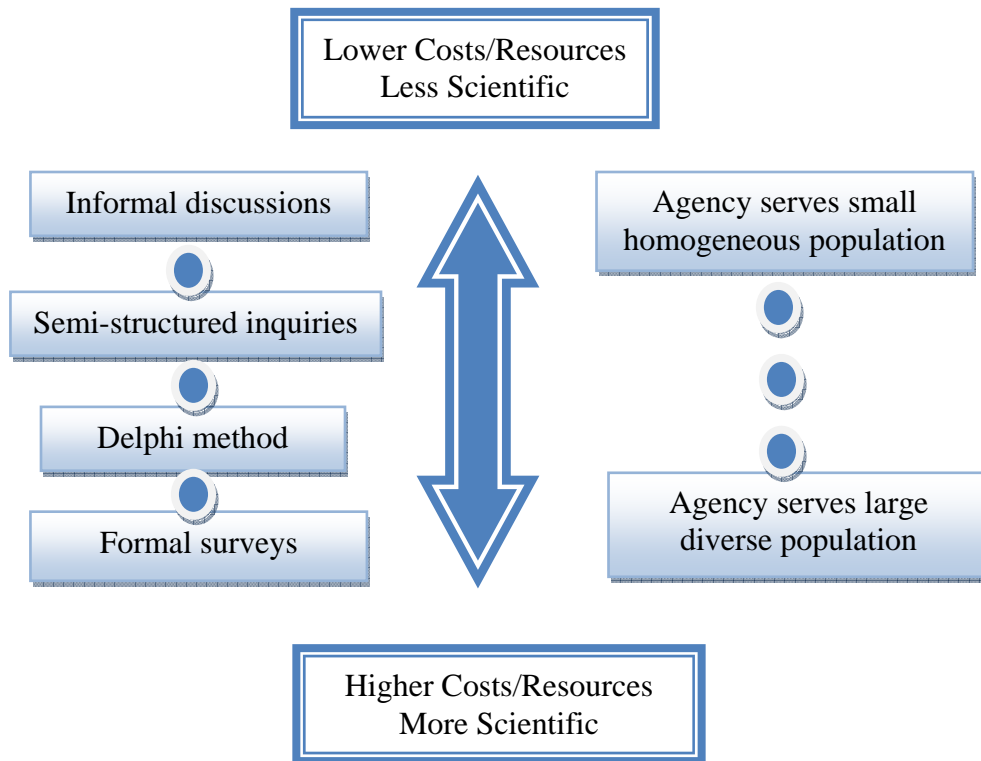
Finally, formal surveys provide the most objective and methodologically sound way to assess organizational capacity. You can create an assessment tool from scratch, or you can adapt a tool that already exists. Your unfamiliarity with survey design and administration should not inhibit you from undertaking a more formal assessment of capacity. With the advent of technology and the Internet, surveys have never been easier to carry out. In the appendix, *Additional Tools and Resource*, you can find the online survey tool that the National Center for State Courts used to examine organizational capacity of victim services organizations in Pennsylvania. You can design and administer a similar tool that best meets your needs.

RESOURCE: An excellent and inexpensive resource for designing and administering surveys is www.surveymonkey.com

Your selection of assessment tools is partly based on the size of your organization, the size and diversity of the population you serve, and your resources. Basically, if your organization is located in a rural area or serves a relatively small population, it will be more feasible for you to undertake informal discussions and/or semi-formal inquiries. But if your organization serves a large target population and has a sizeable staff, discussions and open-ended inquiries are insufficient. In this case, you will need to get feedback from a wide variety of individuals, which requires a more formal mechanism, such as a Delphi study or preferably, an

online survey. Ideally, organizations will combine both formal surveys with informal inquiries with key staff, clients, and stakeholders.

Generally, there will be some costs associated with the use of formal assessment tools, but the costs can be minimal, especially if staff trained in basic research methods are already on board or local university/college staff can volunteer their services. For purposes of comparison, the tools can be grouped into those that use very little scientific rigor (informal discussions and semi-structured inquiries) to those that use well-accepted analytical methodologies (Delphi method, formal surveys). This variance is shown below, with the advantages and disadvantages of the four basic methods to follow.



Reliance on Informal Discussions and/or Semi-Structured Inquiries	Use of Delphi Method and/or Formal Surveys
Easy to implement	Requires time and effort to implement
Anonymity is difficult to guarantee; results depend on willingness to be candid	Allows individuals to respond anonymously
Findings can be difficult to ascertain as responses are subject to interpretation	Findings can be readily documented from objective data analyses
Overreliance on executive director to carry out tasks	Tasks of survey design, administration, and analysis can be distributed across staff
Limited to a relatively small number of persons	Ability to gather feedback from large numbers of persons

This overview of tools should give you enough information to begin making decisions on how you would like to approach the assessment of your organization’s capacity. Answer the following four questions for additional guidance.

1. My organization serves a small homogeneous population.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. We have fewer than ten staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. We have relatively few stakeholders in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. We can use staff or local experts to help us carry out a survey.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Here’s how to interpret your responses.

- If you answered ‘Yes’ to questions 1, 2, and 3, it probably isn’t feasible to carry out an extensive survey. In this case, you should consider informal or semi-formal discussions with staff, volunteers, clients, and stakeholders, and possibly, a Delphi Method.
- If you answered ‘No’ to each of the first three questions, the use of a formal survey will be necessary to gather information from a wide variety of sources.
- If you have a combination of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ answers to the first three questions, consider using a Delphi Method. Additionally, you should proceed with a formal survey—especially if you can identify staff or local experts to help you with survey logistics.

In the space below, write down your current thoughts about the tools you would like to use to carry out the assessment and the reasons for your selection. You don't need to share this with anyone, and it's likely that you will modify your intended approaches as your plan evolves. The goal is to use this exercise as a starting point that will prompt you into developing a detailed assessment plan.

My organization will use the following tools to assess organizational capacity:

Check all that apply.

Informal discussions

Semi-structured inquiries

Delphi method

Formal survey

I selected these tools based on the following factors:

Step 2: Decide who will do the work.

The second step in the process of assessing organizational capacity is deciding who will do the work. Most organizations will find that the work can be completed by the executive director with support from key staff. Other organizations will benefit from bringing in an outside consultant to carry out specific tasks or oversee the entire operation. The decisions you make will depend on the size of your organization, staff capabilities, the degree of organizational issues and problems, and resources. Since most organizations will tend to carry out an assessment internally, the following section emphasizes the role of the executive director, key staff, and the board of directors in carrying out the assessment.

A good way to think about the process of carrying out an organizational capacity assessment is to divide the work into two primary subtasks: gathering/analyzing data and facilitating the process. You may find that staff can carry out all the subtasks, or that hiring a consultant to oversee all or part of the process is your best option. Three questions that you should consider are:

Who will gather and analyze data?
Who will facilitate the process?
Should we use an outside consultant?

Question 1: Who will gather and analyze data?

Once you have determined the assessment strategies and tools that you plan to use in the organizational capacity assessment, someone will need to take charge of gathering and analyzing data. If you decide to gather information informally or semi-formally through personal interviews or group meetings, most of the tasks can be carried out by the executive director or senior staff. But if you are carrying out a survey that involves the collection of data from a number of persons, you will need to enlist the help of staff or consultants who have some knowledge of research methods and analysis. If you decide to undertake the data collection phase internally, following is a list of desirable qualities and skills that should be considered when recruiting internal staff to help with the project.

- Master's degree or higher, with courses in research methods
- Basic knowledge of statistics and spreadsheets
- Excellent communication skills
- Detail-oriented
- Ability to present information in a concise manner
- Previous experience working with assessments or surveys

If you have someone on staff you consider ideal for taking charge of the data collection and analysis component, then begin considering the concepts of “confidentiality” and “objectivity.” An organizational capacity assessment can be politically charged and requires a great deal of sensitivity to those who offer their input. Staff, volunteers, clients, and stakeholders have to believe that their honest input is sought, and above all, that their comments will be held in the strictest of confidence. Furthermore, the executive director and the board of directors have every right to expect that the assessment will result in objective findings based on facts, rather than perceptions. This is a significant challenge for internal staff, but it can be overcome.

Rather than depend on one individual to carry out the collection of data, you may be better served by approaching this subtask creatively. Divide the work according to the level of expertise, management, and confidentiality required of each assessment tool. For example, the executive director could engage staff in personal interviews while the individual assigned to the project could take the lead in developing and administering a survey. Use the resources available to you, but always keep in mind the importance of confidentiality. The approach you choose should fit with your organization’s size, culture and expertise. In the next exercise, identify two staff who can assist with the collection and analysis of data.

Two staff who may be able to assist with the data collection and analysis component are:

Staff 1: _____

Qualifications:

Role individual will play:

Staff 2: _____

Qualifications:

Role individual will play:

Question 2: Who will facilitate the process?

The collection and analysis of data are one aspect of the organizational capacity assessment process. A second aspect is the facilitation of the entire process, which requires a different set of skills and the direct participation of the executive director. Ultimately, the board of directors will play a key role in determining the direction of the organization based on results of the organizational capacity assessment. Consequently, the facilitator must have excellent communication skills and the ability to work with a wide variety of people.

A facilitator accepts responsibility to help the group move through the agenda in the time available and make necessary decisions and plans of implementation in order to accomplish common goals.²

A good facilitator does not make decisions for the group, but offers suggestions and specific strategies that help the group move forward. In reference to organizational capacity assessment, one of the most important objectives of the facilitator is to gain “buy-in” from staff, stakeholders, and the board of directors. For this reason, the facilitator should be a senior member of the executive team, a particularly well-qualified member of the board of directors who can be objective, or an outside consultant. In the space below, write down the names of two persons who may be able to facilitate the organizational capacity assessment process. It is entirely possible that the same persons will be identified in both this exercise and the previous exercise on data collection and analysis. Again, treat this exercise as a means to think about the skills and resources you have available internally and how you might go about the division of labor. You are not limited to the individuals you list—it’s just a “jumping off” point to get you started on the task of assigning roles to carry out the assessment.

² Kevin Wolf, *The Makings of a Good Meeting*, 1994. www.dcn.davis.ca.us/go/kjwolf/facilitate/facimanu.html.

Two individuals who may be able to facilitate the capacity assessment process are:

Staff 1: _____

Qualifications:

Staff 2: _____

Qualifications:

Question 3: Should we hire a consultant?

Carrying out an organizational capacity assessment can be a daunting task. It requires staff and the board of directors to objectively examine strengths and weaknesses and prioritize action items. For this reason, some organizations may be better served by hiring an outside consultant to carry out the process from start to finish. If you plan to hire a consultant, you can find all the details on the search and hiring process in *Additional Tools and Resources*. Below is a table that shows the advantages and disadvantages of using a consultant.

Using a Consultant	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Introduces an objective and unbiased approach	May have difficulties grasping the intricacies of the organization
Offers expertise currently not available internally	Expertise is likely to come at a cost to the organization
Relieves the executive director and board of leading entire project	Program staff may feel less involved in the assessment process
Can complete the assessment more efficiently	It may be difficult to exercise oversight of the consultant

Fundamentally, two questions guide your decision to use a consultant:

1. *Do we have the skills in-house needed to carry out an organizational capacity assessment?*
2. *Can we be objective and unbiased in gathering information and evaluating the results of the assessment?*

Beyond these two questions, a third element comes into play: *Is there a local expert that knows our organization and is capable of helping us with the assessment?*

You will need to develop strategies to recruit a consultant. Tap into your board of directors to see if they have contacts in the community with expertise in capacity assessment. Contact the local funding agencies and let them know of your interest in working with an organizational consultant. They may be able to refer you to local expert. Talk to the local college or university social sciences faculty. Spread the word that you are looking for help carrying out a capacity assessment. You can also place an advertisement in the local newspaper and websites.

I will use the following strategy to identify local consultants:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Solicit help from board of directors	_____ (date)
<input type="checkbox"/> Solicit referrals from local funding agencies	_____ (date)
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact local colleges/universities	_____ (date)
<input type="checkbox"/> Advertise for a consultant	_____ (date)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	_____ (date)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	_____ (date)

Finally, you will need to develop a work plan before you go through the recruitment process.

Basically, this plan should include the following elements (see *Additional Tools and Resources*):

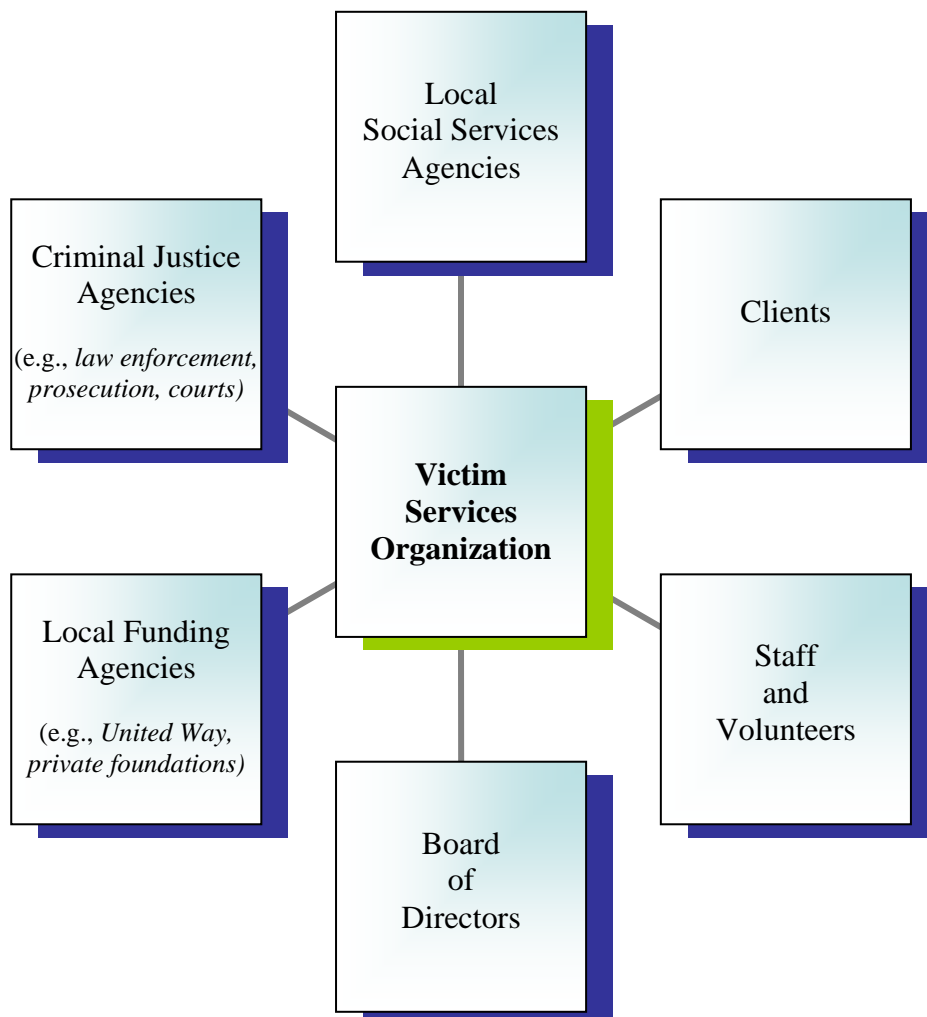
- Statement of work (needs, requirements, deliverables)
- Budget (estimate)
- Timeline (milestones for deliverables)
- Plan for managing the consultant’s work.

Step 3: Gather information

Now that you have identified the tools that you would like to use in the assessment and have staff and/or consultants to help you with the process, it is time to gather information. In order to be effective, you will need to identify your stakeholders.

Stakeholder: A person, group, organization, or system who affects or can be affected by an organization's actions

As a victim services organization, you might have a wide variety of both external and internal stakeholders, such as those individuals and organizations identified below.



All organizations will have similar internal stakeholders—board of directors, staff, volunteers, and clients—who will be the primary focus of your assessment. Yet you will need to consider including outside agencies and organizations (external stakeholders) in the assessment. Some external stakeholders will be familiar with your internal operations, but many will not. It is up to you to determine which external stakeholders to include in the organizational capacity assessment and what types of information you will gather. An example is provided below.

The domestic violence shelter in County X has a number of programs and services that put it in touch with local law enforcement, prosecution, courts, various social service agencies, and the local chapter of United Way. Generally, the external stakeholders have knowledge of the shelter’s programs and services, but are less familiar with internal organizational issues. The shelter decides that it will include external stakeholders in the capacity assessment by carrying out semi-structured interviews between the executive director and key individuals from each agency.

The degree to which you seek information from external stakeholders will vary from one organization to the next. If you are a small organization located in a relatively rural area, you will have far fewer stakeholders than those organizations that serve larger communities, and it’s likely that you can gain all the information you need through a telephone conversation. But organizations serving larger communities and a greater number of stakeholders will have to consider which stakeholders to include in the capacity assessment and how they will go about collecting the information. It’s important to note that you do not need to include all external stakeholders—instead, focus on those stakeholders with whom you have a long-term relationship and can speak toward your organizational capacity. Use the form below to list those external stakeholders that you may want to include in your assessment and how you will go about collecting information from them.

We will include the following external stakeholders in our organizational capacity assessment:

--

We will use the following strategies to gain information from external stakeholders (check all that apply):

Informal discussions

Semi-structured inquiries

Delphi method

Formal survey

Now that you have identified the key external stakeholders, it's time to put all three steps together. You have selected the assessment tools, hired a consultant or relied on staff to complete the assessment, and identified the stakeholders. This is an excellent time to review your strategies. Re-examine your assessment tools. Make sure that the tools address the needs and experiences of each key stakeholder group. For instance, the types of questions you ask of your clients will be quite different from those you ask of local justice agencies. Carrying out a full-scale assessment can be time-consuming and costly. Re-examine your budget and if you need to, prioritize the strategies and stakeholders that are absolutely essential to your project. Once you feel confident that all the underlying issues have been addressed, go ahead and carry out the assessment, keeping in mind the importance of confidentiality throughout the process.

Step 4: Identify capacity needs and set priorities.

By the time you reach this step, you should have a tremendous amount of information in front of you. Ideally, you will have a combination of personal comments and anonymous

responses to surveys. It can be challenging to sift through the assortment of information, so take the time to do the following:

- ☑ Use basic statistics to evaluate the results of surveys and Delphi exercises
- ☑ Compile and categorize comments into basic themes.

You don't have to be a statistician to develop findings from formal surveys and exercises, but you do need some basic skills in data entry and analysis. If you hired a consultant, the consultant's responsibility should include data analysis and the presentation of findings in a clear manner. However, if you are handling the tasks yourself, you will need someone familiar with data management software, such as Excel, and experience extracting results from data. Keep the statistics simple—percentages, medians, means—and then underscore those items that received the highest scores.

Qualitative data, which generally refers to the information you compiled by interviewing staff and stakeholders, tends to be somewhat subjective. Yet the analysis of qualitative information is made easier by the fact that common themes are likely to emerge during discussions. When reviewing your notes, highlight those themes that appeared throughout your discussions. For instance, staff may have shared similar concerns on the inefficiencies or inadequacies of services provided to clients. You will want to be as specific as you can so that you have explicit examples of how each theme impacts your organizational capacity. Similarly, you will want to note areas of inconsistencies. For instance, perhaps all but a handful of staff expressed concerns with the software used by the organization. It will be worth your troubles to identify the source of the problems—software, staff training, or some combination.

At this stage, the role of the facilitator is crucial. The facilitator will be able to highlight findings that are consistent across groups, point out particularly pressing issues, and guide the executive team and board of directors in prioritizing short-term and long-term needs. The

facilitator should also keep the focus on organizational capacity, not particular services, during this exercise. An example of pressing needs and their priority status follows:

Following an organizational capacity assessment, the executive team and board of directors of the domestic violence shelter in County X has prioritized their following needs.		
Most Pressing Needs	Priority (1-5)	Short-term or long-term need?
Our internal communication practices are poor.	5	Short- and long-term
Our ability to recruit and manage volunteers is severely hampered.	3	Long-term
Staff turn-over exceeds acceptable standards.	1	Short- and long-term
Our financial software and accounting practices are inadequate.	2	Short- and long-term
Local organizations are seldom aware of our programs and services.	4	Long-term

In the example of the domestic violence shelter above, the executive team and board of directors has prioritized the issue of staff turn-over. They feel that three of the five issues can be addressed both in the short-term and the long-term, while two of the issues will be dealt with only in the long-term. The prioritization of issues will help them create an action plan that puts into place strategies to address both short-term and long-term needs. Using the model above, you will want to take a similar approach with the data and information you gathered from your organizational capacity assessment. Gather your executive team and board of directors and begin to prioritize key issues. Feel free to use the form below as a model for your discussions.

Our five most pressing needs are:		
Most Pressing Needs	Priority (1-5)	Short-term or long-term need?

Step 5: Create an action plan.

This final exercise is the capstone of the organizational capacity assessment exercise.

While you now have a clear sense of your needs and priorities, you don't have solutions yet. It's time to establish an action plan that will identify tasks, responsibilities, timelines, budget estimates, and potential funding sources. The executive director, working closely with key staff, should lead the efforts to develop a proposed action plan, which would then be shared with the board of directors for additional input and assistance.

An action plan is a document that is pertinent to only a particular time in history. It addresses your current needs. The action plan you create today is likely to be obsolete in five years—after all, you will have addressed your most pressing needs and identified new ones. As such, the action plan is a working document that should be updated on a frequent basis. The key components of an action plan are outlined below.

Key Components of an Action Plan	
Summary Statement	What are your organization’s most pressing needs, by priority level?
Proposed Solutions	Propose solutions for each priority issue. Be specific in your solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify tasks and assign responsibilities for staff • Create a timeline to carry out the action plan • Estimate a budget • Identify potential funding sources
Priority Actions	Establish short-term and long-term goals in your action plan. Prioritize your needs and solutions. Be concise about the specific solutions and when each action will be undertaken.
Progress	Update your progress periodically (every few months). Revisit the action plan regularly and update priorities as needed.

The action plan you develop will be specific to your needs. To help you move forward on your action plan, an example based on our hypothetical domestic violence shelter in County X follows. While the example does not offer the level of detail typically seen in an actual action plan, it should prompt you into thinking of specific actions that you can take that will address your priority issues.

Hypothetical Action Plan of Domestic Violence Shelter

Summary Statement	Our most pressing need is to decrease staff turn-over. This is followed by purchasing new financial software and training accounting staff, improving volunteer recruitment and management, enhancing community outreach and marketing, and improving internal communication.
Proposed Solutions	<p>We propose the following solutions for lowering staff turn-over.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a competitive salary study • Explore ways to improve health benefits for staff • Promote flexible schedules where appropriate • Assess adequacy of position classification system • Develop a reward structure <p>The executive director and assistant director shall assign responsibilities for each task, with the exception of the competitive salary study, which will be completed by an outside consultant. The executive director will provide a comprehensive plan within six months, with implementation to begin within two months following board approval of the plan. The executive director, working with the board, will document the anticipated costs of each strategy.</p>
Priority Actions	Our short-term goal is to retain our current mid-level and senior staff. Our long-term goals are to improve staff recruitment, create a rewarding work environment, and retain our best employees.
Progress	We have met with all mid-level and senior staff to discuss our objectives and have received staff input on ways that we can lower staff turnover.

Congratulations on completing the organizational capacity assessment and creating an action plan that will guide you in addressing your needs. The development of an action plan provides an excellent foundation for the topic of the next section—strategic planning.

II. Develop a Strategic Plan for Your Organization

Perhaps now more than ever before, victim services agencies and other nonprofit organizations must think and act strategically to accomplish their mission in an environment of constrained budgets, diminished funding sources, and growing community needs. Much has been written on the virtues of strategic planning and how to do it (see *Additional Tools and Resources* for references), and it has been one of the most common capacity building activities of victim services agencies in Pennsylvania.

As the executive director of one victim services agency put it, strategic planning can seem tedious but it is a necessity. There are numerous benefits of strategic planning: it promotes a dialogue with the board of directors, enables the organization to envision the best possible future, facilitates leveraging of grant dollars and other resources over time, and empowers executive management to act quickly and decisively when necessary to seize opportunities. All of these benefits facilitate organizational capacity building.

What is strategic planning?

An action plan is specific to particular needs and solutions, while a strategic plan encompasses the entire organization. The following basic principles should be helpful to consider as you begin or renew a strategic planning effort:

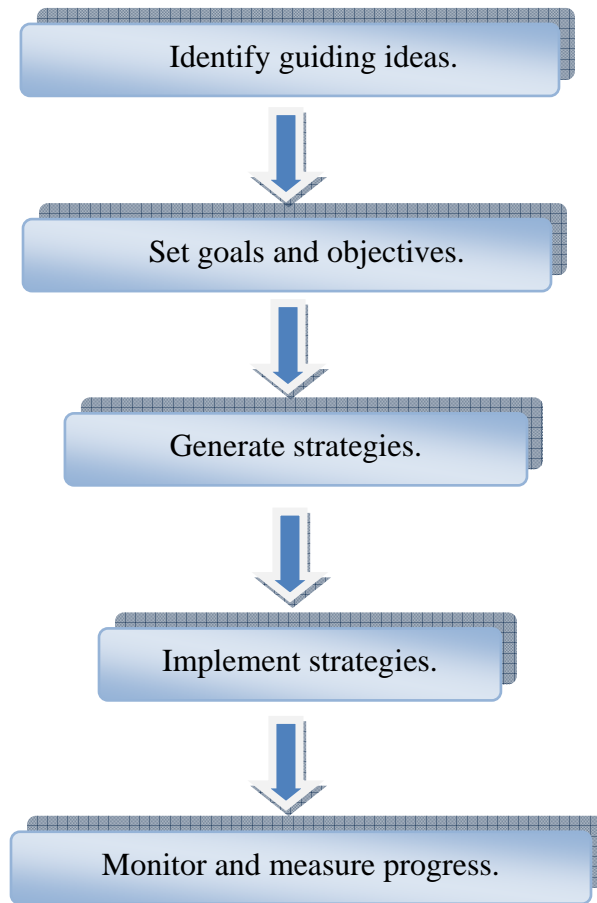
- **Strategic planning is a systematic and disciplined effort for determining what is most important for your organization.** The planning process will help you determine what you are, what you stand for, what you do and why. It is a process to get "from here to there" in terms of organizational performance.
- **Strategic planning focuses on your entire organization** as opposed to a department, and office or a particular program.

- **There is no single strategic planning model that your organization should adopt.** Strategic planning can be very simple or highly complex, whatever is appropriate to your organization, its culture and its operating environment.
- **Your organization's mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies are never final.** Strategic planning is an ongoing process that requires monitoring progress, measuring performance, and making adjustments in light of changes in the external or internal environment.

Steps in strategic planning

Although your organization may be readily able to develop and implement its strategic plan, you might consider engaging a consultant to facilitate the process. As an outsider, a consultant should be able to work more effectively through differing perspectives of board members and staff. A consultant also can assist in identifying and balancing the roles of executive management and the board of directors. (See “A Guide to Acquiring Consultants” in *Additional Tools and Resources*.)

Just as for conducting an assessment of organizational capacity, many models for strategic planning exist, and an array of methods, tools and techniques may be employed. As previously noted, the strategic planning process can be very simple or highly complex. A simplified model that victim services agencies may use is presented here. (See *Additional Tools and Resources* for references to other models and techniques.) This model consists of the following five steps:



Step 1: Identify your organization’s guiding ideas.

The first step in strategic planning is to identify your organization’s guiding values, mission, and vision. This task provides long-term direction, makes it clear what your organization is trying to become, and makes sure the organization has a sense of common purpose, shared values, and focused action. Essentially, the **values** of your organization should be encapsulated in a mission statement.

A **mission statement** defines an organization’s reason for existence. It embodies its philosophies, goals, and ambitions.

Every organization requires a mission statement as a starting point. It is a map that will help you prioritize actions and guide you into the future. A good mission statement consists of one or two concise sentences that summarize your organization's reason for existence. A couple of examples are provided below.

The **Philadelphia Children's Alliance**, an independent non-profit organization, promotes healing and justice for child abuse victims in Philadelphia by conducting state of the art forensic interviews, providing victim support services and collaborating with other agencies to facilitate an integrated response.

The **Women's Center of Montgomery County** is a volunteer, community organization with a primary focus on freedom from domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Our programs, policies and procedures reflect our strong commitment to empowering women.

The mission statement is the building block of an organization, but it focuses on the here-and-now. Strategic planning is about the future, and you will need a vision statement. Where do you want to take your organization? What will be your organization's mission in five years? Do you plan on evolving to address additional community needs?

A **vision statement** outlines what your organization wants to be. It focuses on the future and acts as a source of inspiration.

A vision statement, unlike a mission statement, should be very concise and detailed. It should be engaging and inspire staff to strive toward improving the organization and its services. To keep your vision statement realistic, describe your vision for the next five to ten years. Think about your desired outcomes. This is an area in which you can and should be impassioned. Create a mental picture charged with emotion that can serve to energize and inspire your organization. The purpose here is to inspire, energize, motivate, and stimulate your creativity. Dream big!

Following the example of the Philadelphia Children’s Alliance, here is its vision statement:

Every child sexual abuse victim in Philadelphia will be referred to the **Philadelphia Children’s Alliance**, which will have the capacity to conduct state of the art forensic interviews and provide victim support services. Philadelphia Children’s Alliance will offer its high quality services in an accessible state of the art facility that enables integration with collaborating agencies.

It may be particularly challenging for victim services organizations to develop vision statements.

After all, you work in an environment where budgets are perpetually tight and the “bottom line” rules your actions. So bring in your key staff and have a brainstorming session. Ideally, your vision should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound). But for now, simply get “out of your box” and think about your larger ambitions. You can use the following form to help you outline your visions.

Developing a vision statement
In five years, I would like our organization to:
Why is this important?

Step 2: Set goals and objectives.

Now that you have a mission statement and a clear sense of where you'd like to be in the future, your immediate task is to establish goals and objectives that will spur you to action. Before we move forward on this step, it is helpful to review the differences between goals and objectives.

A **goal** defines what an organization is trying to accomplish both programmatically and organizationally.

An **objective** is a precise, time-based, and measurable action that supports the completion of a goal.

An example of a goal and objectives related to organizational capacity is provided below.

Our organization's **goal** is to build an agency that is fiscally strong with an emphasis on unrestricted funding.

Our **objectives** are to (1) expand our annual campaign to provide \$100,000 more in unrestricted funds; (2) increase funding from foundations and corporations by 20 percent during the next fiscal year; (3) diversify our funding mix to reduce dependence on government funding to no more than 75 percent; and (4) fully fund programs and position prior to the beginning of each fiscal year.

The objectives in the example are very specific. They provide figures (dollars, percentages) and timeframes (fiscal year), and most importantly, can be measured. Your organization will be able to document whether each objective was achieved and make modifications based on your experiences.

Now it's your turn. Write down one of your organization's goals and then list the objectives to achieve that goal. Make sure that your objectives are specific, measurable, and dated. Once you have conquered this task, develop additional goals and objectives based on your mission and vision statements.

Our organization's goal and objectives:	
Our goal is:	
Our objectives are to:	

Step 3: Generate strategies.

Your strategic plan is coming together. You have written mission and vision statements and have identified a number of goals and specific objectives. Now it's time to generate strategies that will help you execute your objectives. This is the time for creativity and determination.

Strategy refers to any effort—a program, project, process, or method—that your organization uses to achieve results consistent with your guiding ideas, goals, and objectives.

In the example used in step 2, an objective of the organization was to secure \$100,000 more in unrestricted funds from their annual campaign drive. But how will this happen? The organization can try to minimize expenses while increasing charitable contributions by developing specific strategies. For instance, they may approach businesses to donate items that can be raffled. Or they may undertake a new email campaign with a list of previous supporters. You will want to identify several strategies, with the expectation that some of the strategies won't produce the expected outcome. The key is to make multiple efforts and then assess the

impact of each strategy before including it in future plans. Here's another example of strategies to achieve an objective from step 2:

Our **objective** is to diversify our funding mix to reduce dependence on government funding to no more than 75 percent.

Our **strategies** are to (1) conduct an analysis of our revenue sources, the proportion of the budget they comprise, and which programs and services those funds support on a quarterly basis; (2) create and continually update a database that contains potential nongovernmental funding sources at the local, state and national level and their philanthropic interests and priorities; (3) create a development plan; and (4) submit at least one grant application to three new nongovernmental funding source each year.

Several examples of strategies used by victim services organizations in Pennsylvania to address goals and objectives are offered below.

After identifying a large underserved population in a market analysis, the **Center for Victims of Violence and Crime** in Allegheny County implemented a marketing and public relations campaign, *Help and Healing Start Here*, to broaden its outreach and to more specifically involve and become closer to this community.

The **Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh** implemented the Women's Center Business System, an innovative method for victim services agencies to identify and address system problems and gaps based on the Toyota production system. This system analyzes a current condition that needs to change and creates the target conditions that will result in the change.

The **Women's Center of Montgomery County** relies primarily on volunteers located in several offices throughout the county. To facilitate efficient and appropriate referrals for services, the agency created an electronic resource directory that can be accessed remotely and regularly updated by its users.

Now that you have learned the essentials of developing strategies, try it with your organization. Take just one of your objectives from the previous exercise and develop strategies that will meet your objective. There is no "right" or "wrong" strategy at this stage. Simply write down all the ideas from you and your staff—you can filter the information later to bring out the "best" strategies.

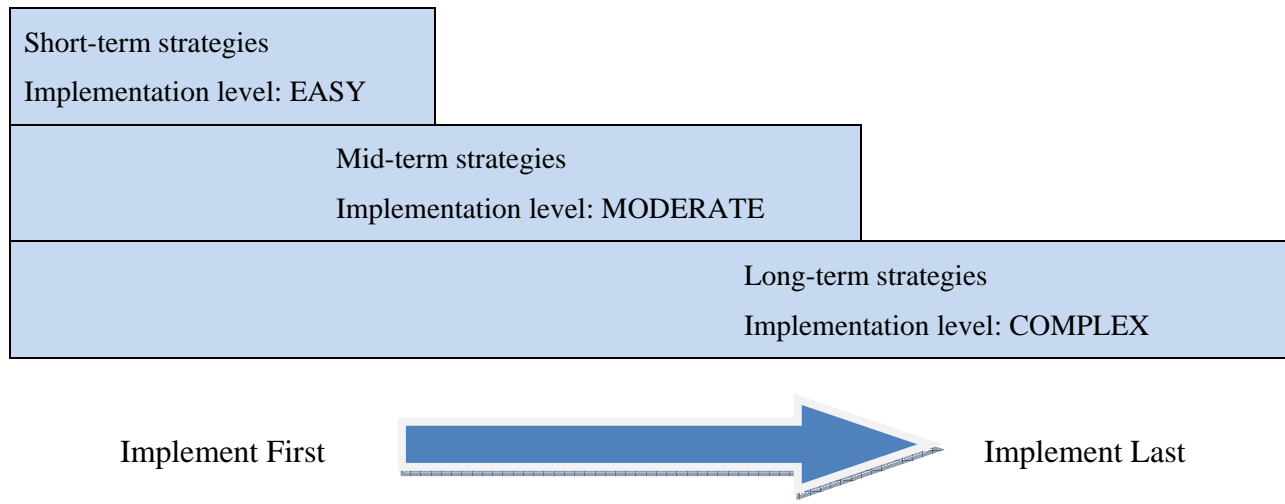
Our objective is to:
I will address this objective by carrying out the following strategies:

Step 4: Implement strategies.

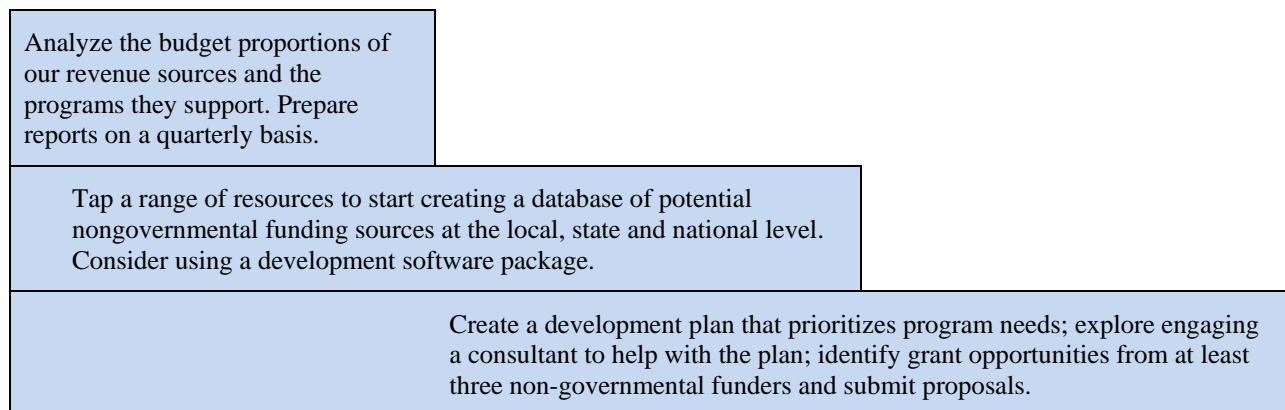
Every organization has its shares of optimists, realists, and pessimists. While the optimists may embrace your plans, the pessimists may find fault at every turn. Change is simply impossible to avoid if you want to become a better organization. Yet the implementation of strategic plans, which often bring changes in the status quo of organizational operations and processes, naturally involves some level of resistance. There are two keys to limiting the level of resistance. First, include staff in generating strategies and empower them to help implement the strategic plan. Second, don't try to implement all your strategies at once. You want to gain the trust of your staff by taking incremental steps.

Before you implement your strategies, identify those steps that you can take that won't disrupt your organizational culture. While we asked you to DREAM BIG in the previous section, begin here by ACTING SMALL. Start with those small actions that are easy to implement and can be carried out rather quickly. Literally, think of your strategies as steps, with short term strategies at one end and long-term strategies at the other. You can use this analogy to

list your strategies by ease of implementation and the amount of time required to carry out the strategy.



Following the examples from step 2 and step 3, we might implement our identified strategies in successive and overlapping stages to achieve our objective of diversifying our funding mix to reduce dependence on government funding to no more than 75 percent:



Once you've considered the ease and timeliness of implementation, write down the first strategy that you will implement. This is an excellent starting point that will guide you in the writing of your strategic plan. In the space below, write down the first strategy that you will implement.

The first strategy I will implement is:

Step 5: Monitor and measure progress.

The final step in strategic planning is monitoring and measuring progress. This is an ongoing process that should be carried out by managers and the board of directors. If a strategy is not working, you should consider ways to modify or discard it. By regularly reviewing your organization's performance in the context of your strategic plan, you will be able to focus your energies on accomplishing the work that is most important.

The monitoring and measuring process will make you aware of the adequacy of your objectives. If your objectives are vague, then it will be nearly impossible to succinctly measure your performance in meeting those objectives. But if you set out specific measurable objectives that include a timeline, then measurement will be an easy task. A hypothetical example based on our previous goal is provided below. You can use the table format to document your own performance.

Goal: Build an agency that is fiscally strong with an emphasis on unrestricted funding.		
Objectives:	Performance Measures:	
1. Expand our annual campaign to provide \$100,000 more in unrestricted funds.	Our annual campaign brought in an additional \$50,000 in unrestricted funds.	
2. Increase funding from foundations and corporations by 20 percent during the next fiscal year.	We increased funding from foundations and corporations by 25 percent during the fiscal year.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Diversify our funding mix to reduce dependence on government funding to no more than 75 percent.	Our dependence on government funding has declined to 68 percent of our total budget.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Fully fund programs and position prior to the beginning of each fiscal year.	We were unable to fund a half-time coordinator prior to the fiscal year.	

The value of documenting performance through specific measures is that you can quickly identify how well you met each objective. Furthermore, you can now return to your strategic plan and re-evaluate your goals and objectives. Did you meet most of your objectives? Or did you find that some goals and their corresponding objectives were unmet? Keep in mind that some of your goals are long-term and may require several years to complete. Use the performance measures to refine your goals and objectives and to make regular improvements in your strategic plan.

In sum, strategic planning is an ongoing process. It is both a critical element of effective capacity building for your organization as a whole, and an essential step in improving specific capacity areas. The following chapter applies the concepts of strategic planning to technology capacity.

RESOURCE: Some funding sources now require organizations seeking funding to prepare a business plan. An excellent resource is the Plan-As-You-Go Business Planning program which can be found at <http://planasyougo.com>

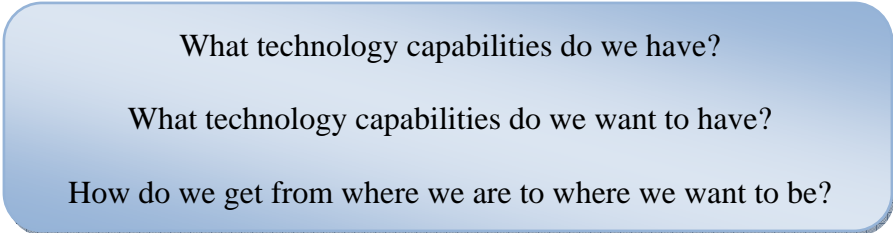
III. Develop a Technology Plan for Your Organization

Strategic planning for an organization focuses on what the organization does, how its environment will change over time, and what the organization must do to prepare for the future. Strategic planning for technology should be done within the scope of the strategic plan of the organization to help the organization expand its capacity and achieve its goals. It involves, for example, building a flexible and robust infrastructure, software applications that support the work of the organization, and management and coordination of resources to accomplish these goals. The technology planning process is critical not only to increasing efficiencies and quality of services, but also to avoiding wasting money on technology that does not serve its intended purpose or that costs more than alternatives might have cost.

This chapter addresses how planning for technology aligns with the broader goals of your organization and helps you further your mission. For example, your agency may have some of the following goals:

- We want to increase community outreach so people will know we are here and will come to us when they need to.
- We want to deliver our services more effectively and at lower cost.
- We want to create a more attractive working environment for staff and volunteers, and not be so ‘behind the times’ in technology.

The essence of technology strategic planning is captured in three questions:



What technology capabilities do we have?

What technology capabilities do we want to have?

How do we get from where we are to where we want to be?

This chapter addresses the first two questions. The third question, as well as references to online resources, is addressed in “A Guide for Acquiring Technology” in *Additional Tools and Resources*.

What technology capabilities do we have?

Your organization should compile a list of the kinds of capabilities in use today. The focus should be on the capabilities, not on the technology—what you can do, rather than the tools you use. The following checklist of capabilities, technology tools and software applications is not comprehensive, but should stimulate thinking about the range currently available. You may need to work backward from the technology tool to the capability.

Check and/or underline each capability that you currently have available for use:	
Access to services	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to provide information or assistance by phone during office hours or off-hours (<i>telephone answering machine, interactive voice response capability to assist callers in accessing the correct office or service with minimal human intervention [telephone answering system with “tree logic” – “Press or say ‘One’ for ...”]</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to be contacted anytime, anywhere (<i>cell phone/pager</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to provide information on the internet and interact with people who have internet access (<i>high-speed internet access, Web site services and tools [information only, interactive features], Website management tools [web content management software, web graphics and image-editing tools]</i>)
Multimedia	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to capture photos and video for promotional and training purposes (<i>digital camera, digital video for staff and volunteer training, digital image/video editing software, e-learning application editor to develop computer-based training modules</i>)
Automate manual processes and manage computer resources	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to create documents of text, numbers, and presentations (<i>office tools [word processing, spreadsheets, presentations], desktop publishing [design, diagramming]</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to send messages to others and collaborate with others within and outside the organization (<i>networking among authorized users [remote access to the network from off-site], email messaging, shared applications [e.g., case management, accounting], electronic documents [document scanning and workflow, content management software], collaboration workspaces [rather than exchanging email attachments]</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to automate tracking and management of financial transactions (<i>accounting [e.g., deposits, withdrawals, invoices, inventory, billable hours], financial management [e.g., budgets, projects, grants, restricted funds, cost centers, contracts, and investments]</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to store large amounts of information and retrieve it through keywords, either a simple database developed in-house, or included in a software application (<i>report creation and integration tools [i.e., Crystal Reports]</i>)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to process credit card donations based on phone calls from donors or to receive payment for goods and services (<i>credit/debit card processing services and equipment</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to organize medium-to-complex projects (<i>project-team management</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to operate software applications in-house or remotely (<i>in-house servers and operating systems, Internet access to hosted applications</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to operate and manage an in-house network and remote computers (network tools, remote computer access tools)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to develop software applications or website (<i>software development tools, web development tools</i>)

What technology capabilities do we want to have?

The checklist above should prompt you into thinking about the types of technology capabilities you would like your organization to have. At this point, you will want to do the following:

- Envision the capabilities your organization would like to have based on its mission, goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving its objectives.
- Develop a preliminary budget.
- Prioritize the capabilities your organization wants to build.

Most executive directors and staff at nonprofit organizations are not technology experts. In fact, it is quite possible that you and your staff feel somewhat intimidated by technology. Don't let this limit your ambitions. Think about the capabilities that you would like to have as an organization. You don't need to carry out exhaustive research: Avoid talking about the tools themselves until you have established what capabilities you want to enhance.

You may find there are a number of hardware and software solutions that can fill your technology needs. Before you move forward, you will need to get some preliminary estimates on technology costs. The potential costs of alternatives can be a factor in what you decide to do now or at some time in the future; therefore, the amount of funding available toward building technology capacity will be an important consideration. Some research on pricing ahead of prioritizing will make decisions more informed.

With a list of capabilities and pricing in hand, it's time to prioritize. Executive managers and the board of directors should weigh each proposed capability carefully in terms of how the technology will increase efficiencies, improve business processes, and enhance service delivery. Some capabilities are absolutely essential, such as providing information and assistance by telephone. Other capabilities, such as an interactive website, may be desirable but not mandatory for the provision of services. Also revisit your organizational needs that were documented in the organizational capacity assessment. It is likely that a number of technology applications, such as accounting software or staff management systems, could fill your organizational needs. You can use the form below to list your information. Here's an example to help get you started.

Our desired capabilities.		
Capability/Tool	Estimated Cost	Priority
Accounting function linked to budget reports/software	\$600	1
Client database accessible by 5 staff/upgraded PCs	\$5,000-\$8,000	2
Staff competency using client database/training vouchers	\$1,200	3
Regularly update website/web graphics and image editing software	\$600.00	4

Our desired capabilities.		
Capability/Tool	Estimated Cost	Priority
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

How do we get from where we are to where we want to be?

With the priorities set, the executive director becomes responsible for taking the next steps toward implementing the desired technology capabilities. The complexity of the technology will drive your organization's approach to acquiring it. On the one hand, an off-the-shelf, commodity-type of product (e.g., a piece of hardware or software), or service (e.g., server backup or virus protection services) requires relatively less effort. On the other hand, complex software, including case management and accounting, requires more effort and skill in managing the acquisition process, which includes specifying, evaluating, implementing and testing the software.

“A Guide to Acquiring Technology” in the appendix, *Additional Tools and Resources*, outlines practical steps and methods for determining your organization's requirements, researching your options, evaluating vendors, selecting a vendor, and implementing the technology. The guide also provides information on web resources for acquiring technology.

RESOURCES: An excellent technology planning and acquisition guide geared toward nonprofit organizations is **www.techsoup.com**

NPower Pennsylvania is another resource for assistance in technology planning, acquisition, and implementation **www.npowerpa.org**

IV. Evaluate Performance and Strive for Excellence

Program evaluation has become a commonplace activity for grant recipients. Funders want documentation of how a particular program or project positively impacts clients (the target population). The examples provided in this section focus on organizational capacity; the target is the organization rather than the clients. In this context, ongoing evaluation can be used to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses which can then be addressed to create an environment of excellence. Yet all of the concepts discussed here can be applied to the general evaluation process.

Generally, three interrelated concepts guide evaluations: input, output, and outcomes. In today's world, funders are typically interested in outcomes, rather than outputs. While the differences may be subtle in some cases, it is important to differentiate between these concepts.

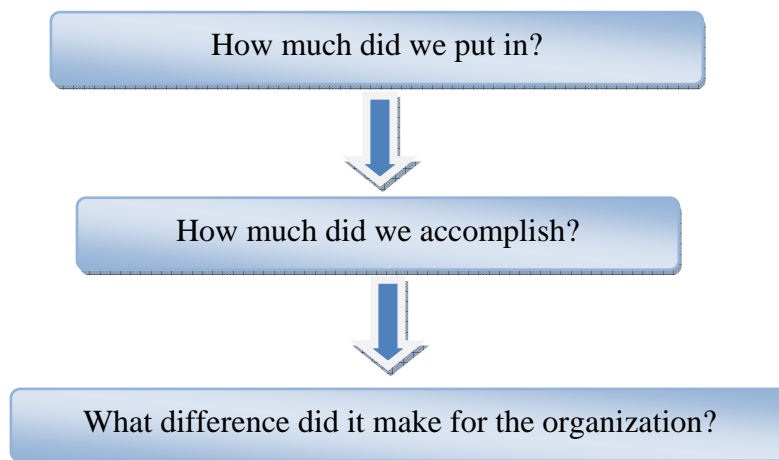
Key Evaluation Definitions

An **input** includes the program ingredients (resources, staff) that are invested or spent for programs, activities, and services.

An **output** quantifies the programs, activities, or services produced or provided.

An **outcome** is the measurable effect on customers, clients, the organization, etc.

The chief aim of an evaluation is to identify the resources (both financial and non-financial) put into the effort, the effect of the resources on the types or levels of services provided, and the impact of the resources on clients or customers. When evaluation is applied to organizational capacity, the illustration on the following page best exemplifies the basic process.



The role of evaluation in organizational capacity building

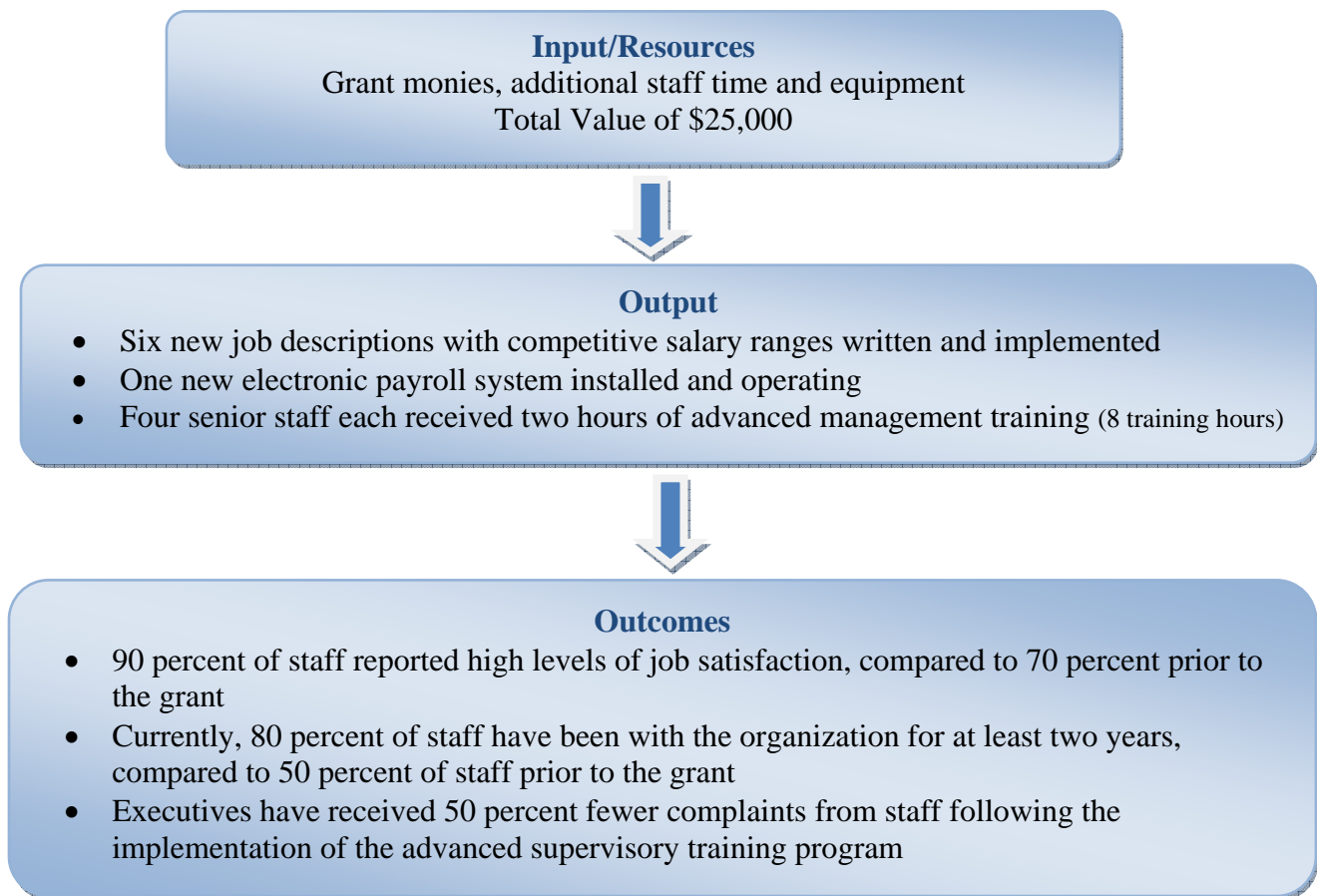
Real-life examples demonstrate the value and potential of program evaluation. Previously, organizational capacity has been discussed in the areas of strategic planning, governance, external relations, human resources, financial and business management, service delivery, and technology. Let's begin by working our way through organizational capacity building projects implemented by two hypothetical victim services organizations.

Organization A aims to improve staffing and retention by obtaining a grant that focuses on improving human resources within the agency, including a comprehensive revision of job descriptions and salaries, the purchase of an automated payroll system, and advanced supervisory training for senior managers. In this case, the ultimate goal of the organization is to improve job satisfaction and retention, which should result in better service for clients, albeit indirectly. To evaluate the grant, Organization A documents the resources that went into the human resources project—grant monies, additional staff time (including training time) and equipment beyond that covered by the grant. The agency then notes the output of the grant in very specific terms. For example, the grant was used to review and rewrite six job descriptions with new salary ranges

based on the complete local market, purchase and install one electronic payroll system used by all staff, and provide two hours of advanced supervisory training for four senior staff.

Organization A, having studied the basic steps to evaluation, will then compare measures of job satisfaction and retention rates both before and after the implementation of the grant. Ideally, the organization will collect information from clients, both prior to and following the grant, to explore whether the grant has had an impact on the provision or quality of services. In terms of specific measures, the flow chart will look as follows.

Organization A: Improving Human Resources

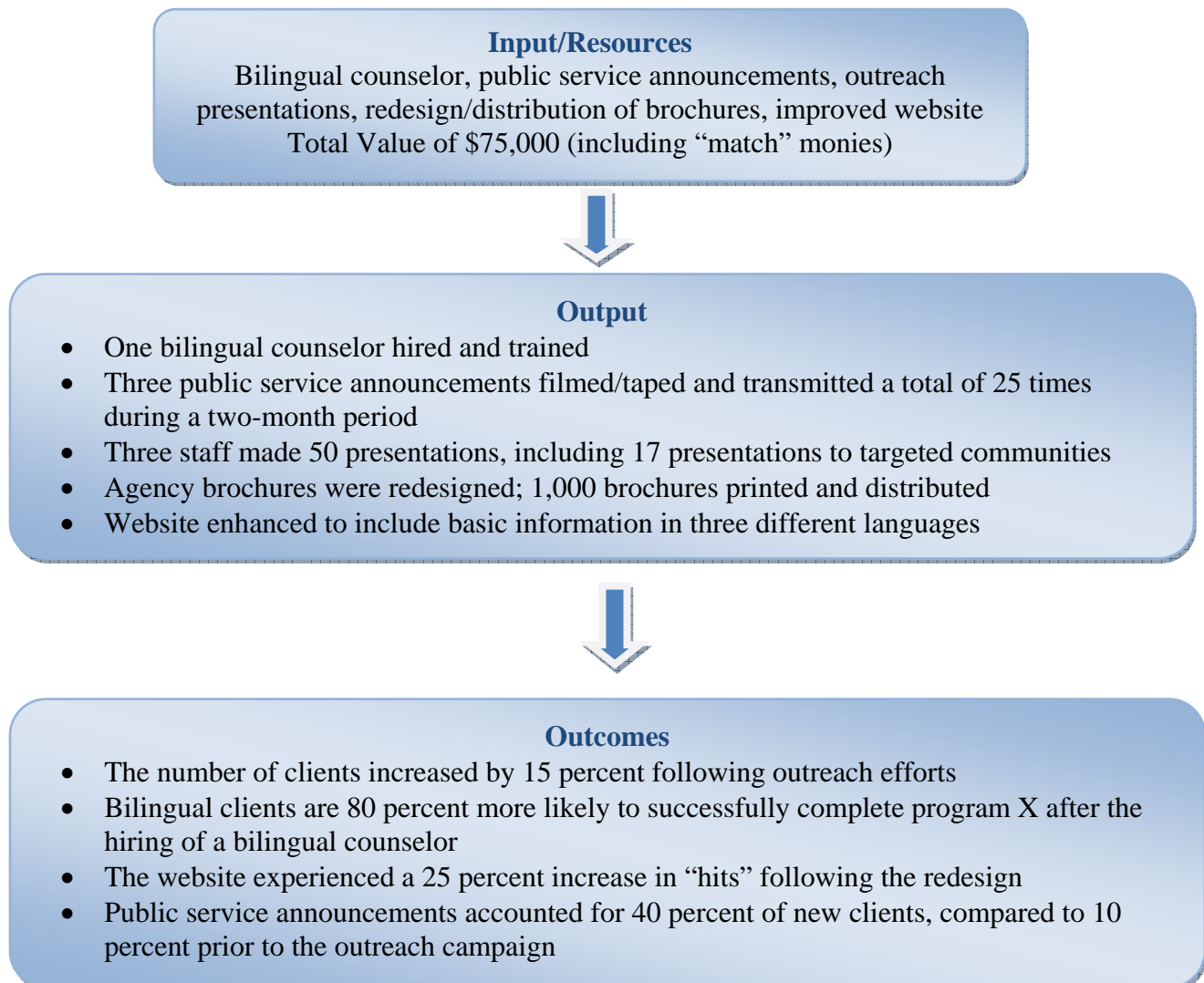


Organization B receives a grant to improve outreach efforts to the local community.

They will develop and distribute brochures, develop a website, carry out public service announcements, hire a bilingual counselor, and make presentations to various community

groups. The outreach campaign is designed to bring in more clients, with a special emphasis on bringing services to a particular crime-ridden neighborhood and members of a linguistic minority group. The outreach program is expected to increase the amount, and quality, of direct services provided to the community. For purposes of this exercise, the evaluation flow chart is shown below.

Organization B: Expanding Outreach Efforts



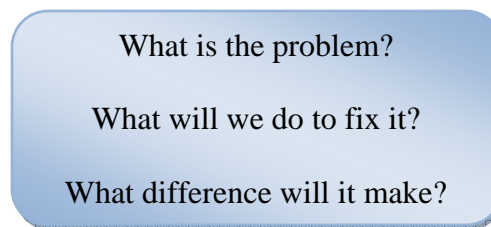
The examples above demonstrate the value of establishing specific measures and collecting data prior to the start of any new program. The importance of outcome measures to

funding agencies and as a means to evaluate agency performance cannot be overstated. In sum, outcome data:

- ✓ Are observable and measurable
- ✓ Identify characteristics (goals, attitudes, skills, knowledge) of the program participant that have changed as a result of the program services
- ✓ Are usually expressed as both a number and percent of the participants who have reached this particular outcome.³

Steps in developing a logic model for organizational capacity

Evaluation designs can be extremely cumbersome, time-consuming, and inadequate if they are handled as an after-thought. Rather, the evaluation scheme should be considered prior to the development of any new project or program. A logic model should be developed to guide you through the entire process. The core of the logic model is based on three simple questions:



Step 1: Define the problem

In section one of the toolkit, you were asked to complete an organizational capacity assessment, which is an excellent starting point for the evaluation process. If you completed the assessment, your organizational priorities and a corresponding action plan have already been established. But if you are just now turning to this evaluation section, you will need to begin by defining the problem. In the examples above, Organization A identified their most pressing problem as staffing and retention, while Organization B prioritized expanding their outreach efforts. Using information from the organizational capacity assessment or discussions with key

³ See Susan Hegland and Lesia Oesterreich,, *Conducting Outcomes Evaluation in Empowerment Programs: A Workshop*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, 2002. (available online).

staff and the board of directors, identify your organization’s most pressing needs in terms of capacity. Keep in mind that you should be concentrating on issues related to strategic planning, governance, external relations, human resources, financial and business management, technology, and service delivery. Yet be as specific as you can in identifying the problem. We will use the following example of Organization C throughout the following steps.

Organization C is a victim services organization in Philadelphia. It relies on a large pool of volunteers to staff its “hotline” and carry out a number of activities. Organization C’s first priority is the retention and management of volunteers.

In the space provided below, write down your organization’s top priority in terms of organizational capacity building:

Our top organizational capacity building priority is:

Step 2: Identify the resources/inputs used to address the problem

For this exercise, you may want to return to section one of the toolkit on organizational capacity assessment; in particular, revisit your action plan. This will help you identify the resources that you will use, or have used, to address the problem. This is your input. In the example above, Organization C lists its major problem as the retention and management of volunteers. Here are four approaches that they will take to address the problem, and the level of resources that may be needed to carry out the plan.

Possible Approaches	Resources Needed
1. Contact similar organizations and learn how they recruit, manage, and retain volunteers.	Minimal staff time
2. Create a dedicated volunteer coordinator position and provide training specific to the problem.	Part-time to full-time staff position
3. Purchase or develop a software program specifically designed for volunteer management	Software acquisition and training
4. Survey volunteers and identify strategies that will improve retention.	Minimal staff time

Once you have decided on your approaches and secured funding, if needed, you are ready to document your input. The input for Organization C’s capacity building project is shown below.

Organization C: Volunteer Recruitment and Management

Input/Resources
 Survey of organizations, one volunteer coordinator position, one volunteer management software program, survey of volunteers
 Total Value of \$75,000 (\$50,000 grant + \$25,000 “match”)

If you haven’t already done so, now is the time to document your input or resources that you will use to address your organization’s most pressing problem. Write down the resources needed for each option, and if you can place a dollar figure on those resources, include that information. You might also note which approaches can be done rather easily and which may require substantial resources and time. This exercise will also help you clarify which types of activities may require grant funds, and which can be funded through the organization’s current budget. Use the table below or create your own to enter your information, which essentially is the input in your logic model.

Possible Approaches	Resources Needed

Step 3: Identify probable outputs

Once you have determined your approaches, you need to consider your outputs. This is the third step in creating a logic model to guide the evaluation process. Recall the differences between output and outcome measures. Output measures are basic: they document the programs, activities, or services produced or provided through the project. In this scenario, we’ll speculate that the **outputs** of Organization C’s efforts on the volunteer retention/management project include:

- Outputs**
1. Ten organizations were contacted and a list of volunteer management tools was compiled
 2. One part-time volunteer coordinator was hired and trained at a national seminar on volunteer retention and management techniques
 3. One new software program was purchased and put in place to manage the volunteer pool. Three staff received five hours of training from the vendor.
 4. Fifty volunteers were surveyed on their perception of their roles and areas in need of improvement. In addition, exit interviews were conducted of five volunteers to document reasons for leaving the organization.

The outputs demonstrate what the organization completed in terms of tasks, but they do not demonstrate success, or failure for that matter. You can use the space below to identify at least three outputs resulting from your proposed organizational capacity project.

My organization's output measures will be:

Step 4: Identify desirable outcomes

The granting agency and the organization need to know how your actions impacted the target population. By considering your desired outcomes prior to implementation, you have the opportunity to collect data and information both before and after your actions, thus resulting in a strong evaluation strategy. The fundamental question is, “What do you want to happen?” Let’s go back to Organization C’s goal of retaining and managing volunteers. Better yet, fast forward to the future, in which Organization C received a grant and was able to accomplish all four elements of its action plan. But did the plan work? Is the problem resolved? How do we know?

Your assignment is to develop **outcome** measures—these are measures that can be quantified and demonstrate impact. Typically, your grants will focus on services, in which case funders want to see the impact on clients. But this toolkit focuses on organizational capacity and for this reason, we will focus on outcome measures that pertain to the organization. Unlike basic documentation, such as the number of people trained, outcome measures explore relationships, such as improvements in performance, reductions in absenteeism, increases in the number of

participants completing a program. Returning to Organization C with its volunteer retention and management problem, we can demonstrate examples of outcome measures.

Outcomes

1. Prior to the implementation of the action plan, 30 percent of volunteers left the organization after one year. After implementation, that figure decreased to 10 percent.
2. Volunteers reported a 50 percent increase in the way their time was used “efficiently” by the organization.
3. Prior to the grant, 18 events over the course of a 6-month period experienced shortages of volunteers due to absenteeism. Following the grant, this figure declined to 2 events in a 6-month period.

Fortunately, Organization C demonstrated fantastic outcomes that show a positive impact of the project. But it’s also possible that the program could have demonstrated failures in particular areas. You’ll note that “quality”, which is a very subjective term, is missing from this equation. It’s not difficult to imagine how quality can impact outcomes. For example, the experience and performance of the new volunteer coordinator will have a direct impact on volunteer retention and management. Also, the ease and functionality of the technology will play a role in outcomes. While the hope is that outcome measures move in the expected direction, the reality is that outcome measures are incredibly valuable in also identifying unanticipated consequences and areas that are still in need of improvement.

Now it’s your turn. Develop three outcome measures that you would like to use in your evaluation design. Revisit your priorities and your action plan. You can use the table below to guide you in developing your outcome measures. If you get stuck, go back to the original question, “What do you want to see happen?” Be as specific as you can.

What is the desired effect? (increase, improve, expand, reduce, etc.)	For whom? (program participants, staff, community, etc.)
1.	
2.	
3.	

These exercises should have led you to a full-strength logic model. You've recognized your current challenges and set about making priorities for organizational change, developed and implemented a clear-cut plan that has the potential for improving your organization, and established clear outcome measures that you can use to gauge your performance. The last stage of the process is near: Strive for Excellence

Strive for Excellence

*Excellence can be obtained if you:
 ...care more than others think is wise;
 ...risk more than others think is safe;
 ...dream more than others think is practical;
 ...expect more than others think is possible.⁴*

It is only fitting that this organizational toolkit concludes with a fairly standard charge: strive for excellence. Organizations have to evolve over time to respond to changing needs. Yet our current environment is one in which too many victim services organizations struggle to make ends meet. Organizational capacity building is a never-ending process. By focusing on those factors that you can change and by providing leadership and innovation, your organization can

⁴ Anonymous. Source acquired from www.thinkexist.com.

be the link that changes people's lives. Our goal has been to bring you some of the essential tools that can be used to improve organizational capacity. Our hope is that you will have great ambitions and challenge all within your organization to excel.

Additional Tools and Resources

Contents

- A. Organizational Capacity Self-Assessment Tool**
- B. A Guide to Acquiring Consulting Services**
- C. A Guide to Acquiring Technology**
- D. Introduction to the Delphi Method**
- E. Web and Print Resources**

APPENDIX A

Organizational Capacity Building Survey

Introduction to the Survey

With a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) is evaluating the effectiveness of PCCD's Organizational Capacity Building Initiatives. The evaluation includes an assessment of current organizational capacity of all applicants for PCCD capacity building grants in 2003-2006. Because your organization was an applicant during this time period, we are asking you to complete an online self-assessment survey. Your individual responses will remain anonymous; only the results will be reported to PCCD in a final report. If you would like to receive a copy of this report, please enter your email address below. We thank you in advance for participating in this self-assessment survey. The results are intended to assist PCCD as it refines its capacity building grant program. If you have any questions about the survey or the NCSC's evaluation, please contact the Project Director, Brenda Uekert, PhD, at buekert@ncsc.org or 757-259-1861. You also may direct questions to PCCD by contacting Deborah Almoney at dalmoney@state.pa.us or 717-787-5152 ext. 3039.

1. Please enter your email address if you would like to receive an electronic copy of the final report.

About Your Organization

The following items ask for basic information about your organization, including staffing, clientele, and budget figures. Please answer each of the items as accurately as possible. Estimates are acceptable when actual figures cannot be located.

2. Name of organization*

3. Name of person completing survey

4. Title of person completing survey

5. Number of years employed by this organization

6. Did your organization receive a grant(s) from PCCD's Organizational Capacity Building Initiative between 2003 and 2008?

7. Did your organization receive a PCCD grant OTHER than the Organizational Capacity Building Grant between 2003 and 2008?

-- None --

8. How many FTE (full-time equivalent) staff are employed by your organization?

9. How many FTE (full-time equivalent) volunteers provide services to your organization or your clients?

Please estimate if actual figures are not available.

10. How many clients has your organization served over the last five years?

If figures are not available for a particular year, please enter "NA".

2003	<input type="text"/>
2004	<input type="text"/>
2005	<input type="text"/>
2006	<input type="text"/>
2007	<input type="text"/>

11. What is your organization's current annual budget?

12. What are your funding sources, by percentage of funds?

Please estimate the percentage of your budget that comes from the following sources. The sum of the numbers entered must equal 100.

Grants	<input type="text"/>
Private Donations	<input type="text"/>
State or local government	<input type="text"/>
Contracts for services	<input type="text"/>
Client fees	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

13. Generally, how has your organization changed over the last 5 years in terms of the following?

	Increased	Stayed About the Same	Decreased
Direct service hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outreach to target communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technological capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff retention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Referrals FROM other organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referrals TO other organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant procurement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Please explain the reasons behind the changes in the items noted above.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

15. Strategic Planning

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
Our mission statement effectively articulates our purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our strategic plan details specific goals, objectives and strategies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We regularly gather information to monitor progress toward goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We regularly review the strategic plan and revise as needed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Has grant funding helped you develop any of the above items in the last 5 years?

- Yes, a PCCD Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a PCCD grant other their Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a non-PCCD grant
- No

GOVERNANCE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

17. Governance

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
There is a clear structure in place to guide the activities of the board of directors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have regular and substantive communication with the board of directors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The board of directors plays an effective oversight role.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The board of directors is effective in promoting our organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. External Relations

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
We are successful in creating partnerships and alliances with local agencies/groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We provide regular communication to the community about our services (e.g., newsletter, website updates, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We actively promote our services to our targeted population.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The community and potential clients are aware of our services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Has grant funding helped you develop any of the above items in the last 5 years?

- Yes, a PCCD Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, an other grant from PCCD
- Yes, a non-PCCD grant
- No

HUMAN RESOURCES

20. Human Resources

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
We regularly assess and update job classifications and descriptions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff recruiting and retention plans keep us competitive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We actively provide new resources and training to encourage staff to excel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We provide regular opportunities for collaboration between staff and management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have practices in place to support successful recruitment and management of volunteers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Has grant funding helped you develop any of the above items in the last 5 years?

- Yes, a PCCD Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a PCCD grant other their Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a non-PCCD grant
- No

FINANCIAL & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

22. Financial and Business Management

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
Our financial software is sufficient for managing finances and producing reports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our financial statement is regularly audited by external consultants/firms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have a financial plan with multi-year expense and revenue projections.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have systems in place to appropriately manage records, data collection, and client privacy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have access to professional advisors to help with legal, liability, accounting, and risk management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have a fundraising plan with specific financial goals and schedules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have a diverse funding base that includes an appropriate mix of funding sources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Has grant funding helped you develop any of the above items in the last 5 years?

- Yes, a PCCD Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a PCCD grant other their Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a non-PCCD grant
- No

Technology & Data/Client Management

24. Technology

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
We have a written technology plan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We use technology systems for secure communications among staff and across service locations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have a confidential client database to track use of services for clients and client demographics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We use technology to manage staff, such as automated timesheet entry and staffing schedules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We use technology systems to gather and report data for potential funding sources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Service Delivery

	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Pertinent to our Organization's Goals
We have the methods in place to monitor and measure the quality of our programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We regularly assess our clients' needs and adjust programs accordingly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have targeted programs that consider the needs of our diverse client groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have formal mechanisms in place to routinely solicit feedback from clients and others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. Has grant funding helped you develop any of the above items in the last 5 years?

- Yes, a PCCD Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a PCCD grant other their Organizational Capacity Building grant
- Yes, a non-PCCD grant
- No

General Assessment

In this final portion of the survey we ask for your general assessment of your organizational capacity. In addition, we ask that you identify current capacity-building needs.

27. Please provide an overall assessment of your organizational capacity.

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

28. How has your organizational capacity changed over the last 5 years?

- Much Better
- Better
- About the Same
- Worse
- Much Worse

29. How do you currently fund activities associated with organizational capacity building?

30. If you received a grant through PCCD's Organizational Capacity-Building initiative, what was the impact of this grant on your organizational capacity? Were your activities sustained after the grant ended? Were you able to use this grant to obtain other funding? Please be as specific as you can.

31. If you did not receive a PCCD grant, how have you been able to address organizational capacity building?

32. Are there any organizational capacity-building activities carried out by your organization that you

consider to be a "best practice"?

33. What are your current organizational capacity needs?

34. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

B: A Guide to Acquiring Consulting Services

Table of Contents

1. Does Your Organization Need a Consultant?	B-1
2. Methods for Selecting a Consultant	B-2
3. Making the Selection: Interviews, Reference Checks, Contract Negotiation.....	B-3

1. Does Your Organization Need a Consultant?

Organizations may need services that staff and board members cannot provide, yet the organization cannot hire a person to provide the service. Although using the services may have strategic results, often the services are needed for only a relatively brief period, so it makes sense to hire the services temporarily.

Your organization might consider using consulting services for a variety of projects or objectives, including the following examples:

- Organizational capacity assessment
- Strategic planning
- Technology planning
- Assessing technology capacity and needs
- Assistance in acquiring technology
- Web site services
- Marketing services
- Organizational development and training

To determine whether your organization needs a consultant, ask questions such as the following:

- Does our organization have the specialized skill it needs to meet a particular objective?
- Does our organization need additional staff to do a specified task, but we are unable to hire an employee?
- Does our organization need to make a major decision and an objective third party might help us identify the options more effectively and work through the process efficiently?

Depending on the type of need and duration of an engagement, your organization may feel the need for a formal process to find and hire a consultant, or you may be comfortable with a more informal approach. Both approaches are discussed in the section below.

2. Methods for Selecting a Consultant

The two methods of selecting and hiring a consultant are sole-source (informal) and competitive (formal). In using either method, your process must be transparent and aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest, impropriety or even the appearance of impropriety.

For both the informal and formal methods, you must develop a clear plan for the work you expect the consultant to do. The plan should include the following elements:

1. A statement of work (SOW) that defines your needs
2. A budget estimate
3. A timeline for completing the work
4. A plan for managing the consultant's work.

The statement of work (SOW) is the project scope that the consultant will respond to in your informal or formal solicitation. This expresses as clearly as possible your needs, and provides the outline of the requirements and deliverables for the consultant's or vendor's proposal and work plan.

A. Sole Source Selection

Your organization may have the freedom to follow a sole source procurement method to select a consultant to perform a desired service. If you are considering going sole source, you should document the rationale for choosing through this method. In documenting your reasons, you are forced to look at them in black and white, which gives you an objective look at whether your decision is reasonable and defensible.

Reasons for going sole-source may include the following:

- Savings can be achieved by using a consultant with subject matter expertise or experience with your organization.
- The solution requires a unique specialist, and a particular consultant has such experience.
- The problem is critical and the solution is time-sensitive, and a more formal process will cause an unacceptable delay. (This situation may be avoidable by better planning, so be aware of the negative perceptions this reason might cause.)
- It is politically desirable to hire locally, and only one potential consultant is qualified.

B. Competitive Selection

You may choose to select a consultant competitively, through Request for Proposal (RFP). It is a more formal process and takes longer than a sole-source selection. Using this method may be dictated by the board of directors, visibility and transparency in the community, or by corporate culture.

The RFP can be a valuable tool in providing your organization with the choices you need to make in order to acquire a useful and cost-effective case management system. The RFP is a written set of requirements designed to obtain responses from a targeted group of vendors so your organization can select the most qualified vendor to complete the work specified in the manner desired. It is not a job offer.

The steps for doing an RFP are outlined in “Sample RFP Timeline” in Appendix B: Guide to Acquiring Technology. Also see Techsoup, which offers online resources to learn about the RFP process and to find examples of RFPs other organizations have done (www.techsoup.org/toolkits/rfp/index.cfm).

3. Making the Selection: Interviews, Reference Checks, Contract Negotiation

This section assumes that you have received proposals from candidates. Whether you decide to select sole-source or competitively, the consultant should be called upon to make a presentation to a selection committee. The committee should be prepared to examine the qualifications and experience of the candidates.

A. Designate the Interviewing Committee

Hiring decisions are difficult, even ones for consultants, and they do not produce fool-proof results. The interviewing committee should include a diverse group of people involved in your organization to have the benefit of differing perspectives and responses to the consultants. A selection decision that considers multiple viewpoints is more likely to be a good decision.

B. Prepare Interview Questions

Interviewing consulting candidates is similar to interviewing employment candidates, but with a few differences. Many approaches to interviewing are available. Types of questions to ask may include asking how the candidate handled a specific situation in the past and how the candidate will achieve the goals stated in the statement of work (SOW). The interview questions should also seek to determine how well the candidate understands the mission of your agency and how well the candidate would work with staff involved in the project.

C. Check References

Checking a candidate’s references is a mandatory activity. This is not a clerical task, and should be performed by a committee member actively engaged in selecting the consultant. Merely assuming that the references are real and will say favorable things about the candidate is not performing due diligence. References will almost invariably say favorable things about the candidate, but this should not deter you from trying to pull the shield aside. It is not easy to get past peoples’ defenses, but the whole truth about candidates is worth trying to access.

D. Schedule and Conduct Interview(s)

You can expect professional behavior on the part of the consultant in scheduling and conducting the interview. Seeing anything less than that is an invitation to eliminate the person from consideration. You can be frank about money matters, and asking about proposed timelines and levels of effort.

E. Negotiate the Contract

Once the selection committee has identified and ranked its hiring preferences, the decision makers for the selection need to act on the recommendations, make the offer and move forward

Additional Tools and Resources

with a written contract. (See “Sample RFP Timeline” in “Guide to Acquiring Technology” in this appendix.) The Statement of Work (SOW) produced for the selection plan can serve as a guideline of the agreements on performance between your organization and the consultant. It is usually an attachment to a contract or a memorandum of understanding between two organizations. As a component of the contract, it is often used to settle disputes over what work should or should not be included in a project. It establishes expectations for a variety of issues in the contract relationship.

You can insert the SOW into a standard consulting contract and insert the particulars of the consulting engagement from the winning proposal. Then you obtain approval of the contract through your governing processes. It is inadvisable to permit work to begin before a contract is signed by both parties.

C. A Guide to Acquiring Technology

Table of Contents

1.	Web Resources for Technology Planning/Acquisition.....	C-1
2.	How Formal a Process for Acquiring Technology?.....	C-2
3.	Selecting the Right Technology Vendor.....	C-3
4.	Sample RFP Timeline.....	C-6
5.	Case Study.....	C-9

4. Web Resources for Technology Planning/Acquisition

Techsoup (www.techsoup.org) is a useful technology resource for nonprofit organizations. It provides information on its website, in articles, in a newsletter, and through an online forum.

In addition to being an information resource, Techsoup is also an online product donation service that connects nonprofits with technology product donations and deeply discounted products from more than twenty-five leading corporate and nonprofit technology partners. Nonprofits must qualify by demonstrating their status as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.¹

Idealware (www.idealware.org) provides candid Consumer Reports-style reviews and articles about software of interest to nonprofits. Through product comparisons, recommendations, case studies, software news, and online seminars, Idealware provides information at little or no cost about software that will help nonprofits be more effective.

Idealware articles name software tools with different levels of capability, ranging from low cost to higher-end tools.² Less expensive software packages typically have few features, and additional cost provides additional features. Articles include advice on pros and cons to consider in deciding which software to acquire. Categories of software include the following:

- Online survey tools
- Page layout tools
- Online conferencing tools, for audio conferencing, web-based presentations and seminars, and distance learning
- Document management systems
- Grants management systems
- Accounting systems
- Online integrated applications that manage member, donor, or other constituent data; provide online payment capabilities; communicate with constituents by email; enable online event registration; and allow an organization to manage the text and images on its Web site

¹ www.techsoup.org/stock/gettingstarted/default.asp

² www.idealware.org/articles

- Event registration and online payment tools
- Email newsletter tools
- Bulk email generators
- Blogging software

Idealware also offers online seminars and recordings of past seminars on a variety of topics of interest to nonprofits. These are how-to seminars as well as guides to particular categories of software.³

ENTECH (Empowering Nonprofits in Technology) offers a variety of resources and services. ENTECH's e-library offers an RFP template and technology assessment tools.⁴ Another ENTECH offering is "web.dots," a technology resource guide designed to provide nonprofit organizations with links to online information on a broad range of topics.⁵

5. How Formal a Process for Acquiring Technology?

Many of the technology capabilities can be satisfied by purchasing off-the-shelf, commodity-type of product or service, through an informal process. Examples include a piece of hardware or software that comes in a shrink-wrapped box, or services like server backup or virus protection services. These kinds of products and services require relatively less effort, though certain steps are required to select the right one.

The steps for selecting the right technology vendor can be abbreviated for off-the-shelf, commodity-type of products or services. Through comparison shopping online or in stores, you can identify features or functions that deliver the capabilities you seek, and determine the best price available. A slightly more formalized approach is issuing a request for quote (RFQ) to likely vendors, to find the best price.

A more formal process is needed for more complex software products, including case management and accounting systems. This process involves a request for proposals (RFP). These software systems affect the business processes of your organization, and therefore require more effort and skill in managing the process. The next section describes the steps for selecting the right technology vendor. Using a consultant may provide capabilities that your organization does not have in-house (see Appendix A: Using Consultants).

The following table provides guidance about how formal your organization's process needs to be.⁶

³ www.idealware.org/online_seminars

⁴ <http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/entech/web/knowledge/Elibrary.html>

⁵ <http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/entech/web/webdots/webdots.html>

⁶ The table is from an article "The RFP Process: An Overview" at www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page5507.cfm

	Formal RFP	Informal Process
Projected budget	Greater than \$10,000	Less than \$10,000
Projected timeframe	Several months	Several weeks
Impact on organization	Moderate/high	Low/moderate
Variations in solution space	Broad range of solutions/options	Narrow range of solutions/options
Approximate document length	20-plus pages	10 or fewer pages
Approximate level of detail	Highly detailed	Overview/summary

6. Selecting the Right Technology Vendor⁷

Once your organization has made the decision to acquire technology, whether the technology is relatively simple or complex, the following steps are appropriate:

- A. Gather Requirements - What does my organization need?
- B. Research & Refine Options - What solutions/vendors might fit my needs?
- C. Evaluate Vendors - What is the best fit for my organization's needs?
- D. Select & Engage Vendor - Is this a reasonable price and contract?
- E. Manage Implementation - Has the vendor delivered on its promises?
- F. Support & Maintenance - How will we maintain the solution and support it?

A. Gather Requirements

Map Business Processes - Document critical business processes that your organization performs. This understanding will be critical for a vendor to understand how its solution should be implemented at your organization.

Requirements Analysis - Identify critical requirements (such as number of users, current technologies in use, need for remote access, and training) that you will need as a part of your technology solution.

Process Re-engineering - Technology implementation often provides an opportunity to change the way certain business tasks are managed at your organization. Consider this element and make a determination if it would be valuable to include.

Prioritization of Requirements - Prioritize your list of requirements and determine which ones are essential and which ones are "nice to have" but not required for success.

Environmental Assessment - If your project involves environmental or physical location factors, make sure a thorough assessment is conducted and that all findings are well documented.

Technical assessment - Document your current technology and catalog all areas that may interface with your new solution.

⁷ This section was adapted from the article "Selecting the Right Technology Vendor" at www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page5072.cfm, Copyright © 2006 NPower. All Rights Reserved. The article was supported by a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

B. Research & Refine Options

Conduct Research - Use the resources at your disposal to learn more about existing products or solutions that could meet your needs. Discuss your project objectives with related organizations, trusted advisors, and technology consultants.

Establish Evaluation Criteria - Develop a set of criteria on which you would like to evaluate your prospective vendors. Some common criteria used in evaluations include extent of meeting your organization's requirements, vendor stability, general impressions, timeframe for deployment, and costs.

Define Targeted List - Based on your requirements and your research into solutions, create a short list of vendors who may be able to meet your requirements. The size of your short list of vendors should correlate to variability in proposed solutions and project complexity. For instance, for a small defined project a short list of three vendors may be appropriate. For large complex projects with many different approaches, you may consider a list as large as eight vendors. Make sure that you keep your short list of vendors to a manageable scale.

Send RFP - Send the vendors your requirements information and ask them to submit a proposal. Typically requirements are sent in the form of a Request for Proposal (RFP) document (see **Sample RFP Timeline** below).

C. Evaluate Vendors

Evaluation Matrix - Develop an evaluation matrix using your evaluation criteria to help you objectively evaluate each vendor's proposal and product demonstration.

Proposals - Each invited vendor should respond to your RFP with a written proposal. Carefully evaluate each proposal and enter the proposal information into your evaluation matrix.

Product Demonstrations - Many vendors will request an in-person or web-based opportunity (a "demo") to showcase the capabilities of their solution. Demos are a valuable way to get more information and also evaluate intangible aspects of a vendor.

Reference Checks - Don't forget to check the vendor's references as a part of your evaluation process. Consider site visits if you are making a large investment.

D. Select & Engage Vendor

Primary and Secondary Options - At the conclusion of your evaluation process, you will need to identify a primary option (your winner) and some secondary alternatives.

Negotiations - Do not burn the bridges with secondary option vendors as they will serve as a valuable resource in the negotiation process. While you are in the negotiation process, keep in mind your secondary options as they serve as your best alternative if your negotiation falls through. Make sure that the final deal you strike with your preferred vendor is at least as favorable as your secondary options.

Contracting - Identify for the vendor a clear set of objectives, deliverables, timeframes, and budgets for your project. Make sure these are clearly written in the terms of the contract.

E. Manage Implementation

Dedicate Project Manager - Your organization should dedicate one or more staff or hire a consultant to oversee the solution implementation. The project manager should have regular checkpoints with the vendor to ensure that delivery matches expectations.

Ensure Timely Delivery - Vendors often juggle many clients at once and as such it is important for your organization to keep track of deliverable dates and ensure that the vendor is meeting them. Be conscious of your deadlines and deliverables to your vendor so they can make their target delivery dates. Keep an eye out for contract terms that apply additional fees for late delivery of necessary project materials from you to the vendor.

Ensure On-Budget Delivery - If your organization negotiates a Time & Materials (T&M) contract with vendor, then it will become imperative to track hours spent and budgeted hours remaining on a project. Without careful consideration of these elements, project costs could spiral out of control because a T&M contract provides no incentive to a vendor to complete the work quickly. A fixed-price contract may be a better alternative if enough risk can be eliminated to keep the vendor's price down, since vendors bid higher prices to protect themselves against risk.

Manage Scope - The greatest area of risk for most technology projects is in controlling project scope. Once an organization begins to see the possibility of technology, they often attempt to do too much in the initial development and launch of the solution. If this is the case, consider your project with the vendor a "Phase 1 deployment" and try to push back on new additions until a future phase. If a new addition is essential to a project, then you should clearly define it in an addendum to the scope of work and negotiate the price with the vendor.

Manage Expectations - Manage the expectations of all parties involved in the implementation support. Be sure to provide realistic timeframes and advance warning of any variances in budgets and timeframes.

F. Support & Maintenance

Resources: Ensure that the appropriate resources are dedicated to support the technology on an ongoing basis. Your support and maintenance plan could include some or all of the following:

- Support Hours/Contract
- Hiring of technology resources to manage the technology
- Assignment of staff member to take ownership
- Patches & Maintenance
- Ongoing Training

Upgrades: If the technology solution becomes mission critical, plan an upgrade path for it. Technology tends to change dramatically every three years and should never be considered a one-time investment.

7. Sample RFP Timeline⁸

An asterisk* marks the stages where your organization may benefit the most from the help of an outside technology assistance provider or consultant in preparing the document.

- A. Evaluate the Project (one to two months)
- B. Plan and Document (one to three weeks)
- C. Research and Target Vendors (one to three weeks) *
- D. Develop and Write RFP (one to two weeks) *
- E. Distribute RFP to Select Vendors (one to two weeks)
- F. Allow Time for Vendors to Return Proposals (two to four weeks)
- G. Evaluate Vendor Proposals (one to three weeks) *
- H. Compile a List of the Most Favorable Vendors (one to three weeks)
- I. Select the Vendor (one day to a week)
- J. Develop a Contract (two to four weeks)

Total Time: three to eight months

A. Evaluate the Project

Clearly identify objectives and stakeholders.

This includes any environmental and organizational forces driving your need for a new system.

Assess project feasibility.

Make sure that your organization's key decision makers support the plan and that the technology will be a smart investment.

Determine impact on staff.

Ensure that your organization's staff can devote the necessary time and resources to make the project a success.

Consider your budget.

Determine how much money your organization can afford to spend on the project.

B. Plan and Document *

Document your current processes and technology.

Document how your organization operates and the technologies it already uses. This helps vendors develop a focused solution.

Determine your organizational priorities.

Of the list of processes identified in the prior step, which ones have the largest impact on your organization? Summarize all of the process information, identify tasks that are crucial, and separate them from those you consider to be luxuries. Establishing this prioritization will give vendors a sense of where they should focus their energy while designing a solution.

Think toward the future.

Technology tends to change rapidly, so consider how the proposed solution will fit with your organization's goals and projected growth a few years down the road.

Drive consensus around your proposed plan.

It's very important that everyone involved in the project supports the plan, since making changes to the RFP at a later date can adversely affect the project's budget and time frame.

⁸ Copyright © 2006 NPower. All Rights Reserved. This article was supported by a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

C. Research and Target Vendors

Learn about the overall technology.

Conducting research about the technology you wish to implement helps you identify vendors who can meet your specific needs.

Get advice from existing contacts.

Locate potential vendors by reaching out to sources, such as technology directors of other nonprofits, consultants you may have used, and funders. A request for information (RFI) may be an appropriate way to gather this information. If the products and services are universally known and available -- for instance, commodity services such as Web hosting -- a request for quote (RFQ) may be appropriate.

Keep the vendor pool broad and diverse.

Develop an estimated budget.

This budget is for your organization's information, so do not share it with others as you circulate your RFP. Most RFPs do not contain budget information unless there is an explicit reason to do so. If you publish your budget, vendors will find a way to reach nearly 100 percent of it with their proposals, leaving you less room to bargain later. Your "internal" budget should cover expenses for all staff, as well as the hardware and software costs. To the best of your ability, consider other one-time and recurring costs.

Circulate an RFI.

Depending on the scale of your project and the amount of knowledge you already have about this type of solution, it may be appropriate to circulate an RFI to others for feedback.

D. Develop and Write the RFP *

Explain your organization.

Outlining your organization's mission helps provide vendors with the context they need to develop a suitable plan. Identify the environmental and organizational forces driving your need for a new system.

Describe your business requirements.

Identify the problems that you hope to solve with the proposed technology plan, as well as challenges that may occur during the implementation phase. Include information about both key and optional requirements.

Disclose your organization's constraints.

Explain your organization's limitations, including known technology constraints. While the RFP should list your desired time frame, it generally should not contain information about fiscal limitations. Include any pilots or proofs of concepts that may be required.

Develop the criteria for evaluation.

Create a rubric with weighted criteria so that you know in advance how you will evaluate proposals. The weight of each criterion should be based on your organizational priorities which you identified in the Planning and Documentation stage.

Request a sample project plan.

Even though the project plan would have a fictitious timeline, the sequence and description of deliverables and activities will reveal the bidder's methodology.

Set a hard deadline for proposal submissions.

Ensure that vendors file their proposals by a specific date.

Make your expectations clear.

Ensure that vendors know what to include in their proposals and how much detail to provide. Be sure to tell them the exact format for responses so that you can compare proposals more easily. Specifically, you should provide a pricing scenario so that all bidders use the same assumptions when they provide their quote.

E. Distribute RFP to Select Vendors

Send out your proposal.

Email your proposal to prospective vendors.

Hold a pre-bid teleconference.

Additional Tools and Resources

About a week after you distribute the RFP, hold a teleconference for interested bidders to call in and ask questions. This will save you the time of responding to individual inquiries.

F. Allow Time for Vendors to Return Proposals

Give vendors ample time to review your RFP.

Technology vendors may have a number of RFPs to contend with; giving them enough time to review yours greatly increases the likelihood that you will get a response.

Check in with vendors frequently.

Contacting vendors who seem promising increases the chance that they will submit a proposal by the deadline.

Assemble a list of FAQs.

Compile a list of vendors' frequently asked questions and supply answers. Send this document to all vendors at least a few days before the deadline so they will have time to review it and make necessary changes to their proposals.

G. Evaluate Vendor Proposals *

Evaluate responses based on scoring criteria.

Develop an evaluation matrix to score and rank your vendor responses. An evaluation matrix can help ensure that your selection process is unbiased (see Business Solutions the Positive Way's [Evaluation Matrix](#) for an example). Make sure key staff members participate in the proposal-review process.

Consider your timeline and budget.

Focus on vendors who can deliver a finished solution that stays within your budget and time frame. Be sure to consider the total cost of ownership (TCO) for each solution. This includes not only the external vendor costs, but also your organization's infrastructure costs, internal staff costs (including training), and recurring costs (such as annual subscriptions or updates).

H. Compile a List of the Most Favorable Vendors

Request product demonstrations ("demos").

Once you have narrowed the field to a handful of serious contenders, set up product demonstrations, making sure that key players at your organization attend them.

Check prospective vendors' references.

Speak with consultants or organizations that have previously worked with the potential vendor -- ideally on comparable projects.

I. Select the Vendor

Choose a winner and at least one runner-up.

Even if you have identified a clear-cut winner, select one (or more) runner-ups in case your first choice fails to deliver or becomes cost prohibitive. Having a runner-up also gives your organization more bargaining power with the winner.

Keep in contact with the runner-ups.

Keep runner-up vendors in the loop, especially those who would make for an easy transition should your first choice fall through.

J. Develop a Contract

Arrive at a mutual understanding of expectations.

Ensure that the selected vendor understands the details of the contract, including the time frame, expected quality of work, and level of technical support your organization will require.

Practice smart negotiating.

Although you should bargain with the vendor regarding price, make certain that your negotiations do not cause the vendor to omit elements that are crucial to the project's success.

Conduct the pilot phase.

All technology projects carry financial and organizational risk. Before rolling out new technology across your entire agency, consider piloting it with one site or one department. Spend at least one week testing the application to ensure all of the functions work properly and that you have a clear understanding how to use the solution.

8. Case Study

The experience of the Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) in Buck's County, Pennsylvania, in upgrading its computer systems, provides an example of how your organization might approach such an undertaking. Here are the key steps NOVA took to acquire and implement a new case management system:

1. In their scope exercise, NOVA staff discovered that they lacked the funds to customize a system, and updating their old Microsoft Access database was not going to provide a long-term solution. They decided to evaluate commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) case management systems (CMS), but knew they would need assistance in selecting a system.
2. They issued an RFP to find a company to help research finding a program.
3. Based upon RFP responses, they hired NPower PA⁹.
4. NPower wrote a report on the business impact and features of their software needs for their daily business functions. NPower also prepared an implementation plan covering data conversion, training, and plans for the transition from the old to the new system, including how long data would have to be entered in both systems to be sure the new system was operating properly.
5. NPower assisted with the development of functional requirements that were later compared to eligible CMS's and ranked according to how these systems met the requirements according to expectations and costs. NOVA looked at
 - How paper records were handled;
 - Daily business processes; and
 - Daily activity logs.
6. NPower assisted NOVA in writing an RFP for the software package and in reviewing and rating proposals submitted by vendors.
7. NOVA liked ETO Software by SocialSolutions¹⁰ (Efforts to Outcomes – ETO)
8. NOVA reviewed three case studies identified on the ETO website where ETO Software was implemented: Lutheran Settlement House, Congreso and House of Ruth.
9. NOVA then invited the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), which would be approving grant support for the system, to review the software and observe a demonstration of the system.
10. NOVA selected ETO and continued to work with NPower as ETO adapted and implemented the system.
11. NOVA conducted a series of staff surveys as the system was piloted and rolled out and after staff received training on using the system. Adjustments were made during each implementation phase.

⁹ www.npower.org

¹⁰ www.socialsolutions.com

Additional Tools and Resources

12. NOVA made a presentation at an annual PCCD conference, “Pathways,” to introduce the ETO system to other crime victim services groups in the state.¹¹

¹¹ “Evaluation of the Victim Services Organizational Capacity Building Initiative – The NOVA Interview.” Personal Interview. By John Matthias. National Center for State Courts Project. 11 Sept 2007.

D. Introduction to the Delphi Method

The Delphi research approach is a qualitative and exploratory forecasting methodology. The objective of the approach is to work towards a consensus amongst a panel of experts, and the approach is particularly useful in documenting a spread of opinion. The Delphi technique uses a series of questionnaires administered in phases to interrogate the panel of experts. Information and opinion feedback on progressive outcomes between phases are provided to the panel. The panel is then requested to respond to the outcomes of the preceding phase.

In general, the technique involves three phases. In the first phases, the panel is sent a questionnaire and asked to pass opinion regarding a subject matter. Their responses are then analyzed and compiled into a document that lists the items identified by the panel. In the second phase, the panel is sent the compilation of the earlier responses and is asked to rank the items. These responses are then compiled into a document that identifies occurrences about which there is general consensus and occurrences about which there is divergence of thought. In phase three, the panel is sent the compilation of phase two responses and asked to comment on and possibly review widely divergent opinions that were made.

The resulting responses are then compiled into a final report that details the areas of general consensus, any significant divergent opinions and reasons for this divergence, and those issues around which there is significant uncertainty.

E. Web and Print Resources

Capacity Building and Assessment

General

Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations. DeVita C. J., & Fleming, C., Eds. (2001). Washington, D.C. The Urban Institute. An extensive review and thoughtful discussion of capacity building theory and research initiatives emerging from a collaboration the Urban Institute's Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, the Human Interaction Research Institute, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations. Venture Philanthropy Partners. (2001). Washington, D.C. Available at <http://venturephilanthropypartners.org/learning/reports/capacity/capacity>.

Evaluation of Capacity Building: Lessons from the Field. Linnell, D. (2003). Washington, D.C. Alliance for Nonprofit Management. www.allianceonline.org

Evaluation of Capacity-Building Programs; a Learning Organization Approach. Gruidl, J. & Hustedde, R. (2003). *Journal of Extension*, 5 (41), an online journal available at www.joe.org/2003october/a1.shtml.

Good to great and the Social Sectors: A monograph to accompany Good to Great. Collins, J.(2005).

Assessment Tools

Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards, available from BoardSource includes confidential questionnaires to evaluate the board's performance and their own contributions. The assessment addresses 10 key areas of board responsibility. It includes a 50-page user's guide with sample forms and instructions for tabulating the results. <http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=39>

Capacity assessment instruments: New Directions in Organizational Capacity Building at www.edc.org/GLG/CapDev/dosapage.htm.

SurveyMonkey.com (www.surveymonkey.com) provides step-by-step guidance and tools for survey design, data collection, and data analysis.

Strategic Planning

BoardSource (www.boardsource.org) offers several publications and an online tool for nonprofit strategic planning. Examples include the following:

The Nonprofit Board's Role in Mission, Planning, and Evaluation, Second Edition
Step-by-Step: Strategic Planning

Additional Tools and Resources

Presenting: Strategic Planning—Choosing the Right Method for Your Nonprofit Organization

Driving Strategic Planning—A nonprofit Executive's Guide

Crafting & Executing Strategy: The Quest for Competitive Advantage: Concepts and Cases, 16/e. Thompson, A. A., Strickland, A.J. & Gamble, John E. (2008).

<http://www.mhhe.com/business/management/thompsonCES/index.html#>

Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: a Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement. Bryson, John M. (1995). San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.

Business plans

Plan-As-You-Go Business Planning (<http://planasyougo.com>) provides resources for business planning, including a free online version of a publication, *The Plan-As-You-Go Business Plan*, and reasonably priced software for purchase (Business Plan Pro).

Governance and Management

Alliance for Nonprofit Management. <http://www.allianceonline.org>

Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management. The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University works with nonprofit organizations to help them effectively manage and use money invested from public and private sources to advance their charitable mission. The Center offers workshops and consulting services in many areas including: board development, business planning, collaboration and alliances, financial management, fund development, organizational effectiveness, and technology planning. (http://www.robert-morris.edu/OnTheMove/findoutmore.about_rmu?iattr=quicklink&ipage=1680)

BoardSource. <http://www.boardsource.org/>

Center for Nonprofit Management. Training, coaching, consulting, resources and tools. <http://www.cnmsocal.org/>

Idealist. <http://www.idealists.org/tools/management-resources.html>

Harvard Business School *Working Knowledge* (<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/>) is a forum for innovation in business practice, offering readers a first look at cutting-edge thinking and the opportunity to both influence and use these concepts before they enter mainstream management practice.

Achieving Excellence in Nonprofits (October 2008), in Harvard Business School Working Knowledge newsletter, <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/5942.html>

Human Resources

General

HRNext (<http://hr.blr.com>) for online human resources materials; to get into forms and information, have to subscribe – COBRA, job descriptions, and basic materials.

Volunteer Recruitment & Management

AngelPoints <http://www.angelpoints.com/home>; also has software solution for tracking volunteers events and volunteer numbers/hours of service

VolunteerMatch (www.volunteermatch.org) is a leader in the nonprofit world dedicated to helping everyone find a great place to volunteer. The organization offers a variety of online services to support a community of nonprofit, volunteer, and business leaders committed to civic engagement.

Technology

General

Techsoup (www.techsoup.org) is a useful technology resource for nonprofit organizations. It provides information on its website, in articles, in a newsletter, and through an online forum. Techsoup is also an online product donation service that connects nonprofits with technology product donations and deeply discounted products from more than twenty-five leading corporate and nonprofit technology partners. Nonprofits must qualify by demonstrating their status as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

Idealware (www.idealware.org) provides candid Consumer Reports-style reviews and articles about software of interest to nonprofits. Through product comparisons, recommendations, case studies, software news, and online seminars, Idealware provides information at little or no cost about software that will help nonprofits be more effective.

Technology Planning

NPower (<http://www.npower.org>) is a network of 13 locally based nonprofit organizations that provide comprehensive, high-quality and affordable technology assistance to other nonprofit groups nationally. NPower PA serves is located in Philadelphia.

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Philadelphia, PA 19107
Telephone: (215) 557-1559
Fax: (215) 689-4949
Website: <http://www.npowerpa.org>

Additional Tools and Resources

TechAtlas (<http://techatlas.org>) offers online tools to nonprofits for technology planning. Some are available for free and others are available to member organizations. TechAtlas is also accessible through Techsoup (www.techsoup.org).

Techsoup's Learning Center (<http://techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/index.cfm>) offers numerous resources for technology planning. Some examples follow.

Get Started with TechSoup's Sample Technology Plan: Evaluate your infrastructure, and budget for the future. Copyright © 2005 CompuMentor. This work is published under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License](#).
<http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/archives/page9751.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=sample%20technology%20plan>

Nonprofit Technology and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).
<http://techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page10908.cfm>

10 Things Every Nonprofit Executive Needs to Know about IT: Ways to get your information technology strategy under control
<http://techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page7377.cfm>

Technology for the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sector.
<http://blog.deborah.elizabeth.finn.com/blog/>