

## **Capacity Building Guide**

This guide is designed to help an organization gauge its capacity to carry out and sustain meaningful change through a set of structured, open-ended questions. This guide is designed to assist users through a reflective thinking process to stimulate thinking that serves as the basis for the attached planning activity, and not for every question be completed. Answers to these questions will help leaders develop, monitor, and adjust plans and budgets to support the organization in aligning, obtaining, and developing resources they need to execute their priority initiatives.

This guide can be used in multiple ways:

First, the leader of an organization may use the guide to think independently about the organization when planning and implementing an improvement effort. The leader could use the information to secure the resources necessary for meaningful improvements to occur within the organization.

Second, the leader of an organization may use the guide with their leadership team, allowing the leadership of the organization to think together when planning and implementing an improvement effort.

Third, the guide can be used by a facilitator to guide a team from the organization through the reflective thinking questions as a way to allow full participation of all team members and to obtain insight from a third party.

Regardless of which of the above methods is utilized, the guide can help the organization develop an understanding of the organizations capacity to carry out and sustain meaningful improvements.

Taking time to think critically about the organization, whether independently or as a team, is the very work and essence of leading any organization. Effective leadership requires spending time thinking about how the organization is going to get to its desired state and what resources the organization needs to execute its strategy. When engaging in ongoing assessment and planning of the organizations capacity to support and implement meaningful improvements, leaders should be ask themselves the following questions:

## **I. Strategic Alignment of Resources**

- What are our strategic goals, objectives, and related priority initiatives?
- Have these initiatives been translated into specific projects and areas of work within each unit of our agency? Are these initiatives well-scoped and well-sponsored?
- Does each unit within our agency have a structure and employ roles that best ensure we can accomplish our priority initiatives?
- Are unit and team work plans and task plans in place?
- Are individual work plans and task plans in place?
- What are our strengths and gaps related to strategic alignment of our resources? What actions do we need to take to address them?

## **II. Inputs (Resources themselves)**

- What inputs do we need to execute our initiatives and hit our output goals? (staff, materials, space, money, technology and equipment)
- What inputs do we currently have?
- What state or condition are our resources in now?
- How adaptable/flexible are our resources?
- What are our strengths and gaps with regard to our resources? And what actions do we need to take to address them?

## **III. Staff Development and Performance Capacity**

- What staff capabilities do we need in order to achieve our strategic priorities? What related knowledge, skills and competencies do our staff need that can be addressed through professional development, technical assistance, and training?
- What are the strengths and gaps in our staff capabilities?
- What staff development activities are we engaged in now, and are these efforts aligned with our needs? (for management, supervisors, workers, new staff)
- Are gaps in our staff capabilities a result of a deficit in knowledge and skills, or do other organizational barriers exist to prevent staff performance? (culture, structure, processes, tools, programs, policies)
- Are these gaps a result of individual or team barriers/issues, e.g., time management gaps or lack of adherence to standard operating procedures?
- Are these gaps a result of organizational barriers/issues, e.g., non-constructively resistant unions, chronic employee relations problems, labor market constraints, budgets, and/or stakeholder support?
- What actions do we need to take to address the underlying causes for our gaps?

#### **IV. Continuous Improvement Planning**

- Do we have quick wins, mid-term and longer-term improvement plans for building or changing our organization's performance capacity?
- How are we continuously improving and leveraging our capacity?
- What are our strengths and gaps with regard to continuous improvement planning? And what actions do we need to take to address them?

#### **V. Project-Specific Capacity Planning**

- Have specific task plans and action plans been developed for this project that help us understand what staff time is needed to accomplish it?
- Have those involved in project-related change efforts been released from other responsibilities and assignments that compete for their time? Do they have work plans in place that help us understand if they are being assigned work that is above or within their capacity?
- Do we have staff involved in project-related change efforts who have the facilitation and the project management skills required for these efforts to succeed?
- Are there capacity gaps that need to be filled immediately before project-driven efforts can continue or be sustained?
- Were our original assessments of capacity required correct, or have we over or under estimated? What steps will we take to address this?

## **Planning Activity: Capacity Building**

This activity is designed to assist an organization in thinking through and plan the capacity it needs to carry out and sustain meaningful improvements. Agency leaders and continuous improvement teams can use this planning activity for both agency-wide (macro) and project-specific (mezzo) capacity planning, in support of their strategic playbook implementation and continuous improvement plans. They can also use the Capacity and Task Planning team activity in Chapter 4 for both project-specific and “micro” or day-to-day capacity management efforts.

This activity should lead to improvement plans that support capacity building through resource and staff development as well as other drivers of capacity and staff capabilities. These plan elements can be included in an agency’s continuous improvement plan, or developed as a separate capacity-building and staff development plan that supports other agency plans.

1. Identify the strategic goals, objectives, and priorities for which resources are needed by the organization, and the methods you will use to align these resources.
2. Identify the resources themselves that are needed by the organization to accomplish its objectives and priorities.
3. Identify the staff development efforts needed by the organization to build the required staff capabilities, as well as remedies for the other root causes for the agency’s gaps in staff capability.
4. Identify the training and technical assistance resources you’ve identified as necessary to address gaps in staff capabilities to support your desired outcomes. Compare this with what is already in place within your agency. Prioritize the list of additional resources you need, and develop improvement plans over time to secure these resources.
5. Consider what enhancements you should make to existing or developing continuous improvement plans to ensure that take into account the related capacity requirements.
6. Consider any project plans you are developing or have in place to ensure they take into account the related capacity requirements.