



Building Capacity: Building Healthy Community

Why “Capacity Building”?

The BC Healthy Communities strategic plan includes the following goal: *Expand community capacity for effective and sustainable engagement in the Healthy Communities initiative.* Objectives that help us meet this goal include:

- 1) Integrate the concept of capacity building into all Healthy Communities initiatives, and
- 2) Foster the creation of “learning communities” to address capacity building as a strategy for enhancing Healthy Communities effectiveness and sustainability

Just What Do We Mean by Capacity Building?

While there is lots of talk about capacity building, the term often means different things to different people. Since it is a major focus of BC Healthy Communities, we’d like to share our view of capacity building:

Capacity building describes processes and activities that maximize human potential. A comprehensive, integrated approach to capacity building nurtures excellence, expansion and positive change in *all* areas of human experience: social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural. In this way, our capacity building efforts reflect the complexity of people, and the communities in which we live our lives.



Building Capacity to Create Healthy Communities

Capacity building is a practical catalyst for bringing the Healthy Communities vision to life in all of our communities. Healthy Communities is a “big picture” concept that not only fosters health and well-being in individuals and in groups, but also addresses human development. In the same way, capacity building pays attention to the complex nature of health, well-being and human development.

The Healthy Communities approach recognizes that health is more than the absence of disease. In addition to healthy bodies and healthy minds, we need to pay attention to social systems and community culture. As Dr. Trevor Hancock¹ says,

“we need a human-centred rather than an economic-centered form of development. Human development and the achievement of human potential is, or should be ... the common theme that unites the statutory (public), business (private), voluntary and community sectors. For if, as a civilization, we are not in the business of improving the quality of life and increasing human development and human capital, what business are we in?”²

The Healthy Communities approach addresses multiple determinants of health including:

- Social determinants (e.g. public policy, education, housing, child care, transportation, air and water quality, food security, neighbourhood design, accessible services and supports...)
- Environmental determinants (e.g., healthy ecosystems, air and water quality, green space, ...)
- Economic determinants (e.g. thriving local business, economic resilience, stable employment, family-friendly workplaces...)
- Physical determinants (e.g. healthy body, physical activity, diet, substance use/abuse, safe sex...)
- Psychological and spiritual determinants (e.g. healthy mind, healthy spirit, healthy lifestyle choices, sense of belonging, purpose, high self-esteem, self-actualization...)
- Cultural determinants (e.g. community identity; shared vision of a healthy community; cultural values of inclusion, diversity, pride, hope, participation ...)

Taking an Integral Approach

A comprehensive and integrated approach to capacity building addresses each of these areas – social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural. This holistic “map” supports communities to see both the big picture *and* the details of the determinants that contribute to health, well-being and optimum human development.

¹ Dr. Trevor Hancock is a well-known leader in the Canadian and international Healthy Communities and Cities movement.

² In Hancock, Trevor. “People, partnerships and human progress: Building community capital.” *Health Promotion International*, Vol. 16, No. 3

BC Healthy Communities

Capacity Building Framework

Our purpose is to create communities that provide us with the social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural assets that promote health, well-being and the capacity to develop to our full potential. Since human potential is unlimited, capacity building is an ongoing aspect of community life.

At BC Healthy Communities, we believe that capacity building is most effective and sustainable when we pay attention in each of the following areas:

- Community learning
- Community engagement
- Expanded community assets
- Community collaboration

The following capacity building framework presents a four-step process designed to promote and shape capacity building activities in each of these areas.

1. Learn

2. Engage

3. Expand Assets

- Thinking
- Knowledge
- Commitment
- Relationships
- Resources
- Partnerships
- Activities

4. Collaborate: how to reach a chosen future

Each step – learning, engaging, expanding assets, and collaborating – is an important building block, expanding individual, organizational, sectoral and community capacity to address each determinant of health, well-being and healthy development.

Working within this framework helps to expand capacity in people, in organizations, and in the community as a whole. The framework promotes a holistic approach, paying attention to:

- Individuals (interior and exterior experiences)
- The systems and structures in which we carry out our activities
- The culture within which we live our day to day lives

Psychological and Spiritual Assets

(healthy mind, healthy spirit)

Physical and Behavioral Assets

(healthy body, healthy actions)

Cultural Assets
 (healthy cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions)

Social and Ecological Assets
 (healthy environment, economy, social systems, institutions, policies, services)

What is BC Healthy Communities?

BC Healthy Communities acts as a catalyst for creating thriving and resilient communities throughout our province. With an emphasis on capacity building, we offer support to communities wanting to integrate the healthy communities approach into their everyday thinking and practice.

The Healthy Communities Approach:

BC Healthy Communities is part of the international Healthy Communities and Cities movement. Worldwide, the healthy communities approach:

1. Addresses multiple determinants of health – social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural
2. Builds community capacity to create a healthy community
3. Identifies important building blocks for creating a healthy community:
 - Community involvement
 - Political commitment
 - Inter-sectoral partnerships
 - Healthy public policy

Tools for Building Healthy Community

Helpful resources from BC Healthy Communities include:

BC Healthy Communities Updates: A monthly newsletter reporting on events, opportunities, innovative approaches to policy and practice, and other inspiring news from healthy communities throughout BC.

BC Healthy Communities Backgrounders: The Backgrounder series presents information on a series of topics related to healthy communities. These Backgrounders will be of interest to anyone who wants to make their community a healthier place to live, work and play.

THINK! Healthy Communities: A series of “thinkpieces” to stretch our thinking and actions as we work together to bring the healthy communities approach into practice in all sectors of our communities.

Regional Facilitators: Facilitators will work in regions throughout the province to provide communities with support in understanding and implementing the healthy communities approach.

Interested in finding out more? Please contact:

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