Evaluation of The Appalachian Regional Commission's Community Capacity-Building Projects

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NOTE: The views, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views, opinions, or policy of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

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Foreword

In recent years, community capacity-building has generated considerable interest in the nation and abroad for its potential as a catalyst for community development. While many federal agencies recognize the worthiness of community capacity-building activities, it is also widely recognized that such investments require evaluation and solid evidence of success. There is currently broad discussion underway within the federal government and the nonprofit community on how such programs should be evaluated in order to assess their value and efficacy. However, evaluation of community capacity-building programs is inherently difficult. One common obstacle is the measurement of performance outcomes of community capacity-building activities. Another is the lack of an accepted conceptual framework in the field to inform a performance measurement system in the first place, resulting in a lack of clarity about the specific purposes, outcomes, and impact of community capacity-building projects.

The ARC called for the current evaluation of its community capacity-building projects with some of these issues in mind:

> Since the inception of the [community capacity-building] initiative, the Commission, state program managers, grantees, and the convening organizations have all struggled with how to measure performance outputs and outcomes. State program managers, grantees and Commission staff focused on articulating results for each project, but translating these results into a common metric proved daunting (*ARC Request for Proposals, 2002*).

This report aims in part to further the broader national debate on evaluation of community capacity-building programs, and to provide the ARC with a common metric and recommendations for evaluating its own capacity-building projects.

Executive Summary

M any communities in Appalachia still do not enjoy the same overall quality of life as in other parts of the country, with respect to material prosperity, health, education, safety, recreation, and other aspects of community well-being. Further, there is a strong case to be made that these struggling communities are in need not just of external financial assistance or infusions of new industry and business, but also of a kind of transformation from within wherein whole communities come together to envision their future and awaken to their potential for collective action and improvement. The ultimate goal of community capacity building is to recognize and develop untapped resources to improve the living conditions and quality of life of people in communities. Community capacity building involves:

- Purposive and planned action on the part of a representative cross-section of the community;

- The mobilization and participation of a broad, diverse coalition of citizens within a community;

- The generation of awareness of community issues and problems, as well as a sense of commitment, common purpose, and empowerment on the part of community members;

- The strengthening of human capital by equipping people with the skills, know-how, and creativity necessary to carry out common goals; and

- The establishment of dense collaborative networks across agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Since 1995, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has invested nearly $12.5 million in 168 community capacity-building projects.[1] This report summarizes findings from an evaluation study of 100 community capacity-building projects funded by the ARC between 1995 and 2003. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background information about the study and community capacity building. Chapter 3 portrays the various community contexts in which the capacity-building projects were embedded, including information on grant recipients, community characteristics, assets, liabilities, and available resources. Chapter 4 presents findings on project activities and their implementation, including barriers encountered and how these were overcome. Chapter 5 examines project accomplishments and impact, and chapter 6 addresses performance measurement. The final chapter presents lessons learned and recommendations for ARC regarding its future capacity-building projects.

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[1] Many of the projects received additional funding from other agencies and organizations.

Study Overview

In 2003, the ARC commissioned an evaluation of its civic capacity-building program. The purpose of this evaluation was as follows:

- To document the range of outputs and outcomes that capacity-building and community leadership projects set for themselves in their proposals to ARC and to assess the extent to which these projects were able to accomplish their goals;

- To measure the extent to which these projects made progress toward the objectives[2] and performance goals[3] that pertain to ARC Goal 3;

- To document community outcomes that occurred as a result of these projects;

- To assess the implementation of a sample of these projects, with an emphasis on identifying obstacles and steps taken to overcome these obstacles;

- To identify potentially promising practices that might be adapted elsewhere; and

- To make policy recommendations aimed at improving ARC's efforts to monitor and assist its civic capacity-building and community leadership projects.

Within this context, two important purposes of the evaluation were to assess factors associated with successful capacity-building projects and to recommend a wide range of performance measures that might be used to document the impact of successful initiatives. The study examines projects' implementation and accomplishments, assesses the extent to which they met their own objectives, and makes policy recommendations for a performance measurement system.

The evaluation of ARC's capacity-building projects included four integrated activities:

- A review of the literature regarding theoretical and applied perspectives on capacity-building and associated best practices;

- A review of applications and final reports to gain a better understanding of the purpose, scope, and accomplishments of the 100 projects in the study sample;

- Telephone interviews with a representative sample of 25 projects to obtain broad information about project-related activities and accomplishments; and

- Site visits with 12 projects to obtain more detailed information about project-related implementation experiences, accomplishments, impacts, and performance measures.

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[2] The objectives for ARC Goal 3 are (1) the percentage of Appalachian residents participating in leadership development programs aimed at community improvement will substantially increase, and (2) all communities and community organizations will have access to capacity-building activities to enhance their ability to marshal resources, plan, and develop solutions to local problems.

[3] The performance goals for ARC Goal 3 are (1) support 4,000 participants in leadership development and/or civic capacity programs, and (2) provide support to develop leadership and civic capacity programs for 10 additional counties per year.

Project Context

All capacity-building projects are embedded in particular communities and, as such, must navigate unique contexts, factoring in interrelated sets of specific aims, assets, liabilities, and resources. Many of the communities in this study faced a common set of challenges: geographic isolation, persistent poverty, unemployment, and declining population, often attributed to young people moving away for educational and employment opportunities that do not exist in their home communities. Other problems mentioned by grant recipients include drug trafficking and addiction, teen pregnancy, and high rates of high school dropouts.

The most common goals reported by the 100 grant recipients in the study were developing or expanding the pool of potential community leaders, reducing the community's sense of isolation, preserving natural resources, fulfilling or improving municipal services, providing previously unavailable opportunities to local youth, and improving the economic health of their communities. Some projects reported interrelated goals. For example, projects geared toward youth were often described as an attempt to stem the exodus of young people from the community, with the community's long-term economic health in mind.

Each community had its own combination of assets and liabilities. The site visits and telephone interviews indicated that communities faced a variety of limitations or obstacles as they embarked on their capacity-building and community development work, such as the local political structure, lack of empowerment, fear of change, and limited resources. Another pervasive problem for the communities in the study was limited resources, most notably funding, but also including nonmaterial resources such as technical expertise and available staff. Even communities with resources that could be marshaled in the drive for change did not necessarily maintain a formal mechanism through which such resources could be distributed efficiently and effectively.

Community capacity building has at its core an assets-based approach to community development, emphasizing the identification and mobilization of community resource toward shared goals. Community organizations, innovative leaders, concerned citizens, and natural resources are just a few examples of community assets that can be directed toward community improvement efforts. In particular, the importance of community organizations—via collaboration, innovative leaders, and concerned citizens willing to get involved in community projects—was a prevalent theme echoed throughout the telephone interviews and site visits.

Resources are the financial, organizational, and human inputs that communities rely on to conduct project activities. Resources can include funding, ideas, expertise and technical assistance, time, materials, technology and equipment, and staff, among others. Grant recipients who participated in the telephone interviews and site visits often stated that they took advantage of existing resources in the community to facilitate project activities.

Projects varied considerably in the amount of ARC funding they received, from a low of $1,137 for a recycling program in Georgia, to a high of $335,000 for the West Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program. This wide range of funding suggests the breadth of activities that ARC funded capacity-building projects comprise, and also reflects different funding strategies used by ARC to foster capacity building in Appalachia. Projects received

approximately $5.3 million in matching funds from federal, state, local, and other sources. Most projects received aid from outside organizations in the form of technical assistance, outreach, and/or additional funds and other resources.

Project Implementation

The approaches employed by the ARC-funded capacity-building projects reflect the diversity of the communities in which they operated. Projects conducted numerous activities suited to particular project goals, and used strategies attuned to the particular needs, assets, liabilities, and available resources of their communities. The activities conducted by ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were divided exhaustively into 11 activity types, with an *other* category for activities that were not categorized elsewhere.[4] For organizational purposes, similar activity types were grouped into four overall strategies: vision and direction, involvement, skills and knowledge, and support.

Looking across all projects, the single most prominent activity—cited by 51 percent of projects—was conducting a group instructional activity such as a workshop or course (see table E-1). Other common activities included strategic planning (35 percent), meetings, conferences, and forums (28 percent), and technical assistance and consultation (26 percent).

Table E-1.—Percent of projects that included various types of activities, grouped by project strategies

Type of strategy and activity	Percent of projects
Vision	
Conduct strategic planning and analysis	35
Conduct regional or local needs assessment	13
Involvement	
Organize and hold meetings, conferences, forums, etc.	28
Conduct outreach to raise awareness of local issues	16
Conduct small-scale community improvement projects requiring the participation of community members for completion	15
Establish/develop a community organization, program, foundation, or association	12
Skills	
Organize and conduct group instructional activities, such as workshops and courses	51
Develop, purchase, publish, and/or distribute materials	18
Facilitate, organize, and conduct one-on-one instructional activities, such as mentoring, counseling, and teaching	6
Support	
Provide or obtain technical assistance/consultation	26
Provide technological support	5

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of projects relied on strategies designed to enhance skills and knowledge—e.g., organizing and conducting group instructional activities,

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[4] Examples of activities categorized as *other* include the establishment of a 24-hour toll-free number for victims of domestic abuse, recycling activities, health screenings, and the renovation and expansion of a local history museum.

conducting one-on-one instructional activities, and facilitating the distribution of instructional materials. Most of these training programs focused on the promotion of leadership skills (38 projects), but other topics were also addressed—e.g., economic development (8 projects), civic development (5 projects), and technical issues such as strategic planning and grant writing (5 projects) (see table 4-4 in Chapter 4). Most (51 of 62) projects used group instruction—and this group instruction was most frequently aimed at adult community members (17 projects), community and business leaders (15 projects), and youth (14 projects) (see table 4-4).

The problems that grant recipients encountered were generally not severe enough to prevent projects from implementing their approach. The most commonly cited problems included time and staffing constraints, attracting participant interest in the project, the isolation of and competition between communities, and limited resources. Projects were able to troubleshoot problems related to implementation, as demonstrated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of these projects remain active.

Project Accomplishments and Impact

Site visit and telephone interview findings provided significant qualitative evidence that the ARC-funded projects were largely successful at building capacity at different levels. There were three main types of capacity outcomes: individual, organizational, and community. At the individual level, projects enhanced the skills and knowledge of community members, increased awareness of community issues, and developed people's sense of empowerment. Many projects benefited organizations by increasing collaboration and the sharing of ideas and strategies for community development, and by enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness, as well as their stability and growth. Projects also benefited communities more broadly by improving strategic planning, enhancing the sense of community self-reliance and pride, increasing civic and political participation, and improving infrastructure and educational opportunities.

Study findings reveal that many projects had outcomes and achievements at more than one level of capacity, suggesting a richness and efficiency of approach on the part of projects with respect to capacity building. Qualitative evidence from across the site visits and telephone interviews support the view that many projects had far-reaching effects on their communities. Some involved significant changes in orientation and attitude, toward both communities in general and social and political duty and service in particular. Many projects led to greater awareness of community issues, a greater sense of community pride and self-reliance, and a stronger commitment to community service. Also, many projects were successful at convincing people of their own capacity for self-improvement and change. Besides these important psychological and attitudinal changes, projects gave rise to more concrete benefits, including the development of individual skills and knowledge, increased collaboration, the strengthening of community organizations and infrastructure, increased volunteerism, and improved planning.

Performance Measurement

A systematic and accurate assessment of project achievement requires a performance monitoring system that can be used to demonstrate that projects carried out their

proposed activities, and the extent to which those activities ultimately benefited individuals and communities. For such a system to work effectively, activities and related benefits must be clearly defined and measurable. Further, projects should have realistic plans to obtain valid and reliable data for documenting progress toward their outcomes.

The benefits of ARC's community capacity-building projects to individuals, organizations, and communities were far reaching and significant. One could argue that such enhanced capacity has paved the way for longer term economic, environmental, and social benefits, as well as increased community assets and decreased liabilities. However, these conclusions about program impact are primarily based on the observations, reflections, and judgments of project staff and participants themselves, rather than on more concrete and documented forms of evidence. Claims of project success could not be substantiated with hard data. In some cases, the desired outcomes that projects described in their proposals were not sufficiently clear, specific, and measurable—and therefore could not provide data-based tangible evidence of project success. In other cases, projects did not invest in the data collection activities required to demonstrate the immediate or long-term impacts of the efforts.

Moreover, the definition of clear and measurable outcomes is notoriously difficult for community capacity-building projects. One reason is that many of the benefits resulting from such efforts, such as enhanced community pride, empowerment, and community self-reliance, are not easily quantifiable. Further, many of the more quantifiable outcomes are hard to measure in a cost-effective manner. For small-scale and/or short-term projects with limited resources for data collection, it is even more difficult to assess whether the activities ultimately contributed to longer term economic, environmental, or social outcomes. In any event, over the long term, these obstacles will ultimately hinder the Commission's ability to document the range of benefits resulting from its community capacity-building projects.

Most (85 percent) of the 179 outcomes proposed by the 30 projects were capacity-based (i.e., individual, organizational, or community).[5] The remaining 26 outcomes (15 percent) were development outcomes (economic, environmental, or social), suggesting that most projects were setting their sights on shorter-term capacity-building goals (see table E-2).

Of the 179 outcome statements, 55 (30 percent) were classified as individual, 25 (14 percent) as organizational, and 73 (41 percent) as community outcomes. Of the 26 developmental-based outcome statements, 11 outcome statements (6 percent) were economic, 7 (4 percent) were environmental, and 8 (4 percent) were social outcomes. Across the 179 outcome statements that we reviewed, the most commonly proposed included enhanced skills (22 percent), increased civic participation (15 percent), improved planning (11 percent), and increased collaboration (9 percent).

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[5] In fact, of the 30 site visit and telephone interview sites included in this analysis, only one project did not propose at least one capacity outcome. This particular project proposed three economic/increased employment outcomes, all involving an increase in new jobs for project participants. The project might have also proposed an increase in individual skills as an outcome, but did not.

Table E-2.
Types and number of outcomes for the 30 case study and telephone interview sites

Type of outcome	Number and percent of outcomes (n=179)	
	Number	Percent
Total...	179	100
Capacity Outcomes	153	85
Individual..	55	30
Enhanced skills	40	22
Increased awareness of community issues	7	4
Enhanced empowerment..	8	4
Organizational	25	14
Increased collaboration	17	9
Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness...	5	3
Enhanced stability/growth	3	2
Community	73	41
Improved planning...	20	11
Improved community self-reliance...	14	8
Increased civic participation	26	15
Increased political participation...	2	1
Enhanced community pride	5	3
Improved infrastructure	2	1
Improved educational opportunities	4	2
Development Outcomes..	26	15
Economic	11	6
Increased tourism	2	1
Increased commerce..	2	1
Increased/improved employment..	5	3
Decreased outmigration	2	1
Environmental	7	4
Improved water quality..	4	2
Improved air quality..	*	*
Improved soil quality	*	*
Improved land use...	3	2
Increased/improved recycling..	*	*
Social	8	4
Improved health	1	1
Improved learning	3	2
Increased safety..	*	*
Improved governance...	2	1
Improved community housing and structures	2	1

*No outcomes statements were proposed.

Most (70 percent) of the 179 outcomes proposed by the case study and telephone
interview projects were successfully achieved (see table 6-3). However, projects
appeared to have difficulty obtaining data that could be used to ascertain whether an
outcome—especially developmental outcomes—had been achieved. This mirrors our
finding from the site visits that the evidence provided in support of project success was
mostly anecdotal. In fact, most of the 30 case study and telephone interview projects did
not collect any data about project implementation and impact. Interviews with project

staff revealed several reasons for this—e.g., the difficulty of collecting data, a lack of resources or funding for data collection activities, lack of expertise and experience in data collection and evaluation methods, and the belief that such data collection was not formally required by ARC. In addition, only a few of the projects appeared to believe that the collection of such data would further their own immediate interests (e.g., to attract future funding, improve activities), and some viewed data collection as an external imposition.

Recommendations

The weight of both the qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that a clear majority of projects succeeded in achieving real results. Nevertheless, if the ARC wants to be in a position to demonstrate the impact of its community capacity-building projects, it will have to do a better job in the future of measuring, tracking, and reporting performance of the program. Our recommendations are designed to build upon our previous recommendations by identifying specific steps that ARC might take to enhance the application and reporting guidelines for its community capacity-building projects.

Reinforce the ARC application materials provided to community capacity-building applicants. First, we recommend that ARC reinforce the general blueprint set forth in earlier ARC publications by developing additional materials aimed at helping applicants consider the range of steps required to execute their proposed approach and document the resulting community benefits. Exhibit E-1 presents seven guiding questions that community capacity-building applicants might address in their proposals. Beginning with project purpose, these questions are designed to help applicants consider the range of issues they will need to address over the life of their project—most notably the link between their proposed approach and the capacities they are trying to enhance, the community conditions they are seeking to improve, and the data they will use to document project success.

Exhibit E-1
Guiding questions for ARC community capacity-building projects

1. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your project?

2. What resources—within and outside of your community—do you have at your disposal to conduct your project?

3. What factors within your community are likely to affect the implementation and success of your project?

4. What strategies and activities will you use to achieve your goals?

5. How will project activities enhance the capacity of individual community members, organizations within your community, and/or the overall community?

6. As a result of enhancing your community's capacity, how will your economic, environmental, and/or social conditions improve?

7. How will you know if capacity has been enhanced and conditions have improved?

Provide prospective applicants with examples of community capacity-building outcomes. In an effort to help prospective community capacity-building projects address these questions in their proposals, we recommend that the ARC provide applicants with supplemental materials that demonstrate the range of outputs and outcomes that might be attributed to a generic community capacity-building project. The logic model presented throughout this report provides an example of the type of tool that might be posted on the ARC web site. The model, which portrays the relationship between a project's intended purpose, activities, and outcomes, can be used to provide applicants with illustrative examples of intermediate and long-term outcomes that are commonly associated with community initiatives (see appendix A).

We further recommend that the Commission work more closely with individual applicants to help them specify (1) the goals and outcomes that their projects are designed to address, (2) the numeric benchmarks against which their progress can be assessed—and the timeframe within which these benchmark will be achieved (see exhibit E-2), (3) a description of the methodologies that will be used to assess whether the numeric benchmark was achieved (see exhibit E-3), and (4) a description of how and when the data will be reported to the ARC. While some of this could be accomplished by posting a tool like the logic model on the Commission's web site,[6] many projects will likely benefit from having extended discussions with ARC staff (or other experts recommended by the ARC) on topics pertaining to performance measurement.

Exhibit E-2		
Examples of community goals, outcomes, and corresponding benchmarks		
Goal	**Outcome**	**Benchmark**
Individual Capacity: *Enhance skills*	Increase in skills of community members	20 community members who received training will increase their leadership skills in 2005
Organizational Capacity: *Increase collaboration*	Increase in number of service providers using input from community members to determine priorities and make decisions	15 local service providers will report using input from community members to make decisions in 2005
Community Capacity: *Enhance community pride*	Increase in the number of suggestions for community improvements from residents	50 community members will suggest a community improvement in 2005
Economic: *Increase tourism*	Increase in hotel business	Over the next 3 years, all community hotels will increase their yearly revenues by at least 5 percent
Environmental: *Increase recycling*	Increase in the number of local businesses that recycle	Over the next 2 years, 90 percent of local businesses will be recycling
Social: *Improve quality of community housing*	Decrease in the number of community homes needing major repair	Over the next 2 years, there will be a 25 percent decrease in the number of community homes that need major repair

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[6] The introduction to the logic model includes an overview of how to transform goals and outcomes into measurable benchmarks. See the electronic attachment for a full working version of the logic model.

Exhibit E-3	
Examples of benchmarks and corresponding data sources	
Benchmark	**Data Source**
20 community members who received training will increase their leadership skills in 2005	Pre/post survey of trainees—e.g., survey trainees before and after training to document improvement in their knowledge or skills
15 local service providers will report using input from community members to make decisions in 2005	Interview local service providers to assess whether they have increased their review of input from community members
50 community members will suggest a community improvement in 2005	Conduct an informal survey (e.g., an open-ended question in a common gathering place such as a grocery store) to obtain suggestions from residents about community improvements
Over the next 3 years, all community hotels will increase their yearly revenues by at least 5 percent	Analysis of local tax records
Over the next 2 years, 90 percent of local businesses will be recycling	One-time survey of all local businesses to document the proportion of businesses that are using recycling procedures
Over the next 2 years, there will be a 25 percent decrease in the number of community homes that need major repair	Windshield survey of residential structures to rate neighborhood dwellings on a five-point scale—should be conducted every year to document decreases in the number of homes in need of repair

Provide projects with written materials on potential data collection and analysis practices. While collecting data can be difficult and time consuming, findings from the literature review and site visits suggest that some of the outcomes that projects propose can be addressed through analysis of easily accessible existing records—e.g., county tax records, school enrollment records, police reports, employment and unemployment statistics, organizational meeting minutes, medical records, and hotel receipts. These data can often be found in county offices or the local chamber of commerce, as well as through such state and federal agencies as the Bureau of the Census, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Department of Commerce. By publicizing these existing sources, ARC may be able to help projects devise strategies for obtaining and analyzing public data that can be used to demonstrate improvements in a given condition (e.g., unemployment, hotel occupancy rates) over time. For other outcomes, projects may need to be encouraged to collect new data through one-time surveys, pre/post surveys and assessments (e.g., to measure changes in participants' skills or knowledge), and interviews (conducted in person or over the phone).

The ARC may need to help individual grant recipients develop low-cost plans for collecting and analyzing data. While working with individual projects—collectively or in a workshop setting—can be time consuming, we believe that the potential rewards are substantial. By their very nature, community capacity-building projects should be making continuous use of data to inform their consensus-building and decision-making efforts. As such, the Commission's efforts to help community capacity-building projects make maximum use of data would represent a valuable investment with many long-term benefits.

Reinforce ARC's reporting structure. If the ARC is to be in a position to identify innovative and successful community capacity-building practices, its staff will need to be able to systematically access more detailed information about the implementation and impact of its projects. We therefore recommend that the ARC develop uniform closeout report guidelines that are to be used by all of its community capacity-building projects. Exhibit E-4 provides an example of the topics that the ARC's community capacity-building projects might be required to address in their final reports. Collected over time, we believe this information would enhance the ability of program staff to assess the implementation and impact of the Commission's community capacity-building projects. While some grant recipients might continue to rely primarily on anecdotal information, the use of standard reporting guidelines—coupled with the requirement that projects report on their intermediate and long-term outcomes—would likely enhance the Commission's ability to obtain consistent data that can be used to assess project and program success. In addition, interviews with case study respondents suggest that projects would actually welcome more structured reporting requirements, so long as those requirements are not onerous or unrealistic.

Exhibit E-4
Example of potential ARC guidelines for
community capacity-building project final reports

Background—Provide a short statement regarding the need for this project. What problems did you hope to solve when you applied for ARC funding?

Activities—Describe in detail what actually happened during this grant cycle, and explain how you implemented the project activities. If there were significant changes to your program during the course of the project, or if the project was implemented differently than described in your original proposal, please describe those changes here.

Description of Project Benefits—Provide a description of how your project (1) enhanced the capacity of individuals and/or organizations within your community and (2) contributed to communitywide improvements. Also, assess the extent to which your project has addressed the problems or needs that you identified in your original request for ARC support.

Outcome Data—Provide any data that documents the outcomes associated with your project. Data will vary according to the type of project you completed, and it may be difficult to provide data at this time. However, it is very important to gather this kind of information so both your organization and ARC can document our successes. At a minimum, report on the extent to which you met the numeric goals that you identified in your original request for ARC support.

Problems Encountered—What would you do differently if you were starting this project again? Describe any major problems that may have occurred during the implementation of your project. Knowing the types of difficulties you encountered and how you resolved them will be helpful to other technology grantees that may be interested in replicating your program.

Program Continuation and Sustainability—This section should describe whether and how you intend to continue program activities after the end of the ARC grant period. Will the program continue with other funding, and if so, what other sources of funds have been identified? If the program is to be discontinued, has it served its purpose, or is there still a need to solve the problems you were addressing? What additional steps are being taken to obtain other resources needed to continue the project?

Conclusions and Recommendations—This section summarizes your project and the lessons learned during its implementation. Include a review of your successes and suggest ways that your experiences may be helpful to others.

Attachments—Attach any material that helps to describe your project and documents your success, such as photographs, news clippings, maps, videotapes, or web site addresses. Also, please attach copies of any written evaluations that may have been completed for your project.

SOURCE: Adapted from the ARC Grant Administration Manual.

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Introduction

The whole Appalachian region of which Day County is a part has been of concern to churches and philanthropic enterprises for generations. But the main achievements, until recently, have been the surveying of the area… and the partial alleviation of such acute needs as hunger, ill health, poor clothing, and shortage of formal education. Education efforts have tended to drain the more promising young people out of the area, thus increasing the difficulties for those who remain. Little has been done to help people find a viable way of living and thus cultivate the responsibility of self-help.

Biddle and Biddle (*The Community Development Process:*
The Rediscovery of Local Initiative, 1965)

Biddle and Biddle's seminal work on community development foresaw the need to support the people of Appalachia not only materially, as had been done for generations by charities and churches, but also by providing them with the tools to create a "viable way of living" for themselves. Their work recognized the development of human capacity and local initiative as a necessary condition for long-term community growth and well-being.

Consistent with Biddle and Biddle's vision, contemporary community development theorists and practitioners agree that long-term sustainability, economic growth, and improvement in quality of life in communities depend on the generation and maintenance of capacity for local collaborative and coordinated action toward common goals (see chapter 2 for definitions and discussion).

In the nearly 40 years since the publication of Biddle and Biddle's book, the people of the Appalachian region have made tremendous strides in assuming local initiative and improving the quality of their lives. However, many communities in the region continue to suffer from some of the same difficulties they faced in 1965, including outmigration of youth, shortage of human capital, social division, and low levels of civic participation. And while capacity building has certainly made impressive inroads throughout the region, many Appalachian communities have only just begun to develop their potential and "cultivate the responsibility of self-help."

ARC's Community Capacity-Building Projects

Since 1995, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has invested nearly $12.5 million in 168 community capacity-building projects.[7] While these projects were diverse,

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[7] Many of the projects received additional funding from other agencies and organizations.

they were linked by their reference to Goal 3 of the ARC Strategic Plan for 1997–2002: "The people and organizations of Appalachia will have the vision and capacity to mobilize and work together for sustained economic progress and improvement of their communities." Designed to support a wide array of objectives (e.g., enhance communities' organizational capacity to work cooperatively to address local concerns) and activities (e.g., leadership, strategic planning), these Goal 3 projects shared the ultimate goal of increasing the capacity of community stakeholders (e.g., government officials, businesses, residents) to collectively address their communal social and economic concerns.

In October 2000, ARC created an enhanced program for distressed counties, with two parts: a capacity-building effort, and a telecommunications and information technology initiative. The capacity-building program is "designed to strengthen communities and help organizations fulfill their mission in an effective manner," and includes the following elements:

- A minigrant program to provide strategic planning and technical assistance so local communities can jump-start the process of economic development;

- Workshops, knowledge sharing, and other activities to encourage community learning and leadership development;

- ARC outreach efforts that give local communities access to other resources, including nonprofits, foundations, and government agencies; and

- An online resource center for accessing information on funding, grant writing, and best practices.

ARC uses three primary strategies to fund capacity-building projects. First is its Flex-E-Grant program, which began in 2001 as part of ARC's Enhanced Distressed County Program. The program provides small investments, usually up to $10,000, for short-term capacity-building projects. For example, $124,000 was awarded to Mississippi's Flex-E-Grant Program. The CREATE Foundation, acting as the project's fiscal agent, distributed smaller grants to distressed counties seeking funding for activities such as leadership training and strategic planning.

Second is the Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP). Begun in 1997, the ACLP consists of a series of two-day training sessions at which community teams develop six-month action plans for their communities and set measurable outcomes with which to determine their success. Community teams whose action plans are approved by ARC receive minigrants to begin implementing these plans. At the completion of these projects, grant recipients convene for a one-day training session to report their results, network with other grant recipients, and learn about other funding opportunities.

Finally, a number of projects originate at the state or local level. Grant recipients include local development districts, government agencies, colleges and universities, and nonprofit organizations. For example, the West Virginia EMS Technical Support Network, a nonprofit organization, sought ARC funding to provide management and leadership training to EMS agencies, which are largely volunteer organizations and frequently lack these skills. Often, these projects represent collaborative efforts between multiple community-level organizations.

The activities conducted by ARC-funded community capacity-building projects are rather varied; however, these activities, generally, can be classified into one of four strategies:[8]

- **Vision and direction**—e.g., conducting strategic planning and/or regional or local needs assessments.

- **Involvement**—e.g., small-scale projects that require the participation of community members, establishing or developing community organizations or associations, conducting outreach, and organizing meetings, conferences, or forums.

- **Skills and knowledge**—e.g., group instructional activities, one on one instructional activities, and developing materials.

- **Support activities**—e.g., providing or obtaining technical assistance, and providing technological support.

Study Overview

In 2003, ARC commissioned an evaluation of its civic capacity-building program. The purpose of this evaluation was as follows:

- To document the range of outputs and outcomes that capacity-building and community leadership projects set for themselves in their proposals to ARC—and assess the extent to which these projects were able to accomplish their goals;

- To measure the extent to which these projects made progress toward the objectives[9] and performance goals[10] that pertain to ARC Goal 3;

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[8] As is discussed in chapter 4, many of the projects conducted activities in more than one of these strategy categories.

[9] The objectives for ARC Goal 3 are (1) the percentage of Appalachian residents participating in leadership development programs aimed at community improvement will substantially increase, and (2) all communities and community organizations will have access to capacity-building activities to enhance their ability to marshal resources, plan, and develop solutions to local problems.

- To document community outcomes that occurred as a result of these projects;

- To assess the implementation of a sample of these projects, with an emphasis on identifying obstacles and steps taken to successfully overcome these obstacles;

- To identify potentially promising practices that might be adapted elsewhere; and

- To make policy recommendations aimed at improving ARC's efforts to monitor and assist its civic capacity-building and community leadership projects.

Within this context, two important purposes of the evaluation were to assess factors associated with successful capacity-building projects and to recommend a wide range of performance measures that might be used to document the impact of successful initiatives. This report provides an examination of 100 civic capacity-building projects that have been funded by the Commission since 1995. The study examines projects' implementation and accomplishments, assesses the extent to which they met their own objectives, and makes policy recommendations for a performance measurement system.

The evaluation of ARC's capacity-building projects included four integrated activities:

- A review of the literature regarding theoretical and applied perspectives on capacity building and associated best practices;

- A review of applications and final reports to gain a better understanding of the purpose, scope, and accomplishments of the 100 projects in the study sample;

- Telephone interviews with a representative sample of 25 projects to obtain broad information about project-related activities and accomplishments; and

- Site visits with 12 projects to obtain more detailed information about project-related implementation experiences, accomplishments, impacts, and performance measures.

Findings of the literature review were employed in determining the definitions, parameters, and approaches of community capacity building as currently understood by both national and international theoreticians and practitioners. These findings were also instrumental in developing the conceptual framework of this evaluation, as reflected in a comprehensive logic model introduced in chapter 2 and discussed throughout this report.

Westat reviewed the applications and final reports for all projects in the sample. Findings from the document review were used to create a database containing background information about these 100 projects. This database was used to analyze patterns that exist across the projects in the sample, as well as to select projects for the site visits. Specific variables that were abstracted as part of this analysis included project description, types of activities, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and accomplishments reported by projects in their final reports. Findings from the document review are integrated throughout this report.

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[10] The performance goals for ARC Goal 3 are to (1) support 4,000 participants in leadership development and/or civic capacity programs, and (2) provide support to develop leadership and civic capacity programs for ten additional counties per year.

The use of open-ended telephone interviews with a sample of 25 capacity-building projects enabled us to obtain detailed data on a core set of topics. In addition, by interviewing staff from a representative sample of projects—stratified by project type— we were able to obtain information about the implementation and impact of "typical" capacity-building initiatives. The purpose of these interviews was to engage a sample of grant recipients in a dialogue about the implementation and impact of their projects. The telephone interviews were conducted with the individuals who oversaw ARC grants, with each interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Results from the telephone interviews are used throughout the report as support for general findings.

To get a firsthand look at the implementation and impact of ARC's community capacity-building initiatives, Westat then conducted site visits to 12 projects. These visits allowed us to gather in depth information on each of the study questions, with special emphasis on documenting the range of outcomes that occurred as a result of the ARC grant. In addition, site visits were used to engage project staff and other stakeholders in discussions of the types of performance measures that ARC might use to document outcomes associated with future civic capacity-building projects. The site visits also focused on the following topics:

- Context of the project, including community characteristics, characteristics of the grant recipient and other organizations involved and the nature of their involvement, target audience, and problem(s) the project was designed to address;

- General approach of the project, goals, and objectives, including specific outputs and outcomes established by the project;

- Implementation of the project, including planning processes, roles of partners and other stakeholders, types of activities supported, training provided, and community outreach;

- Problems or obstacles to implementation, how they were resolved, and recommendations of ways to avoid them in the future;

- Attainment of project goals and objectives, and impacts on target audiences and the broader community;

- Lessons learned and recommendations for similar projects;

- Plans for sustaining projects beyond the grant period and future plans; and

- Recommendations for performance measures that might be used to document outcomes associated with capacity-building projects.

In selecting these 12 projects, we focused on sites that appeared to have implemented innovative practices, achieved the objectives they set for themselves, and delineated valid and measurable performance indicators. Targeting the site visits to those projects that appeared to have been most successful allowed us to obtain information about best practices that may prove useful to other ARC capacity-building initiatives.

Structure of the Report

Chapter 2 discusses an array of definitions, issues, and approaches related to community capacity building, and provides a framework for the evaluation and chapters that follow. The remainder of the report presents the evaluation's substantive findings. Chapter 3 portrays the various community contexts in which the capacity-building projects were embedded, including information on grant recipients, community characteristics, assets, liabilities, and available resources. Chapter 4 presents findings on project activities and their implementation, including barriers encountered and how these were overcome. Chapter 5 examines project accomplishments and impact, and chapter 6 addresses performance measurement. The final chapter presents lessons learned and recommendations for ARC regarding its future capacity-building projects.

Perspectives On Community Capacity Building

A review of academic research and literature from organizations that administer community development and community capacity programs suggests that such endeavors hold great promise for many communities. But the review conducted for this evaluation also revealed that community capacity building and community development is a complex and vaguely defined field. Until the field gains greater definition and clarity of purpose, it may be difficult to prove its effectiveness and true value. This chapter sorts out the terminology, delineates the scope and parameters of the field, and provides a framework for the evaluation of ARC's community capacity-building projects. It includes definitions and discussion of issues and approaches from both theoretical and applied perspectives. The chapter ends with presentation of a logic model that synthesizes and incorporates findings from the review of research and insights in the field. This logic model will then serve as the framework for the evaluation and the data-based substantive chapters that follow.

Community Capacity Building and Community Development Efforts

Referring specifically to community capacity-building efforts in Australia, Hounslow (2002) noted that community capacity building is "commonly applied to disadvantaged communities and population groups," although in principle it has relevance to all communities and to society as a whole. Further, "this is belated acknowledgement that the profound economic restructuring and social change of the last decades of the 20th century has had a very uneven impact—benefiting some individuals and communities, while harming others." Ironically, community capacity building and community development work has been carried out internationally for many years in developed countries such as England, Canada, Australia, and in continental Western European counties. Craig (2002) notes that more recently, "Community development work itself has received a welcome boost in many countries, not least in the emerging democracies of East and Central Europe, and in many Third World countries…"

The same point made by Hounslow applies equally to the United States and the Appalachian region in particular—there remain many communities that do not enjoy the same overall quality of life as in other parts of the country, with respect to material prosperity, health, education, safety, recreation, and other aspects of community well-being. Further, there is a strong case to be made that these struggling communities are in need not of external financial assistance, or infusions of new industry and business, but rather of a kind of transformation from within wherein whole communities come together to envision their future and awaken to their potential for collective action and improvement. Community capacity building not only entails imagining how things might be, but realizing what it takes to get there and then translating plans into action. It

involves challenge to the status quo, and in some cases, conflict with established modes of behavior and governance.

Community capacity building and community development work is a growing and evolving discipline in the United States. It is carried out by community development agencies, higher education institutions, and governmental organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Institute, the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Within the Appalachian region, community capacity-building programs are operated by the Brushy Fork Institute, the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED), the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, and Rural Action, among others. These organizations and foundations traditionally receive funding from ARC, other federal, state, and local government agencies, private foundations, and corporations.

Common Terms and Concepts

The literature review revealed considerable variation of terminology in describing similar and sometimes identical phenomena. This section sorts out the various terms and provides operational definitions that are used throughout the report.

Community Capacity

What is community capacity? While the field is somewhat amorphous and definitions vary, the literature indicated considerable overlap of common themes, and suggests various parameters that allow delineation of the field.

According to the nonprofit Aspen Institute, civic and community capacity refers to "the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities." To Frank and Smith (1999), community capacity is "simply the ways and means needed to do what has to be done. It is much broader than simply skills, people, and plans. It includes commitment, resources, and all that is brought to bear on a process to make it successful."

Littlejohns and Thompson (2001) define community capacity as "the degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions which allow it to exert greater control over its physical, social, economic, and cultural environments." Community capacity is defined by Howe and Cleary (2001) as "the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain positive changes."

Many definitions of community capacity and community capacity building identify sets of parameters or components of capacity. For example, Goodman et al. (1998), propose the following dimensions of community capacity: participation, leadership, skills, resources, social and inter-agency networks, sense of community, understanding of community history, community power, community values, and critical reflection.

The various definitions provided in the literature reveal community capacity building to have several underlying features. First, it involves purposive and planned action on the part of a representative cross-section of the community. It presupposes that change generated from within a community is most likely to be sustainable and effective. The actions envisioned should work toward the interests of the community as a whole, and not just the interests of a select portion of the community.

Second, community capacity building involves the mobilization and participation of a broad, diverse coalition of citizens within a community. This includes generating awareness of community issues and problems, as well as a sense of commitment, common purpose, and empowerment on the part of community members. In this sense, capacity building is about changing attitudes and minds.

Third, community capacity building involves the strengthening of human capital by equipping people with the skills, know-how, and creativity necessary to carry out common goals. This includes developing skills for leading change, as well as skills of interaction across lines of race, class, age, and other social barriers that too often hinder progress.

Fourth, community capacity building involves establishing dense collaborative networks across agencies, organizations, and individuals. Ultimately, the goal of community capacity building is to recognize and develop untapped resources to improve the quality of life of all people in the community.

It should be noted that the phrase *community capacity building* may not be well accepted in some communities, where it may be taken to imply that people are somehow lacking in capacity. In the literature one finds reference to *civic capacity building*, often used interchangeably with community capacity building. For the purposes of this report, we avoid using *civic capacity building*, since it implies limiting the scope of activities to those that build capacity related to governance and democratic participation. While these are certainly an integral part of community capacity, there are other aspects of capacity that go beyond the development of civic participation, such as organizational development and collaboration, community strategic planning, and physical infrastructure. Community capacity building has also been referred to in the literature variously as "empowerment" (Craig 2002; Perkins and Zimmerman 1995), "readiness" (Haglund, Weisbrod, and Bracht 1993), and "competence" (Eng and Parker 1994; Iscoe 1974).

Community Development

Biddle and Biddle (1965) defined community development as "a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local aspects of a frustrating and changing world." They equated development with improvement, where improvement is "evaluated in terms of democratic skills, responsibility to serve a growing awareness of a common good, ethical sensitivity, and willingness to cooperate." According to Frank and Smith (1999), community development is "the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental, and cultural)."

It is important to distinguish *community capacity building* from *community development*, since these distinct terms are often used interchangeably. The sense of community development overlaps considerably with community capacity building, but is different in several respects. First, community development does not necessarily involve the building of community capacity. The example given by Frank and Smith (1999) is of a community in which jobs and wealth are generated due to exclusive government and industry control of economic and social development, but where capacity is not strengthened in that the community is not subsequently better positioned to manage itself, make decisions, sustain long-term well-being, and so on. Similarly, there may be severely disadvantaged communities in which capacity is strengthened, but where no development occurs (at least in the short term).

Thus, one might view community capacity and community development as complementary processes in a continuum where capacity feeds development, and where development may feed back into capacity. Both processes share the primary goal of improving the quality of life of people within communities.

The concept of community development has a longer history than that of community capacity building. The more recent emphasis in the literature on the more restrictive notion of community capacity building may have been due in part to negative connotations of the word *development*, often associated with unchecked growth and expansion. Many practitioners struggle to dispel the notion that growth is in itself good for a community. They point out that the ultimate goal of community building should be the well-being of community members, and that economic interests must be balanced with social and environmental considerations. For example, MDC, a community development organization whose mission is to advance the interests of disadvantaged communities in the Southern United States, identifies six interrelated components of community development, only some of which pertain directly to economic interests. They are business development, workforce development, physical infrastructure, social infrastructure, cultural and environmental stewardship, and civic infrastructure (MDC 2002).

Another reason why some practitioners prefer to avoid using *community development* is that the expression too closely resembles *economic development*, which for many disadvantaged communities can be as harmful for some in the community as it is beneficial to others. Some communities see economic development as a panacea for the problems that they face, and, rather than pursuing more practical options, throw all of their efforts into business recruiting. In any event, practitioners of community building view economic development as just one component of community development.

Concerns such as these have spawned the creation of alternative expressions that attempt to avoid the negative connotations of *development*. For example, many practitioners prefer to adjoin the term *sustainable* as a modifier to the word development (see Hart 1999; Kinsley 1997). According to Hart (1999), "The primary goal of a sustainable community is to meet its basic resource needs in a way that can be continued in the future." Thus, the word *sustainable* is meant to counter the assumption that expedient solutions will benefit communities in the long term. Kinsley, of the Rocky Mountain Institute, notes that "sustainable development stands in sharp contrast to conventional economic development strategies." He then lists features of the sustainable development approach, as follows:

- Redefines prosperity, weighing community values, quality of life, and the environment alongside economic considerations.

- Seeks true development, in the sense of getting better, instead of expansion, which is merely getting bigger.

- Advocates the long-term stewardship of community resources, ensuring that present actions don't erode the basis for future prosperity.

- Pursues self-reliance and a more democratic approach to decision-making, representing community-wide interests over those of an elite few.

- Stresses diversity, resilience, and a conviction that many small efforts work better than a single one-size-fits-all solution.

Community Capacity Building: In Theory and Practice

As with other fields[11] and professions, community capacity building has a theoretical aspect as well as an applied aspect. Theorists are interested in the varied structures, networks, and dynamics of communities, how these may change over time, and how they play a role in community development and capacity building. Practitioners are principally interested in what works and how they can affect change in communities in the most effective ways. Unlike other fields with a clear and balanced division of labor between theory and application, community capacity building is naturally heavily weighted toward practice.

In general, insights of theoreticians and academics are informed by abstract conceptions of community structure and organization, human interaction, and power and governance, whereas the insights of practitioners are founded more on direct experience in implementing community work. But in actuality, there is a fine line between theory and practice with respect to community capacity building, and the two domains are mutually beneficial. Much of the work done in theoretical camps, while often somewhat abstract, is geared toward providing tools for the improvement of communities. Popple and Quinney (2002) encourage "students and practitioners to practice in a critical, systematic manner, informed by theory."

The following sections attempt to map some of the terrain of community capacity building from both theoretical and applied perspectives. Both perspectives help provide the framework, goals, and guiding principals for community capacity building, as well as a framework for monitoring and evaluating capacity-building programs.

Community Capacity Building and Community Development in Theory

Hustedde and Ganowicz (2002) note that the profession of community development incorporates theories from a wide range of disciplines, including work by community-

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[11]The term *field* here is used rather loosely, since community capacity building is not as clearly defined and established as a formal field or discipline.

development-oriented anthropologists, community psychologists, sociologists, social welfare professionals, and community economists, among others. They also point out that this balkanization of theory and the sometimes impenetrability of the language used by theorists leads many pragmatic-minded practitioners to conclude that theory is irrelevant for their purposes. Nonetheless, they outline three main areas where theory may be especially useful for community developers.

Wilkinson (1972)

Wilkinson proposed the conceptualization of community development within the framework of social field theory. Referring to his earlier work (Wilkinson 1970), he proposed that groups, organizations, communities, and other forms of social organization may be treated as social fields, where a social field is defined as "a process of interaction through time, with direction toward some more or less distinctive outcome and with constantly changing elements and structure." Social fields in most instances are oriented toward a single interest or category of interests, and are sometimes linked along institutional interest lines. By contrast, a *community field* is a "locality-oriented social field through which actions expressing a broad range of local interests are coordinated," such that there is generalization across interest lines. Community development then is collective action that is "purposively directed towards altering community field structure in a positive way," where "positive" refers to the subjective notion of improvement.

The first area pertains to theoretical perspectives on structure, which is related to the concept of agency or capacity building, and is known as *structural functionalism*: "According to this theoretical framework, societies contain certain interdependent structures, each of which performs certain functions for the maintenance of society." Structures (i.e., organizations and institutions) form the basis of the social system, but generally work toward their own interests. Understanding of structures in a community, their interrelationships, and how they may change or maintain the status quo can be of considerable use to practitioners.

The second area outlined by Hustedde and Ganowicz has to do with the role of power and conflict in communities, that is, who controls or has access to resources: "If community development is about building capacity, then concerns about power are pivotal." Practitioners must be aware of the distribution of power within a community, because very often their work involves actions geared toward challenge to the status quo and shifting of power in communities. According to Hustedde and Ganowicz, because power is never evenly distributed across social categories, conflict theory is an essential component of this perspective, where conflict is viewed as a necessary part of social life.

The third key theoretical perspective outlined by Hustedde and Ganowicz is symbolic interactionism, which has to do with the construction and maintenance of shared meaning through interaction and language: "If community development is about

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Gaventa (1980)

Gaventa's work on power and participation is revealing of the extent to which a theoretical perspective may be employed to explain aspects of human behavior. In this case, Gaventa's theory of power explains the apathy, quiescence, and nonparticipation of disenfranchised groups in the face of severe inequities in an Appalachian community: "In this view, then, apparent inaction within the political process by deprived groups may be related to power, which in turn is revealed in participation and nonparticipation, upon issues and non-issues, which arise or are prevented from arising in decision-making arenas." Gaventa notes the interrelationship of participation and political awareness and explains the emergence of dissent or even rebellion as the process by which relationships of power are altered.

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building or strengthening solidarity, then practitioners must be concerned about the meaning that people give to place, people, and events." Above all, community capacity building involves altering people's perceptions about who they are and what they are

capable of achieving. Symbolic interactionism may benefit practitioners by helping them to understand how shared meaning is constructed in communities, and how to challenge, criticize, or modify those meanings.

The three theoretical perspectives identified by Hustedde and Ganowicz are not mutually exclusive, and fruitful research and conceptual frameworks have development at the intersection of these areas. For example, linking Wilkinson's interactional perspective with community power research and interorganizational network analysis (Aiken 1970; Galaskiewicz 1979; Knoke 1990; Laumann and Pappi 1976), Sharp (2001) conducted research that aimed to measure and evaluate the community field in three communities and relate this to the community's structures and capacity for local action. His approach involved analysis of the networks among community actors and associations and was based on the belief that a community field consists of interaction between diverse social fields that "facilitates communitywide awareness of local concerns and enhances the flow of information and/or financial resources." Further, Sharp assumed that the ability to manage and direct resources and action is influenced by the possession of authority or power on the part of one or more elements of the networks within the community field.

Sharp (2001)

Following work by Walton (1970) and Aiken (1970), Sharp identified different types of possible power structures within communities that form a continuum from centralized (pyramidal and factional) to decentralized (coalitional and amorphous) power structures. In the pyramidal structure, power is concentrated in the hands of a single, cohesive group of leaders. In a factional structure, two or more factions compete for power within a community. In a coalitional structure, actors and associations work together in fluid coalitions where power is not strongly concentrated. In an amorphous structure, power is diffuse, with little coalition building or centralization of leadership. Sharp hypothesized that the pyramidal and coalitional power structures would be more likely to support a community field than the factional and amorphous structures. Pyramidal power structures would support the community field as long as the centralized leadership was used to direct resources toward common goals of the community. Coalitional structures could be effective providing that there were dense network linkages across diverse social fields. On the other hand, factional structures would be less likely to unite toward the common interests of the community, whereas amorphous structures would not be able to garner the ties across social fields necessary to "facilitate the flow of information and resources that define a community field."

Sharp's analysis of networks and power structures of three rural Midwestern communities reveals that indeed communities with pyramidal and coalitional structures had community fields. He concludes by suggesting ways in which such a theoretical framework may have implications for rural community research and community development practice. He suggests that an understanding of the kinds of power structures within a community "could help citizens and leaders to understand the organization (or lack of organization) of their community, to recognize how resources and information flow within the community, to determine who does and does not have access to these resources and this information, and to identify attributes of the local structure that enhance general capacity for local action."

Other works have explored the relationship between networks, power, and capacity for local action in communities. For example, Beaulieu and Ryan (1984) found a strong positive correlation between the position of individuals (leaders) in hierarchical power networks within communities and their position in hierarchical action networks that promote community development. Flora (1998) and Flora and Flora (1993) develop a model called *entrepreneurial social infrastructure*, which applies features of social capital theory (Putnam 1993; Coleman 1993) and emphasizes the role of diverse, inclusive, and flexible networks, legitimization of alternatives and conflict, and mobilization of a wide range of resources.

Community Capacity Building and Community Development in Practice

Within the camp of practitioners, there is a growing body of literature that documents and advocates effective practices in community development work. This section discusses management of community-building projects from both local and global points of view.

Best Practices and Guiding Principles. Practitioners have compiled and published sets of best practices and guiding principles for successful projects and programs. Authors of these lessons learned note that every community is different, and that developers may find some guidelines more realistic, relevant, or feasible than others, depending on the local context. These publications suggest underlying key features of successful capacity-building efforts. First, successful community capacity-building endeavors are grounded in community goals or a common vision that is established by a widely representative segment of the population. Second, successful projects (i.e., those that succeed in building capacity) involve effective ways to enlist, educate, and motivate all community members to act toward those common goals. Third, successful projects create new links and networks across organizations and individuals within communities. Fourth, successful projects are realistic as well as idealistic, pragmatic as well as visionary. Fifth, they emphasize bottom-up, grassroots initiatives, with focus on developing latent potential and undeveloped resources (human and natural) from within the community.

The Rocky Mountain Institute's review of community development efforts revealed 10 ingredients of "smart and sustainable governance":

- Establish genuine collaboration among leaders of all community sectors and people from all walks of life.

- Develop and publicize a community goals or vision statement that sets forth economic, environmental, and community goals.

- Develop and publish indicators of progress toward each of the goals in the vision statement.

- Develop and adopt decision-making tools and methods.

- Take action: choose projects and programs that actively strengthen the local economy, nurture the community, and restore the environment.

- Foster community entrepreneurship.

- Organize a business network.

- Establish a community sustainability plan.

- Employ continuous learning: Revisit major decisions and actions at predetermined dates following implementation.

- Foster leadership and civic capacity.

Howe and Cleary (2001) identified five key factors of success from their review of effective initiatives occurring across varied communities and circumstances:

- Capacity building, focusing on education and the development of human and social capital and increased connectedness.

- A linked approach, involving coordination across government portfolios, partnerships between spheres of government (local, state, and commonwealth), and partner-ships between government, business, community, and philanthropic sectors.

- An emphasis on local democracy, whereby bottom-up initiatives take priority over solutions imposed from outside, and the importance of local identity, leadership, knowledge, and management are recognized as critical components.

- Flexible approaches that take regard of the multifaceted nature of the problems that face particular communities and emphasize the importance of continuous reflection and development.

- An emphasis on sustainable strategies rather than one-off projects, and (strategies which recognize the ongoing interdependency of social, economic, and environmental connectedness.

Hart (1999) outlined some common features of sustainable community projects:

- Including diversity—People from all walks of life should be represented and included as participants. Aspects of this guideline include diverse leadership, effective outreach, and respect for all participants.

- Leadership—Effective leadership is broad-based and inclusive of a cross-section of viewpoints in the community. Organizations that initiate and lead community change should have the resources necessary to be effective.

- Outreach—Announcements about community meetings should be made in as many different ways as possible.

- Respect for all participants—General guidelines should be developed that ensure that everyone is treated with respect and that all viewpoints are allowed to be expressed.

- Format—Community meetings should be held at convenient times and places, and should be conducted in a way that attracts and promotes participation.

Needs-Based Versus Assets-Based Approaches. Besides taking into account best practices for designing and implementing community capacity projects, agencies and organizations that promote community development must consider more global, programmatic issues that have to do with alternative approaches to addressing community-level problems.

According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), there are two main approaches to community development that have been and continue to be employed in community-building enterprises. The first focuses on identifying and treating the needs, deficiencies, and problems of communities. In this more commonly employed approach, public, private, and nonprofit human service systems provide programs with local activities that "teach people the nature and extent of their problems, and the value of services as the answer to their problems." The needs-based approach is closely aligned with so-called "top-down" community work, usually adopted and funded by local and central government agencies, a major theme of which is "to integrate individuals and groups into mainstream society and to make services and resources more sensitive to their needs, usually in running and organizing the projects" (Popple and Quinney 2002).

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that this provision of services may create a culture of dependence, where people in the community may begin to view themselves as deficient and powerless to change. In addition, institutions that play a role in community development (i.e., governmental agencies, foundations, research institutions) focus their efforts on the needs and problems of communities, which can result in "a wall between lower income communities and the rest of society—a wall of needs which, ironically enough, is built not on hatred but (at least partly) on the desire to 'help.'"

The needs-based approach may have other negative consequences. First, it may lead to a breakdown of a community's own problem-solving capabilities. Second, resources based on needs direct funding to service providers rather than residents. Third, this approach may have negative consequences for local leadership, which must attract resources by calling attention to the deficiencies of their communities. Fourth, it may cultivate relationships between community residents and external agencies, rather than between community members themselves, and thus contributes to the continued fragmentation of communities. Fifth, it makes continued funding dependant on continued failure. Sixth, the needs-based approach involves treating isolated individual clients, rather than developing a plan that is comprehensive in scope and involves the energies of whole communities. Finally, needs-based approaches aim at best for survival, rather than comprehensive long-term improvement and self-sufficiency.

According to Kretzmann and McKnight, an alternative approach that is assets-based recognizes the potential negative consequences of the focus on the needs and problems of communities, and instead emphasizes a community's assets and untapped resources: "The key to neighborhood regeneration, then, is to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes." Such work often begins with a "map" of community assets,[12] including description of the skills of residents, and inventory of community associations and formal institutions (i.e., private businesses, schools, libraries, parks, nonprofit institutions such as hospitals, and social service agencies). The next step, more difficult than a simple inventory of assets, is enlisting and mobilizing individuals, local associations, and institutions in the community-building enterprise.

Clearly, community capacity building, as described in this chapter, is soundly located within the assets-based camp. The features that these approaches have in common are the focus on planning, problem-solving, strengths, resources, and potential; mobilization of community members toward common goals; and an internal concentration, rather than a reliance on external assistance. Although external forces should remain significant contributors to community development, assets-based approaches give primacy to community self-definition, self-determination, and self-control.[13] Further, the work of Kretzmann and McKnight is heavily cited in the community capacity-building literature.[14]

A Framework For This Evaluation

This evaluation takes into consideration issues of accountability for Federal programs, as directed by the President's Management Agenda (PMA), as well as issues related specifically to the evaluation of community capacity-building programs.

In August 2001, the President announced an agenda for reforming the management of the government and improving the performance of federal programs. The President's Management Agenda consists of five government-wide initiatives and nine program-specific initiatives. Included in the former is the Budget and Performance Integration initiative, which further refines GPRA requirements by aiming to enhance the quality of information on program results so that government can make better decisions about its allocation of resources. This particular initiative "stresses making budget decisions based on results."

The link between budget and performance was recently formalized with the development of a new instrument for assessing government programs at the federal level. The Program

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[12]Frank and Smith (1999) list the following community assets: human assets and liabilities; environmental resources; economic opportunities and limitations; cultural and recreational facilities, programs, and services; financial, political, and security systems; infrastructure in existence and needed; and communication processes.

[13]Moore (2003) noted that "practitioners were cautious about 'top-down' directives from government or other agencies engaged in promoting change within the community. Loss of local control was cited as a critical concern by practitioners, and loss often influenced community decision-making."

[14]For example, in her review of the underpinnings of community capacity building work, Hounslow (2002) notes that "the assets approach challenges the paternalism inherent in many public policies and programs and in the ways that 'professionals' often work with communities."

Assessment Rating Tool (PART) "evaluates a program's purpose and design, planning, management, and results and accountability to determine its overall effectiveness." The PART intends to determine the strengths and weaknesses of individual programs with a focus specifically on the results they produce. Its overall purpose is "to lay the groundwork for evidence-based funding decisions aimed at achieving positive results."

Craig (2002) notes that recent years have seen an expansion of interest in the evaluation of community development work and that the move toward evaluation has been driven by several factors. First, since much of the community development work conducted in advanced economies is funded from public taxation, there is concern that programs be accountable and justified, and that they meet their stated objectives. Second, evaluation of community development work may be done to improve practice.

> **Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)**
>
> In the PART, strengths and weaknesses of programs are determined primarily through the use of 30 questions, which comprise the tool itself and consist of items that are applicable to all programs as well as ones that are tailored to a particular type of program. Items are divided into four sections, the first three of which focus on the program purpose, strategic planning, and management. The fourth section focuses on results and, more specifically, pertains to the extent of achievement of program goals. The results obtained in the PART culminate in a rating and accompanying performance summary for each program, which, in turn, provide important information to policymakers and other stakeholders as to how and where to improve programs and how to allocate government resources.
>
> Like the President's Management Agenda, the PART represents a new effort at improving government accountability; therefore, important lessons regarding how to improve the tool are still being learned. Although modifications to the PART are ongoing, the fundamental purpose of the tool—making budget decisions based on results—remains the same.

Wilkinson (1972) emphasized the importance of evaluation of community development work, although his discussion took place before the era where demonstrating accountability was a primary focus of evaluation: "The relationship between purposive action and actual outcomes can, however, be measured with some accuracy through carefully designed research. Through such research it may be possible to develop more realistic strategies of purposive change and more valid criteria for evaluating programs."

The significance of evaluation of community development work was noted as early as 1965 by Biddle and Biddle (1965), who emphasized the importance of considering such work within the context of local values: "No scientist (social or any other kind), when he takes part in development, can be content with description only. He must approve actions and evaluate results in the light of some scheme of values towards the attainment of which the development is directed."

Baker and Teaser-Polk (1998) note that the work of researchers (namely, Goodman et al. 1998) takes an important step toward measuring community capacity by identifying its main dimensions. They note further that "the next step is to create a dialogue about these dimensions and appropriate measurement strategies not only among experts in the field but also among community members and outsiders who engage with communities to create healthful changes." This section and later chapters in this report aim to contribute to this dialogue on measurement and evaluation of community development and community capacity-building programs and projects. As suggested by Baker and Teaser-Polk, Biddle and Biddle, Craig, and others (see, for example, Connell and Kubisch 1998), the framework developed here takes into account the perspectives of stakeholders, local context and community values, and the role of process in community development work.

Craig (2002) offers a variety of important insights that should be considered when developing evaluation frameworks of community development (what he calls "empowerment") programs. Several of these are noted here for their relevance to the evaluation of ARC's community capacity-building projects. First, an evaluation framework must acknowledge that the impacts of interventions may take time to manifest themselves, although governments often seek quick results: "This pressure causes a particular tension for community development-oriented work that necessarily works at a slower pace than frequently is available to the political process."

Second, evaluations more often than not end up demonstrating the complexity of programs, rather than clear success or failure. Evaluation should aim to unveil the complexity of local community dynamics and how this influences program or project outcomes. Third, evaluators and social scientists are not neutral observers and must make their own perspectives clear during the course of the evaluation: "Nowhere is this perhaps more important than in the evaluation of community development with its contested goals and need for coalitions between workers and local activists." Finally, evaluation is nearly always about questions of value and judgment: "Evaluation has to ask, 'Whose assessment of the work is valued, and why and how is that value measured?'" The evaluation framework presented in the remainder of this section and developed further in chapters 3 through 7 incorporates each of these points.

Due to the complex and dynamic nature of community work, Craig (2002) argues that the goals of community development evaluation should be realistic and modest, and should involve an engagement between the evaluator, the local community, and its organizers. He further argues that outcomes must be the heart of measurement within an evaluation of community development work (rather than outputs), and that realistic, measurable, and meaningful outcomes should provide the basis for ongoing monitoring:

> The key issue facing evaluation now, and this is particularly relevant to areas of work such as community development that seek qualitative improvements in people's lives, is therefore perhaps best expressed thus: to make the important measurable, rather than (as is too often the case with the focus on performance indicators) to make the measurable important. p134

The approach to assessing project achievement and impact adopted in the current evaluation of ARC's community capacity-building projects involves balancing analytic tools with distinct qualitative and quantitative emphases. Craig (2002) argues that the complexity, fluidity, and value-laden nature of community development work requires that evaluation take into consideration a range of perspectives and multiple sources of data. He points out that mechanistic, purely quantitative approaches to performance measurement of community development work are limited and should be supplemented with qualitative analysis: "…the most important issue here is to recognize that quantitative and qualitative data are not in competition…. Critically, some quantitative data cannot be used without qualitative data supplementing it to give a more rounded picture…." Further, Craig notes that qualitative assessment can provide greater insight into the how and why of change in order to be able to transfer experience to other situations and ensure sustainability over time.[15]

Along similar lines, Dixon (1995) advocates evaluation of community development work that gives primacy to community values and internal ethnographic understanding of

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[15] He notes that for this reason, case studies are usually the best approach for evaluating community development.

community dynamics. She proposes a two-pronged approach to evaluating community development projects. The first is a "community story" approach, which involves a narrative self-evaluation told primarily from the insiders' perspective—those in the community directly involved in development work. The second is a traditional performance measurement model (with indicators, outcomes, etc.), but one with indicators and measures developed in consultation with community members, "to represent a negotiated agreement of all the stakeholders."

The analyses of project accomplishments and impact reported in chapters 5 and 6 of this report employ elements of the recommendations of Craig and Dixon. First, analyses are based on qualitative and quantitative data. Second, the qualitative findings are informed in large part by the "insiders'" perspective, as gleaned in case study and telephone interviews. Within this framework, chapter 5 presents the qualitative findings on accomplishments and impact, whereas chapter 6 examines project achievement within the context of ARC's performance measurement system.

A Logic Model for Community Capacity-Building Projects

Two primary purposes of this evaluation are to assess factors associated with successful capacity-building projects and to recommend a range of performance measures that can be used to document the impact of successful initiatives. The latter purpose arose from ARC's recognition of its need to enhance its performance measurement system:

> Since the inception of the [community capacity-building] initiative, the Commission, state program managers, grantees and the convening organizations have all struggled with how to measure performance outputs and outcomes. State program managers, grantees and Commission staff focused on articulating results for each project, but translating these results into a common metric proved daunting. (*ARC Request for Proposals, 2002*)

To assist in arriving at such a "common metric," Westat developed a logic model representing the interrelated features of community capacity-building projects. As is illustrated throughout this report, this logic model serves as the working framework for this evaluation of ARC's community capacity-building projects. In addition, it has an applied purpose in that it is intended to serve as a tool for informing the design of future projects (see chapter 7).

Logic models may also inform program and project design, and assist managers and project organizers in shaping projects that may later give evidence of results. With respect to community development, Craig (2002) suggests that local people be engaged in identifying goals and needs and selecting measures of success or effectiveness. This might be done by offering them menus that "can help communities identify measures that might be regarded as of most importance, to construct others, and to be alive to the possibilities of differing priorities." As will be shown, the logic model is ideally suited for the sorts of menus advocated by Craig.

Exhibit 2-1 presents a logic model based on our review of the literature on community development and capacity-building projects,[16] as well as on data from the 100 ARC-funded community capacity-building projects included in this study.

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[16] Most notably, the work carried out by the Aspen Institute, the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, and Maureen Hart, author of *Sustainable Community Indicators* (1999).

Exhibit 2-1
Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

```
                                        ( + )

        Assets                  Develop Vision
                                & Direction
                                for the             Individual        Economic
                                Community           Capacity

Project        Resources        Promote
Purpose                         Involvement of
                                Community
                                Members         Organizational     Environmental
                                                Capacity
                                Enhance Skills
                                & Knowledge
                                of Community
                                Members
                                                Community          Social
        Liabilities             Obtain          Capacity
                                Technical
                                Support for the
                                Community

                                        ( - )
```
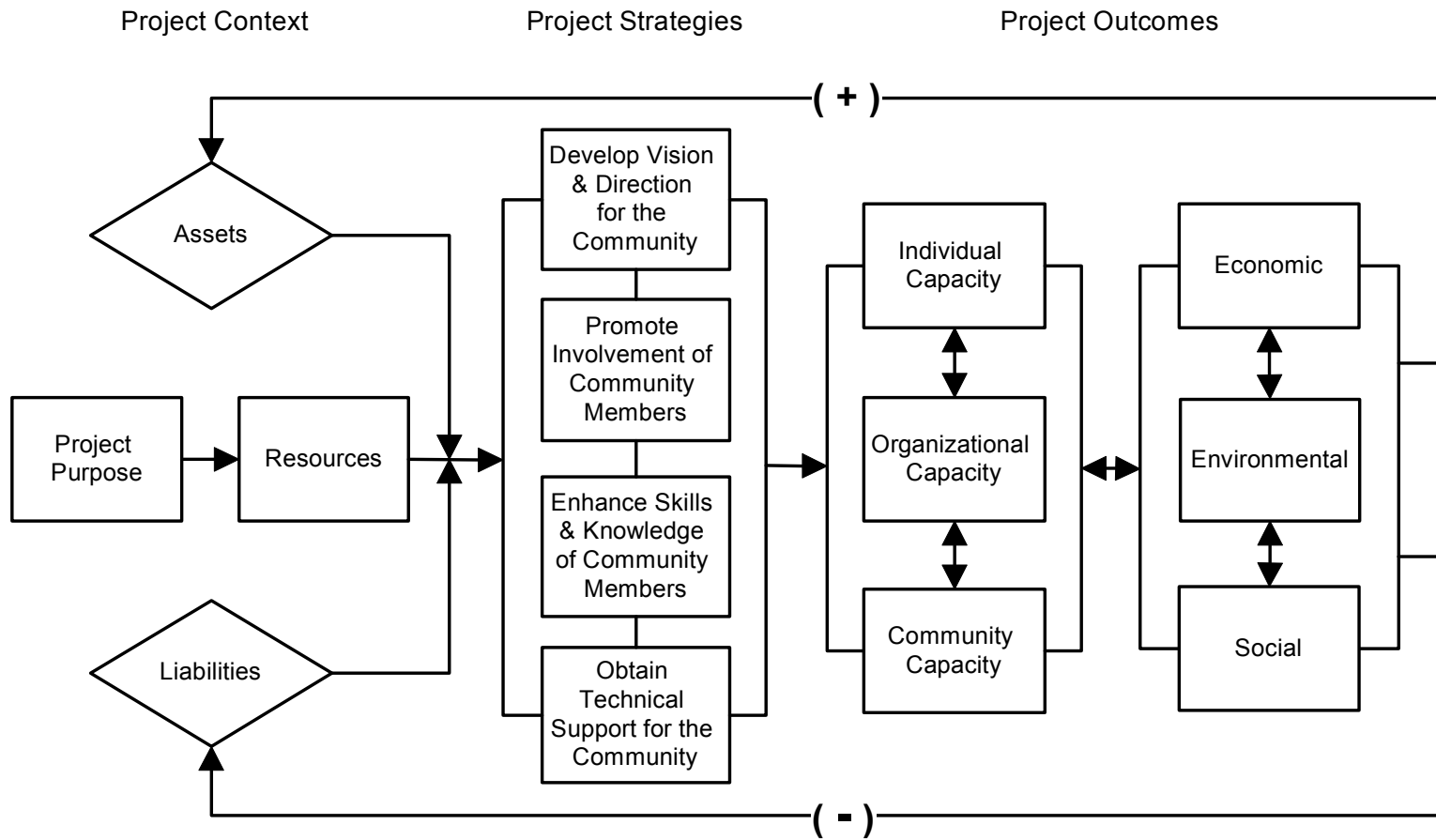
Although the logic model in exhibit 2-1 can accommodate a wide range of community capacity-building projects, it was designed specifically for the ARC capacity-building program. As such, it represents the various components of ARC's community capacity-building projects and the relationships between those components—i.e., project purpose, contextual factors (assets, liabilities, and resources), project strategies/activities, and outcomes (including capacity and development outcomes) (see exhibit 2-2). It should be noted that Exhibit 2-1 shows only the first layer of the logic model. Each of the boxes within Exhibit 2-1 includes further structural detail (see appendix A) that will be revealed and discussed throughout the report.

Exhibit 2-2
Logic Model Components

RESOURCES	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
Resources are the inputs (e.g., financial; organizational; material; personnel) that a project may rely on to conduct activities.	Contextual factors refer to the community assets and liabilities that can affect the implementation and/or impact of a project.	Activities are what a project does with their resources to bring about changes or results.	Outcomes are what a project hopes to accomplish or change in their community as a result of project activities.

The ARC Community Capacity Logic Model is a visual representation of the **resources** a project has for design and implementation, the **contextual factors** that can affect the implementation and/or impact a project, the **activities** that are planned, and the **outcomes** the staff hopes to achieve.

Logic models traditionally depict a process that flows from left to right—from resources to outcomes. For some projects, it may be useful to reverse this flow. Sometimes projects find it more useful to "work backwards," starting with identifying anticipated outcomes and then determining the activities and resources that will be needed to achieve these outcomes.

Summary

This chapter attempted to define and delineate community capacity building and to portray issues in the field as they relate to the current evaluation. We have aimed to make explicit some of our assumptions about methods of evaluation, given the complexity and subjective elements of the community capacity-building enterprise. The themes and concepts addressed in this chapter are interwoven throughout this report and help provide the tools for evaluation and interpretation of ARC's community capacity-building projects. In addition, these themes and concepts are embodied in the logic model, which serves as a framework or heuristic device for this evaluation and report. Chapter 3 on project context corresponds to the leftmost components of the logic model (project goals, assets, liabilities, and resources). Chapter 4 on project activities and implementation relate to the next components of the logic model having to do with project strategies and activities. Chapters 5 and 6 address project achievements, outcomes, and performance measurement, which correspond to the two outcome component levels of the logic model. The details and *logic* of the logic model and its components will be addressed in each of these respective chapters. The final chapter will argue for the logic model as a potentially valuable tool for project design and evaluation.

P<u>roject</u> **C**<u>ontext</u>

All capacity-building projects are embedded in particular communities, and as such must navigate unique contexts, factoring in interrelated sets of specific aims, assets, liabilities, and resources (see exhibit 3-1). This chapter portrays the various contexts within which 100 capacity-building projects funded by ARC were implemented, including project goals in relation to community and grant recipient characteristics, community assets, liabilities, and available resources. Information about projects was drawn from the document review, as well as from findings from the site visits and telephone interviews. While this chapter begins to detail some of the contextual factors in communities, more extensive analyses of the complex interaction among these factors and their impact on project success are provided in later chapters.

Exhibit 3-1
Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects: *Project Context*

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

For the purposes of the ARC Community Capacity Logic Model, project context encompasses four interrelated areas that projects need to consider as they design their initiative: project purpose, resources, community assets, and community liabilities.

- **Project purpose** refers to the community conditions or issues that the project will be designed to address. The identification of project purpose drives the rest of the project.

- **Resources** refers to the inputs (e.g., financial, organizational, material, personnel) that a project may rely on to conduct activities. Resources (e.g., funding, technical assistance, materials) may come from within (e.g., community members, local businesses) or outside (e.g., federal government, nonprofit organizations) of the community.

- **Community assets** help to facilitate change and can enhance a community's ability to implement its approach and achieve its outcomes. Examples of community assets include community organizations, innovative leaders, "sparkplugs," energized citizens, and partnerships.

- **Community liabilities** can inhibit community change and a project's ability to implement activities and/or achieve desired outcomes. Examples of community liabilities include an entrenched political structure, a lack of empowerment, a fear of change, apathy, distrust, and limited resources.

Assets and liabilities are unique to each community, and as the logic model demonstrates, communities should move in the direction of maximizing assets while minimizing liabilities.

Project Purpose

The most common goals reported by the 100 grant recipients in the study were developing or expanding the pool of potential community leaders, reducing the community's sense of isolation, preserving natural resources, fulfilling or improving municipal services, providing previously unavailable opportunities to local youth, and improving the economic health of their communities. Some projects reported interrelated goals. For example, projects geared toward youth were often described as an attempt to stem the exodus of young people from the community, with the community's long-term economic health in mind.

A few projects cited other less common goals. For example, the Aliceville Museum and Cultural Arts Museum grantee cited the revitalization of their downtown as the driving force behind their project. They chose to renovate and expand the local history museum in an effort to draw new business to the area, increase tourism, and provide residents with a place to honor their shared history. The Susquehanna Economic Development Association-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) New Neighborhoods Project cited neighborhood revitalization and assumed a technical assistance role to support the Lewistown Monument Square Development Plan and the Sunbury City Visions Project. Both of these community projects sought to revitalize neighborhoods by organizing effective community action; cultivating leaders with the requisite skills for development; helping community members envision the future of the neighborhood and plan strategically to achieve that future; instituting neighborhood improvement organizations; and developing appropriate programs, projects, and services to facilitate neighborhood reinvestments and development.

Other projects addressed common community issues but targeted less conventional participants. The West Virginia Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Leadership/ Management Skills Training Project provided leadership training to local EMS agency representatives throughout the state. The grant recipient explained that EMS agencies in West Virginia are largely volunteer organizations, and their staff often lacks the leadership and management skills needed to navigate an EMS environment that has become increasingly business-oriented. The program was developed to provide the necessary skills of leadership and management to the targeted group of participants.

Community Characteristics

Many of the communities in this study faced a common set of challenges: geographic isolation, persistent poverty, unemployment, and declining population, often attributed to young people moving away for educational and employment opportunities that do not exist in their home communities. Other problems mentioned by grant recipients include drug trafficking and addiction, teen pregnancy, and high rates of high school dropouts.

Although there may be a misperception that Appalachia is one homogeneous, coherent region, the diversity of the communities in this study is reflected in the various, often innovative, approaches they employed to solve community problems, the range of

CONTEXT:
NEW OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL FOR WOMEN

The idea for the New Opportunity School for Women came about when a request *for* help reached a woman in search of a way *to* help. When Jane Stephenson's friend, author Gurney Norman, approached her about a woman he knew who was newly divorced, had little money and no job skills, the wheels in her head began to turn. A well-timed call from the Educational Foundation of America to her husband and then-president of Berea College, John Stephenson, about possible projects in the community that might be worthy of outside funding led to a proposal. Not long after, the New Opportunity School for Women was born.

The situation of this woman in need of help is not unique. Many of the women in the region face poverty, limited educational and employment opportunities, low self-esteem, and the stigma attached to low-income Appalachian women. Some also struggle with domestic abuse, homelessness, and depression. The New Opportunity School stepped in to fill a void that existed in south central Kentucky, and that exists in communities nationwide. This was made sadly apparent when the New Opportunity School, after receiving one of Oprah Winfrey's "Use Your Life Awards" on national television, was flooded by letters from women across the country who didn't know where else to turn.

The school's mission is "to improve the educational, financial, and personal circumstances of low-income, middle-aged women in Kentucky and the south central Appalachian region." Toward this end, the school relies on a wide variety of resources to run its residential program and year-round services. It has close ties to Berea College, a unique educational institution that provides a free liberal arts education to low-income students and has a strong commitment to service learning. The New Opportunity School relies on local businesses to support the internship component of the residential program from which the women gain employment skills, recent work experience, and employer recommendations. The staff is also vigilant about identifying grant opportunities. The ARC funding, in particular, was crucial to their ability to extend leadership development efforts to women in eight distressed counties in the region. Of course, the sheer dedication of the small staff and the volunteers, many of whom are graduates of the school, is vital.

There are also numerous cultural barriers to women in the region who are seeking to improve their lives. The staff described mothers who admonish their daughters for wanting to attend the school, telling them that "you're getting above your raising." They also recounted husbands who felt insecure about their wives leaving home, returning to school, and finding a job. Some women have been told by their husbands, "You're not going. If you do, I won't be here when you get back." Many of these women have been taught not to set their aspirations too high. Moreover, their families, which rely on them so heavily, can be threatened when the women learn new skills, develop new interests, build their self-esteem, and assume leadership roles in the community.

The school's success is rooted in their ability to draw upon community assets including strong leaders (most notably Mrs. Stephenson and the school's Board of Directors) who have guided the success of the school, other organizations in the community with whom they've been able to establish beneficial ties and rely upon to support the school's activities and the women's progress (for example, Berea College), and the community's involvement and commitment to the school over 17 years.

community assets they brought to bear on the issues, and the challenges they faced in the process. Each community had its own combination of assets and liabilities.[17]

Community Liabilities

The site visits and telephone interviews indicated that communities faced a variety of limitations or obstacles as they embarked on their capacity-building and community development work, such as the local political structure, lack of empowerment, fear of change, and limited resources.

For several projects, the structure of the local political system fueled negative attitudes about the legitimacy of local decisionmaking and community members' ability to be a part of the political process. Corruption was an extreme example; more common was an implicit understanding among the community at large that access to the decision-making process through political avenues was reserved for a select, powerful few. More commonly cited as a liability during the site visits were "negative norms," which suppressed community involvement and civic engagement, including a general fear of change or resistance to it, passivity, and apathy. Some of these communities had seen similar projects promise to bring forth change, only to conclude with disappointing results or fail outright. As a result, some communities display a certain level of distrust and suspicion about project intentions and efforts.

One grant recipient described people in the distressed counties of his project as "distressed in their attitudes." This was echoed in sentiments expressed by other grant recipients. Grant recipients talked about participants who feel they don't deserve better than what they have, or if they do feel they deserve better, that there is nothing they can do to change things. Sometimes attitudes expressed by others in the community work to repress participation in project activities. For example, one grant recipient described participants being shamed into not seeking out better opportunities through the project, who are told by their families, "You're getting above your raising."

Another pervasive problem for the communities in the study was limited resources, most notably funding, but also including nonmaterial resources such as technical expertise and available staff. Even communities that did have resources that could be marshaled in the drive for change did not necessarily maintain a formal mechanism through which such resources could be distributed efficiently and effectively.

Community Assets

As discussed in chapter 2, community capacity building has at its core an assets-based approach to community development, emphasizing the identification and mobilization of community resources toward shared goals. Community organizations, innovative

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[17]In previous evaluations of ARC programs, Westat conducted mail or telephone surveys that provided quantitative data on project communities such as metropolitan status, economic status, and the characteristics of the intended beneficiaries. In the evaluation of ARC-funded capacity-building projects, telephone interviews were used instead, in conjunction with site visits, to gather more in-depth knowledge of project activities, implementation, and outcomes. As a result, quantitative data about community characteristics are not available for the 100 projects in the study sample; rather, information about project communities is drawn from the site visits and telephone interviews.

leaders, concerned citizens, and natural resources are just a few examples of community assets that can be directed toward community improvement efforts. In particular, the importance of community organizations via collaboration, innovative leaders, and concerned citizens willing to get involved in community projects was a prevalent theme echoed throughout the telephone interviews and site visits.

Collaboration among community organizations is effective for its cost efficiency; the range of experience, expertise, and opinions it brings to the table; and, under the best circumstances, the forum it creates for a vibrant exchange of diverse ideas. Distributing responsibilities and costs across organizations that share an investment in the project's success can also add stability and enthusiasm to the life of a project. Members of Hurley Community Development, which led an environmental cleanup effort in Southwest Virginia, had never heard of ARC until they began working with People, Inc., a local community action agency that brought community members together to start Hurley Community Development. Their connection to another community organization proved to be a key starting point for action.

Numerous grant recipients also indicated that having the right leader, with the ability to motivate others, was extremely important, especially during the initial stages of the project. As one grant recipient stated, having a "sparkplug" person to get the project started ultimately made an enormous difference to their project. A strong leader can play an influential role in cultivating the interest and personal investment of community members in the project. Community involvement is essential, whether community members are involved as project staff, volunteers, or beneficiaries. Several grant recipients referred specifically to Americorps' Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a national program that recruits individuals for community service across the country. More frequently, grant recipients emphasized the importance of volunteers drawn from the very communities the project was created to serve.

Another positive force for change is the social capital among small, tight-knit communities. Putnam (1993) defined social capital as the "features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." Several grant recipients attested to the fact that working in communities where everyone knows everyone else facilitated project work. For example, publicizing the project can be easier, with word of mouth often noted as an effective way of promoting community participation. Moreover, there often exists a sense of obligation and trust among community members that share a long history and close relationships with one another.

Resources

Resources are the financial, organizational, and human inputs that communities rely on to conduct project activities. Resources can include funding, ideas, expertise and technical assistance, time, materials, technology and equipment, and staff, among others. Grant recipients who participated in the telephone interviews and site visits often stated that they took advantage of existing resources in the community to facilitate project activities. The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, for example, was created to provide a formal mechanism to build philanthropic assets in the 29 counties that compose Appalachian Ohio. The Foundation promotes collaboration among community organizations in the

region and serves as a neutral convenor in an attempt to demonstrate to local projects how they can use the resources they have more efficiently by becoming aware of resources already available in the community and developing collaborative relationships. The Foundation itself is working with the Ohio University Extension Service, an educational network in the state, to integrate elements of its mission into the workshops convened by the Extension Service.

Extension Services were cited by several projects as a valuable resource. The Spark Community Leadership Program, which sought to improve the environmental quality of the Chattahoochee River basin and develop youth leadership skills, worked through the Heard County Extension Service because of its ongoing presence in the schools and its expertise in leadership instruction. The West Virginia University Extension Service provided technical assistance to the Big Ugly Family Education project, which was designed to provide education programs for youth and families in underserved, typically isolated, communities. These three examples show how the use of a similar resource was strategically tailored to fit the particular needs of a project or community.

Other grant recipients provided similar examples of how resources, both financial and non-financial, can be used creatively and strategically. The New Opportunity School for Women relies on businesses in the community to provide unpaid internship opportunities to the school's participants. The women receive valuable work experience as well as a current professional reference that they can use on their resumes. School staff members said that very rarely has a business owner turned down their request for an internship, and some internships have led directly to employment. Project Jump Start turned to local tradesman in the community to serve as mentors for summer internships. As a result, the students learned a skilled trade, the tradesman benefited from the employment services of the students and a greater pool of skilled workers from which to hire, and the community addressed a shortage of skilled workers in particular fields.

ARC Funding

Funding, of course, is one of the most critical and talked about resources. The document review provided data on ARC's financial inputs to capacity-building projects, specifically grant amounts and funding by state. Projects included in this review were funded from 1995 through 2004. During this period, the 100 projects were funded for a total of roughly $7 million in ARC grants.

Projects varied considerably in the amount of ARC funding they received (table 3-1). The wide range of funding, from a low of $1,137 for a recycling program in Georgia, to a high of $335,000 for the West Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program, suggests the breadth of activities in ARC-funded capacity-building projects, and also reflects different funding strategies used by ARC to foster capacity building in Appalachia. For example, ARC's Flex-E-Grant program provides states with a pool of money to be distributed as smaller minigrants of $10,000 or less for short-term capacity-building projects. In addition to the West Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program, the sample includes three programs: the Virginia Enhanced Distressed Counties Flex-E-Grant Program, the Alabama Flex-E-Grant Program, and Mississippi's Flex-E-Grant Program for Distressed Counties. As a result, one seemingly large grant actually comprises many smaller grants, which are funneled to community-based organizations.

Table 3-1
Number of projects by ARC funding amounts and matching funds

Funding level	Number
ARC funding amount	
$50,000 or less	53
$50,001 - $100,000	24
$100,001-$200,000	18
$200,001 or more	5
Matching funds	
$50,000 or less	67
$50,001 - $100,000	17
$100,001-$200,000	10
$200,001 or more	6

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

The median grant amount for ARC's community capacity-building projects was $50,000.[18] The majority of projects received grants of $50,000 or less (53 percent), while 24 percent received grants between $50,001 to $100,000, 18 percent received grants between $100,001 and $200,000, and 5 percent received more than $200,001.

Through the telephone interviews and site visits, it was clear that ARC funding was a strong determinant in project implementation. Most of the grant recipients indicated that while their projects would have been conducted on some level without ARC-funding, the projects would have taken much longer to be implemented and been scaled down considerably. Meanwhile, several grant recipients stated unequivocally that their projects would not have existed at all without ARC funding. The grant recipient for the Southwest North Carolina Distressed Counties Scattered Site Housing, which used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) hardware and software to survey land in two counties as the first step in developing a comprehensive program to address affordable housing shortages in both counties, stated that there was not enough money locally for GIS mapping, nor was there much money from private foundations for projects that center around this relatively new technology. The grant recipient for the Elkhorn Watershed Association Project, through which the Watershed Association was created, also stated that without ARC funding, the project would not have had the initial funding necessary to get off the ground.

ARC funding was distributed across the 13 states of Appalachia, with a greater concentration of capacity-building projects in a select number of states.[19] Forty-six percent of the projects were in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Alabama. Kentucky had the greatest number of ARC-funded capacity-building projects with 19, with West Virginia and Alabama following closely with 15 and 12 projects, respectively.

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[18] Because many of the larger grants are awarded as Flex-E-Grants, to be distributed as smaller minigrants, the median, rather than the mean, is reported here to reflect this funding strategy.

[19] Only South Carolina was not represented in the project sample.

Table 3-2
Number of projects, by state

State	Number of projects
Kentucky	19
West Virginia	15
Alabama	12
Ohio	9
Pennsylvania	9
Multistate	7
New York	7
Virginia	5
North Carolina	5
Georgia	4
Mississippi	4
Tennessee	3
Maryland	1

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

CONTEXT:
HURLEY COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The small community of Hurley (population 5,261 in 1990), located in the coalfields of southwest Virginia, has been "plagued with high unemployment" and has suffered from a declining population, a polluted river, geographic isolation, and persistent poverty. Some Hurley residents are forced to leave the community in order to find work. And many of the remaining community members feel that they have been forgotten by the region's political and business leaders.

In 1995, a Hurley resident began to address some of these issues by meeting with other community members, rather informally, on a park bench in the town's only park. The purpose: to encourage residents to remain in Hurley by increasing employment opportunities in the community. This was the unofficial beginning of Hurley Community Development (HCD). As it became too cold to meet outdoors, the group of community members began holding meetings in a local office building on the edge of town. Through phone calls, flyers, and word of mouth, the organizers brought as many community members together as possible—with some resident "sparkplugs" serving as a tremendous asset to the project and community by volunteering 30-50 hours per week.

Another critical asset to the effort was a local community action agency. This agency officially brought Hurley community members together to form Hurley Community Development. In addition to helping HCD with start-up and formation, in 1997 the agency brought HCD's attention to the opportunity to participate in an ARC Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP). In fact, the members of HCD had not even heard of the ARC until this opportunity was presented to them.

Five Hurley community members attended an ACLP meeting, after which HCD was awarded $3,800 to conduct a 25-mile river and road cleanup. This decision to clean up the river reflected, in part, discussions with a local politician about the need to cleanup the river before attempting to attract outside employers into the community. HCD had also been told that the small community was lacking things industry would want (e.g., public water) to relocate to Hurley. The successful cleanup, which depended largely on the efforts of community volunteers, would be the first step to improving on the community's natural assets and reaching the larger goals of attracting employers and decreasing the out-migration of community members.

Matching Funds

Projects received approximately $5.3 million in matching funds from federal, state, local, and other sources. Most projects (67 percent) received $50,000 or less in matching funds (see table 3-1). Only 5 of the 100 projects in the document review did not report having some matching funds. Moreover, some grant recipients noted that they were able to leverage ARC funds to elicit funds from other sources, because ARC funding signals to other funding entities the value and legitimacy of a particular project to the community. The timing of funding seems to be a salient factor. As mentioned above, ARC provided the initial funding necessary to get some projects in motion. In other cases, ARC funding came at a time during the process that helped grant recipients gain other funding. The Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED), the grant recipient for the Sustainable Communities Initiative, stated that although the project would have been conducted without the ARC grant, ARC funding arrived at key times and MACED was able to use it to leverage funds from other entities.

Grant Recipient Experience and Expertise. Experience and expertise are two other resources that projects can marshal for project activities. As described above, the majority of projects received grants of $50,000 or less (53 percent), with many of those projects receiving $10,000 or less. As a result, the value of nonfinancial inputs such as staff experience and expertise should not be underestimated. Some grant recipients had extensive experience in carrying out similar projects in the past, while others' experience was limited. In some cases, the project represented an entirely new type of activity for grant recipients. In fact, a few of the grant recipients were established specifically for the purposes of conducting the project. The Leadership East Kentucky Foundation, for example, was created to implement the project of the same name. While it was established by and affiliated with the statewide Leadership Kentucky Foundation, it operated – with the exception of initial technical assistance—independently, and would not have been created otherwise.

Of the site visit grant recipients, very few described their projects as an entirely new type of project to their organizations. Many had experience in community development, but noted that the ARC grant provided them their first opportunity to develop a new leadership program or incorporate a leadership component into an existing program. For example, the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) is a community-based nonprofit organization with more than 30 years experience representing 17 community action agencies in eastern and southern Ohio. With the ARC grant, they established the Appalachian Leadership Academy, through which they provide professional development opportunities for mid-level managers employed in community action, local government, or nonprofit agencies.

Some grant recipients hired staff members with the necessary experience or collaborated with other organizations that had experience relevant to the project. COAD, for example, enlisted the assistance of the Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD) at Ohio University, given ILGARD's experience providing leadership training to government agencies and development organizations.

In addition, the majority of telephone interview and site visit projects indicated that at least one person on their staff had substantial experience in conducting the type of project they were engaged in or, at the very least, had knowledge and expertise in economic, community, or leadership development in general. Experience is an invaluable resource

to projects. If project staff or the organization has a positive history with the community, the result can be a sense of trust among community members and a network of community connections that project staff can work through to implement activities more easily. Experienced staff members also have numerous resources—other organizations doing similar work or materials that can be used for carrying out project activities—on which they can rely.

In most cases, the number of staff was relatively small (i.e., fewer than five full-time persons, sometimes just one), and a major trend among the projects was that the project leader or director had relevant experience and, in some cases, advanced degrees in the areas of civic and community development. Although this was the case for the project leadership, those persons often relied on volunteers and others not necessarily skilled or experienced in the specific areas to help carry out activities. As one grant recipient explained, while they have several support positions, the only programmatic position is that of project director.

CONTEXT:
ALABAMA FLEX-E-GRANT

The six distressed counties covered by the Alabama Flex-E-Grant youth leadership program (Hale, Pickens, Fayette, Bibb, Franklin, and Macon) are plagued by high unemployment and poverty. Given the shortage of employment opportunities in the region, many young people leave their home communities in search of employment after high school and college graduation. In addition, many of these young people do not have the relevant skills, awareness of community issues, or sense of empowerment needed for building the capacity of their communities. The primary purpose of the Alabama Flex-E-Grant youth leadership program was to equip young people in the region to lead local action.

The Flex-E-Grant recipient was the University of Alabama's University Center for Economic Development (UCED), founded as an umbrella organization that draws from the resources of the University of Alabama to support the state's public and private economic development initiatives. The Center facilitates this support by providing access to university technical resources and the specialization of faculty and professional staff. A major emphasis of the UCED is community development.

The Alabama Flex-E-grant program was a collaborative effort by several organizations that had worked together in the past. This included the Program for Rural Services and Research (PACERS), the Auburn Center for Architecture and Urban Studies, and the Central Alabama Water and Conservation Council. Each of these organizations is focused on community capacity development and economic development.

The Youth Leadership Initiative was UCED's second effort of this type aimed at young people. It is based on "Youth Your Town," a similar youth leadership program emphasizing planning, priority setting, and community projects. The Youth Your Town program was in turn based on Alabama's "Your Town" leadership program for adults, which has enjoyed tremendous success and is still in progress.

Elements of resistance within communities noted by project staff include fear of change, hardened ways of thinking, lack of exposure to alternatives, a power-brokerage system, and self-defeating attitudes (e.g., "We're at the bottom," "We don't deserve it," and "This is the best we can do"). Community assets across the region include "unselfish leaders," concerned and committed citizens, promising young people, natural beauty, and a diverse ecosystem.

Project Partners. Most projects received aid from outside organizations in the form of technical assistance, outreach, and/or additional funds and other resources. For example, Step by Step, Inc., in administering the Big Ugly Family Education Program, received assistance from three organizations for three different purposes. The West Virginia

University Extension Service provided technical assistance, the Save the Children Foundation provided additional funding and resources, and the local Lincoln County Public School System provided logistical support and help with outreach, primarily by encouraging and facilitating parent and student involvement in the project.

The example of the Big Ugly Family Education Program highlights a common project partner: educational institutions. Projects serving youth often relied on K-12 public schools as explicit or implicit partners. However, the majority of site visit projects identified at least one institution of higher education as a partner.

As noted previously, another common project partner was that of the County Extension Service. This was often because the Extension Service staff developed a trusting relationship with the community, and through that experience is savvy about the community and knowledgeable about community resources, assets, and liabilities.

CONTEXT:
BIG UGLY FAMILY EDUCATION

Prior to receiving their grant from the ARC, the Big Ugly Creek community suffered from an overwhelming, perhaps unparalleled, lack of resources. It lacked what most communities, even in distressed areas of Appalachia, take for granted. One good indication of this level of desperation was that there were no public facilities whatsoever. Compounding this problem was that the severe geographic isolation of the community made it extraordinarily difficult to access facilities and other resources in surrounding areas.

Located in Lincoln County, one of the three poorest in West Virginia, Big Ugly Creek also lacked the financial and organizational resources that are usually necessary in seeking to improve self-sufficiency. Fortunately, the community did have a select group of individuals who had both the creativity and the energy to find the wherewithal to reduce the community's sense of isolation.

The Big Ugly community received from $19,540 from the ARC, well below the median grant amount of $50,000. Nonetheless, what the project lacked monetarily was made up in human capital. This is best illustrated by the project director, who not only possessed both an educational background and considerable experience in community development, but had been a dedicated resident of the community for nearly a decade. With technical assistance from the West Virginia University Extension Service and supplemental funds from the Save the Children Foundation, he and his staff were able to overcome several unsuccessful prior attempts at securing resources for the community and to create new opportunities for residents.

The project faced additional challenges during its implementation. For example, several consecutive years of job losses and other events in the immediate area led to increasing rates of poverty in a region already at the bottom with respect to household income. These events culminated in an increasing sense of hopelessness and pessimism, which was reflected on several occasions during the initial stages of the grant period, when project leaders were forced to confront significant resistance to change and jealousy among individual community members.

Summary

This chapter described the varied contexts within which ARC-funded community capacity-building projects existed. A document review of 100 projects demonstrated a wide range in ARC funding for capacity-building projects from a low of $1,137 to a high of $335,000, with the median grant amount at $50,000. Information drawn from in-depth telephone interviews and site visits highlighted the characteristics of the grant recipients, including their experience and expertise, project goals, and project partners. Common themes emerged regarding community assets that facilitate change, such as community organizations and concerned citizens, committed individuals and partner organizations, as well as community liabilities that hinder change, such as negative norms and limited resources in the community.

P<u>roject</u> **I**<u>mplementation</u>

The aim of community capacity-building projects is to promote change and develop individual, organizational, and community capacities from within communities themselves. It is not surprising then that the approaches employed by the ARC-funded capacity-building projects reflect the diversity of the communities in which they operated. Projects conducted numerous activities suited to particular project goals and used strategies attuned to the particular needs, assets, liabilities, and available resources of their communities. Even projects that implemented similar activities such as leadership skills training did so in ways that were responsive to the characteristics and problems of their communities.

Strategies and Activities

The activities conducted by ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were culled from the document review of 100 projects, reviewed, and divided exhaustively into 11 activity types, with an *other* category for activities that were not categorized elsewhere.[20] For organizational purposes, similar activity types were grouped into four overall strategies: vision and direction, involvement, skills and knowledge, and support (see exhibit 4-1). Activity types, with definitions and corresponding examples, are presented by strategy in exhibit 4-2. Exhibit 4-3 presents the strategies and activities for the site visit projects.[21] It is important to note that these four categories of strategies are a construct of the study and, as such, were not considered by the grant recipients themselves as they designed or implemented their projects.

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[20] Examples of activities categorized as *other* include the establishment of a 24-hour toll-free number for victims of domestic abuse, recycling activities, health screenings, and the renovation and expansion of a local history museum.

[21] Strategies were assigned to projects based on activities culled from the document review. During telephone interviews and site visits, additional activities were detailed by grant recipients that were not accounted for in categorizing projects by strategy. The result is that some projects may have included additional activities that are not reflected in the strategy assigned to them from the document review, or conversely, they may have dropped an activity that was reflected in the strategy assigned to them from the document review.

Exhibit 4-1
Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects: *Project Strategies*

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

```
                                    ( + )

                  ┌─────────────┐
                  │ Develop Vision│
       ◇ Assets ◇ │ & Direction   │   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────┐
                  │ for the       │   │ Individual   │   │ Economic │
                  │ Community     │   │ Capacity     │   └──────────┘
                  ├─────────────┤   └──────────────┘
                  │ Promote       │
┌──────────┐      │ Involvement of│   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ Project  │  ┌─────────┐ Community │  │ Organizational│  │ Environmental│
│ Purpose  │→ │Resources│ Members   │→ │ Capacity     │   └──────────────┘
└──────────┘  └─────────┘            │  └──────────────┘
                  │ Enhance Skills│
                  │ & Knowledge   │   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────┐
       ◇Liabilities◇ of Community │   │ Community    │   │ Social   │
                  │ Members       │   │ Capacity     │   └──────────┘
                  ├─────────────┤   └──────────────┘
                  │ Obtain        │
                  │ Technical     │
                  │ Support for the│
                  │ Community     │
                  └─────────────┘

                                    ( - )
```
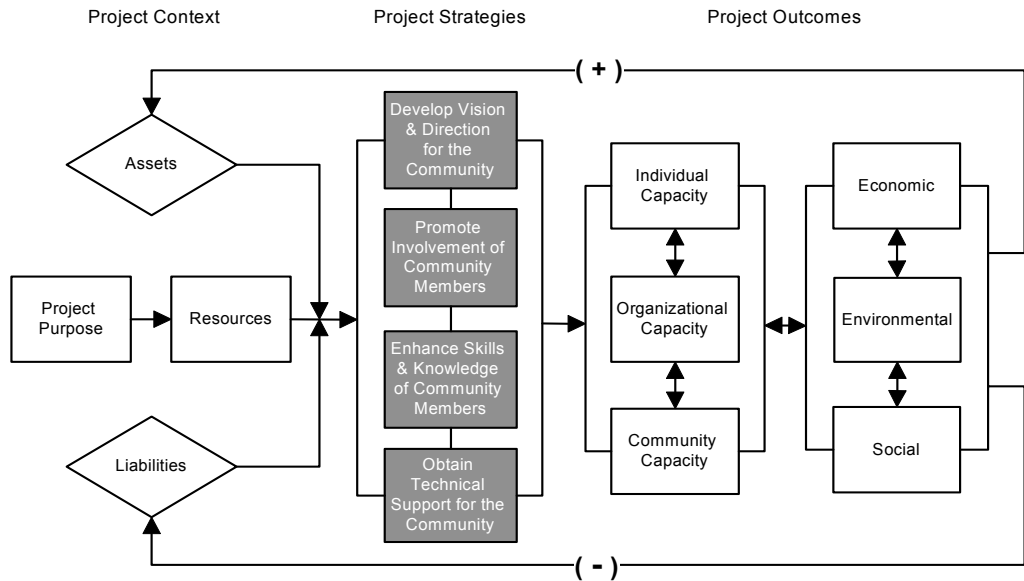
Activities are what a project does with its resources to bring about changes or results. The range of activities commonly associated with community capacity projects has been organized into four overall strategies: vision and direction, involvement, enhanced skills and knowledge, and technical support. (See exhibit 4-2 for examples and definitions of activity types by strategy.) While some projects will implement activities from only one strategy, often projects will implement activities from multiple strategy categories.

Exhibit 4-2
Definitions and Examples of Activity Types, by Strategy

Strategy	Activity	Definition	Examples
Vision and Direction	Conduct strategic planning and analysis	Assessing a community's current status, developing a strategic plan for community or economic development, and determining solutions to solve current community problems.	• Create and implement a community action plan • Hold vision development meetings with multiple representatives from the community • Review other communities' strategic agendas and models
	Conduct regional or local needs assessment	Conducting a regional or local needs assessment for a community(s) or organization.	• Conduct a community survey of needs • Conduct one-on-one interviews with community members • Conduct site visits to other communities

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">**Exhibit 4-2**
Definitions and Examples of Activity Types by Strategy
(continued)</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Strategy**</td><td>**Activity**</td><td>**Definition**</td><td>**Examples**</td></tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="4">Involvement</td>
<td>Conduct small scale community improvement projects requiring the participation of community members for completion</td>
<td>Conducting any small-scale community improvement project that involves the participation of community members.</td>
<td>• Restore a building
• Improve a park
• Volunteer community clean-ups
• Create a community recycling program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish/develop a community organization, program, foundation, or association</td>
<td>Establishing or developing an organization, foundation, program, or association.</td>
<td>• Create a watershed association
• Establish a commission to provide community strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct outreach to raise awareness of local issues</td>
<td>Publicizing or publishing information to inform community members of or raise awareness about a local issue.</td>
<td>• Publish a monthly community newsletter
• Hold special events to promote awareness
• Distribute announcements/ placements/flyers
• Hold a press conference
• Make community meeting agendas available through various media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize and hold meetings, conferences, forums, etc</td>
<td>Organizing and/or facilitating events held for administrative purposes such as planning, collaborating, and communicating. Audience and frequency (average hours of participation for the average participant) vary by project.</td>
<td>• Conduct bimonthly town meetings
• Hold a public information session
• Regular Chamber of Commerce breakfasts
• Church socials</td>
</tr>
</table>

		Exhibit 4-2	
		Definitions and Examples of Activity Types by Strategy	
		(continued)	

Strategy	Activity	Definition	Examples
Skills and Knowledge	Organize and conduct group instructional activities, such as workshops and courses	Organizing and conducting group instructional activities including organizing, planning, and/or facilitating instructional workshops, courses, etc. Audience, frequency (average hours of participation for the average participant), and type (leadership, technological, economic development, etc.) of instructional activity vary by project.	• Leadership and economic development workshop for local elected officials • Classroom training in water testing for 5th graders • Instruction on use of high-tech equipment • Scholarships for key leaders to attend formal workshops
	Facilitate, organize, and conduct one-on-one instructional activities, such as mentoring, counseling, and teaching	Facilitating, organizing, and/or conducting one-on-one guidance, rather than group instruction, from an expert. Audience and frequency (average hours of participation for the average participant) vary by project.	• Career counseling for low income women • Establish a mentor-mentee relationship between local business owners and high school students
	Develop, purchase, publish, and/or distribute materials	Researching and developing or purchasing paper resources such as curriculums, resource guides, or handbooks for practitioners. It is assumed that activities such as publication and distribution are included in the developing or purchasing of materials.	• Develop a resource directory for local elected officials • Purchase books/videos on leadership

Exhibit 4-2
Definitions and Examples of Activity Types by Strategy
(continued)

Strategy	Activity	Definition	Examples
Support	Obtain or provide technical assistance/ consultation	Obtaining and/or providing technical assistance including the hiring of a consultant and/or providing information or a skill.	• Hire a consultant to identify key issues facing a community • Hire a consultant to oversee and assure successful completion of community projects
	Obtain technological support	Obtaining and/or providing technological support including overseeing, developing, and/or purchasing of computer software, hardware, and/or facility. These activities can be performed by a community member. This does not include computer training.	• Oversee the use of a new computer facility • Develop a community database and network • Establish an informative community website

Exhibit 4-3
Strategies and Activity Types of Site Visit Projects

Project	State	Strategy	Activities
Ohio-West Virginia YMCA Youth Leadership	WV	Involvement and skills	Targeting ARC-designated distressed counties in West Virginia, high school students were recruited to form community-based student leadership groups. The students attended a 6-day residential leadership/service training camp to help them build self-confidence, develop their leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, and identify community needs. Leadership groups then returned to their communities to implement community improvement projects.
Sustainable Communities Initiative	OH	Skills	The Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) received grants from ARC and the Kellogg Foundation to fund grassroots sustainable community development projects. MACED provided technical support to the Owsley County Action Team and the Letcher County Action Team. As a result of their efforts, dozens of community projects were planned and implemented by the action teams, following a model based on the 3 Es of sustainability: ecology, equity, and economy.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">Exhibit 4-3
Strategies and Activity Types of Site Visit Projects
(continued)</td></tr>
<tr><th>Project</th><th>State</th><th>Strategy</th><th>Activities</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Ugly Family Education</td>
<td>WV</td>
<td>Involvement and skills</td>
<td>Since 1988, Step by Step has worked with youth, families, and economically challenged communities to develop local education programs, regional collaborations, and social policy. Specific project activities focused on four areas: parent involvement in family education activities, continuing education, welfare to work support for higher education, and a community time bank to encourage volunteerism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Neighborhoods Project</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>SEDA-COG provided technical assistance to the Lewistown Monument Square Development Plan and the Sunbury City Visions Project. Both of these community projects sought to revitalize neighborhoods by organizing effective community action; cultivating leaders with the requisite skills for development; helping community members envision the future of the neighborhood and plan strategically to achieve that future; instituting neighborhood improvement organizations; and developing appropriate programs, projects, and services to facilitate neighborhood reinvestments and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation for Appalachian Ohio Organizational Development</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio serves as a formal mechanism for tapping into local philanthropic resources. Its activities include building philanthropic capital for regional improvement, convening diverse stakeholders around priority issues of common concern in the region, and developing and funding strategic initiatives to address identified needs in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian Leadership Academy</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>As a response to the increasing shift of program responsibilities from the federal and state level to the local level, the Appalachian Leadership Academy provided community organization and agency staff with a year-long sustained professional development program. Participants convened on a monthly basis to attend lectures and workshops designed to develop leadership skills. Most sessions provided considerable time for hands-on, small group work, and topics included communication, negotiation, and financial management.</td>
</tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Exhibit 4-3
Strategies and Activity Types of Site Visit Projects
(continued)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project</td><td>State</td><td>Strategy</td><td>Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hurley Community Revitalization</td><td>OH</td><td>Involvement</td><td>Hurley Community Development focused their efforts on environmental cleanup. Their initial river clean-up was extremely successful and led to additional, expanded activities such as an environmental education program in the community schools to raise students' environmental awareness. They also campaigned for and won small, mandatory fees on power and telephone bills that would fund trash collection and thereby help prevent trash disposal in the river and surrounding areas.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alabama Flex-E-Grant</td><td>AL</td><td>Skills</td><td>The Alabama Flex-E-Grant program was based on the state's Youth Your Town program. Students from six distressed counties in the region were offered three 1-day leadership workshops and took part in an experiential hands-on training. Students were guided through the process of identifying assets in their communities, developing a master plan based on these assets and their ideas for community improvement, and strategizing about projects related to plan goals. Students then presented their plans to local officials.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Hale Bopp Comets</td><td>AL</td><td>Skills</td><td>The Hale BOPP project was designed to develop the leadership skills of selected 11th grade students in the county. Students met throughout the year for field trips to places like the Moundville Archaeological Park, the Challenger Learning Center at the McWane Center, and the University of Alabama. They were exposed to a wide range of topics including problem solving, entrepreneurship, and teamwork building and took part in several cultural activities such as a tour of the Birmingham Museum of Art and the Civil Rights Museum.</td></tr>
<tr><td>East Kentucky Leadership Network Youth Leadership Program</td><td>KY</td><td>Involvement and support</td><td>With the Youth Leadership Program, the East Kentucky Leadership Network specifically sought to address young people's lack of engagement in civic life. Students attended several conferences throughout the year and participated in the Kentucky Youth Assembly, a mock legislature. Students were also expected to attend meetings of local boards such as the school board and the tourism board.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The New Opportunity School for Women</td><td>KY</td><td>Skills</td><td>Participants in the New Opportunity School for Women took part in a 3-week residential program designed to provide women with a broad range of skills related to all facets of personal development such as career and self-esteem. The ARC grant facilitated the introduction of specific leadership skills to the residential program and afforded the school the opportunity to offer many more women leadership development through outreach workshops.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">**Exhibit 4-3**
Strategies and Activity Types of Site Visit Projects
(continued)</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Project**</td><td>**State**</td><td>**Strategy**</td><td>**Activities**</td></tr>
<tr><td>West Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program</td><td>WV</td><td>Support</td><td>The West Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program has administered several hundred thousands of dollars in grant money to develop leadership in the state's 27 distressed counties. Minigrants are awarded to local projects to increase leadership skills and promote economic and community development.</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

Table 4-1
Project strategies

Project strategies	Percent of projects
Skills	62
Involvement	47
Vision	36
Support	28
Project dimensionality	
(number of strategies)	
Single strategy only	
Total	39
Skills only	25
Support only	5
Involvement only	5
Vision only	4
Two strategies	
Total	36
Involvement/Skills	14
Involvement/Vision	8
Skills/Vision	5
Involvement/Support	3
Skills/Support	3
Vision/Support	3
Three strategies	
Total	14
Involvement/Skills/Vision	5
Involvement/Vision/Support	4
Involvement/Skills/Support	3
Skills/Vision/Support	2
Four strategies	
Total	5
Other	
Total	6

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of projects employed a skills-related strategy, while 47 percent conducted an involvement-related strategy (see table 4-1). It is worth noting that 39 percent of projects focused exclusively on a single strategy type (most notably skills), while 55 percent employed activities that cut across two or more strategy types. This finding suggests that the majority of ARC's community capacity-building projects relied on multiple broad strategies to achieve their aims.

IMPLEMENTATION:
NEW OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL FOR WOMEN

The New Opportunity School's activities center on the skills and knowledge strategy. Twice year, the school offers an intensive 3-week residential program, which targets middle-aged, low-income women in Appalachian Kentucky. Session topics include how to write a resume and conduct a job search, business etiquette, stress management, self-esteem building, public speaking, public policy-making, community participation, and leadership. For example, the staff facilitates discussions among the women about problems in their home communities, how they can address those problems, and how they can become involved politically.

The personal development courses broaden the women's educational and employment horizons and help them develop the skills they need to prepare for and take advantage of the range of opportunities available to them. The school makes the connection between the women's educational and employment opportunities and the leadership roles and opportunities for community involvement present in the community.

Because the school is limited in the number of women that can served through the residential program, the school also offers year-round counseling and outreach sessions to women throughout the region. ARC funding was used for the school's outreach workshops and financed leadership development in particular. Mrs. Stephenson noted that the school has always emphasized building women's self-esteem, and leadership development was a perfect fit. Her thinking was, "while building self-esteem, let's teach them how to be leaders."

The school struggles with many of the issues that other capacity-building projects do. At the top of the list are staffing and funding limits. Because the school is so successful, the staff grapples with well-intentioned pressure to expand the residential program and reach more women. Given the school's small staff and finite resources, however, expansion would be risky. In addition, there is a concern that expanding the program would change its nature. The women benefit from the intimate, small-group environment in which they receive highly individualized attention. Trying to serve too many women could detract from the current atmosphere in which women feel a sense of security—and which is conducive to the holistic approach that the school takes to self-improvement.

The school must also work to overcome the cultural barriers that prevent women from participating. As mentioned in the previous chapter, families rely on these women for so much that the prospect of them being away from home for 3 weeks can be overwhelming. Additionally, the women come away from the program with a sense of empowerment and new ambitions for themselves that can be threatening to those who depend on them or who are jealous of their personal development.

There is also the stigma of poverty and isolation. Some of the women have never been to Berea or even on the Interstate. Some are afraid to come inside for fear that they won't be liked by the other women. After being accepted to the residential program, one woman who had second thoughts initially told staff members she couldn't come because her sister was sick. In reality, she didn't have a suitcase: "I wasn't going to bring my stuff down there in a paper bag." Overcoming the women's personal fears and the cultural resistance embedded in the community presents a continual challenge.

Even projects that fell within a particular strategy generally relied on different tactics within that strategy. For example, Hurley Community Development conducted several involvement strategies (e.g., small-scale community improvement projects and public outreach), while the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio combined the development of a foundation with regional conferences to promote collaboration. Looking across all projects, the single most prominent activity—cited by 51 percent of projects—was conducting a group instructional activity such as a workshop or course (see table 4-2). Other common activities included strategic planning (35 percent), meetings, conferences, and forums (28 percent), and technical assistance and consultation (26 percent).

Table 4-2
Percent of projects that included various types of activities, by project strategies

Type of strategy and activity	Percent of projects
Vision	
Conduct strategic planning and analysis	35
Conduct regional or local needs assessment	13
Involvement	
Organize and hold meetings, conferences, forums, etc.	28
Conduct outreach to raise awareness of local issues	16
Conduct small scale community improvement projects requiring the participation of community members for completion	15
Establish/develop a community organization, program, foundation, or association	12
Skills	
Organize and conduct group instructional activities, such as workshops and courses	51
Develop, purchase, publish, and/or distribute materials	18
Facilitate, organize, and conduct one-on-one instructional activities such as mentoring, counseling, and teaching	6
Support	
Provide or obtain technical assistance/consultation	26
Provide technological support	5

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

Vision and Direction

Over one-third (36 percent) of projects in the study conducted at least one of the activities (e.g., strategic plan or needs assessment) associated with a vision and direction strategy. These activities were generally conducted in conjunction with another strategy type—i.e., only four projects were designed to focus solely on the development of a strategic plan or needs assessment (table 4-1). One project that concentrated exclusively on vision and direction activities was the Southwest North Carolina Distressed Counties Scattered Site Housing project, which mapped approximately 9,000 parcels of land in the Graham and Swain counties using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) hardware and software. The grant recipient plans to use the GIS maps to inform the development of a comprehensive program to address the affordable housing shortages in both counties.

Thirty-two of the grant recipients conducted strategic planning and/or a needs assessment in conjunction with one or more other project strategies. For example, the Sustainable Communities Initiative worked with two action teams—in Letcher and Owsley Counties—to address community development and build social capital. Both action teams conducted strategic plans to identify community issues, identify solutions to those issues, and discuss community values and principles that should direct their efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION:
HURLEY COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

With the $3,800 ACLP I grant, Hurley Community Development (HCD) focused its efforts on an *involvement* activity, a 25-mile road and river cleanup. The ARC funding was used to hire four low-income Hurley teenagers to do trash pick-up, provide lunch for volunteers, and cut down trees in the creek that were collecting debris. With the help of community volunteers (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and HCD family members), the project was responsible for the pick-up of 126,000 pounds of trash over a 6-month period.

To identify the 25 miles of road and river to be cleaned, the project implementers started in the center of Hurley and went out in three directions. While there was no real community opposition to conducting the project, there was initial disagreement about which 25 miles of river and road should be targeted for cleanup. Naturally, most Hurley residents wished to have their property included in the selected 25 miles. In addition, there was some skepticism voiced about the project—comments such as "What do you want to pick up trash for?" "Why do you want to pick up other people's trash?" "Why don't you use the money for something else?" were not uncommon.

Convincing residents that this was a worthwhile project was an easier task than persuading some community members to change their habits. At one point during the cleanup, while youth were picking up litter, people were driving by and throwing more litter out of their vehicles. When volunteers approached police officers about this problem, the officers said they have no time to write a ticket and besides, the county had no litter control ordinance. Additionally, many residents were not utilizing the trash collection service. Rather than paying an optional $7 for trash pick-up, community members were using their yards and the river for trash disposal. In order to get residents to start using curbside pick-up, after the ACLP I grant concluded, HCD campaigned for a mandatory $1.50 charge on power bills and an additional $1.50 charge per month on phone bills for trash collection. The mandatory charge was imposed, which caused some residents to reconsider their trash disposal habits. In the words of one volunteer, residents began to decide that "if I'm paying for trash collection, I'm going to use it!"

Due to the success of the initial Hurley Community Development road and river cleanup, HCD was awarded a second, $17,500 ACLP grant. HCD used the ACLP II grant to re-clean the original 25 miles of road and river—and to remove large, heavy objects from the river such as cars and major appliances. In addition to continuing their cleanup efforts, HCD included such other involvement activities as the establishment of an environmental education program in the community schools. The program was developed to raise environmental awareness and generate interest among community youth to become involved in environmental initiatives. With the second ACLP grant, HCD also held a second Annual Community Pride Day and purchased three park benches to be placed around the community. HCD had also proposed the installation of a streetlight, which was never installed, because the cost of the electric bill was not included in the budget.

More than 8 years since residents of the Hurley community began meeting at a Hurley park bench, HCD continues to operate today. While the road and river cleanup is an annual event, the environmental education program has been discontinued due to a lack of time and resources. However, the organization has expanded its activities to include home repair. In addition, the office serves as a food pantry and hosts crafts lessons. Thus, while some ACLP activities were not sustained, the organization continues to serve as a valuable resource to the community.

Reflecting the individual needs of their communities, the two action teams took different approaches. Letcher County initially focused on opening up the local political process and getting community members involved, while Owsley County directed its initial efforts at increasing local employment opportunities. In addition to strategic planning, the Sustainable Communities Initiative also used numerous activities that fell under the skills and knowledge strategy.

Another project—the Carroll/Harrison/Jefferson Leadership Program—conducted its needs assessment prior to ARC funding. With the ARC grant, the grant recipient developed a 14-month leadership program that was open to all residents in the three participating counties who were 18 years or older and had an interest in community issues and leadership. While the grant recipient did not conduct a needs assessment during the timeframe of the project, the project itself was a result of a needs assessment that indicated a lack of leadership skills in the region and introduced training program in the area to remedy that void.

The Spark Community Leadership Program used funding from a previous ARC grant to conduct a community-wide survey to identify issues that were of the greatest concern or priority for the residents. The survey demonstrated the community's desire for more community programs targeting youth, as well as its support for greater protection of the environment. Combining these two identified needs, the Spark Community Leadership project was created to develop leadership skills among youth while engaging them in improvement projects intended to improve the health of the river.

Thirteen of the 30 projects participating in the telephone interviews and site visits conducted a needs assessment as part of their ARC-funded project. Methods used to conduct these needs assessments included focus groups, community-wide surveys, surveys that targeted specific stakeholders (e.g., elected officials), and a review of existing data (e.g., graduation rates, employment statistics, and environmental quality testing results). For some grant recipients that directly served their target population, need was established through day-to-day contact. For example, the West Virginia EMS Technical Support Network and the West Virginia Municipal League both routinely responded to technical assistance requests from their constituency, and in the process were able to identify where there was a need for new programmatic efforts.

Involvement

Involvement strategies comprise activities that promote the involvement of residents in community affairs, including:

- Conducting small-scale projects requiring the participation of community members for completion;

- Establishing and/or developing a community organization, program, foundation, or association;

- Conducting outreach to raise community awareness of local issues; and

- Organizing and holding meetings, conferences, and forums.

Forty-seven projects used activities related to this strategy type—with 28 percent conducting meetings, conferences, and forums. Adult community members and community and business leaders were the most frequently targeted participants for meetings, conferences, and forums—with 16 projects directing these activities toward adult community members and 12 aiming their activities at community and business leaders (table 4-3). Many of the activities in this category were short term and offered as a way to inform participants about community issues. They also provided residents the opportunity to discuss these issues and network with one another to promote collaborative efforts.

Table 4-3
Number of projects that held meetings, conferences, and forums,
and frequency of participation

Meetings, conferences, forums, etc. (n = 28)	Number of projects
Audience	
Community members (adults)	16
Community and business leaders	12
Elected and government officials	7
Targeted groups (e.g., women, low income, elderly)...	3
Youth...	2
Economic development professionals	1
College students...	0
Cannot determine...	2
Other	3
Frequency (average hours of participation for the average participant)	
One time...	6
Short term	8
Long term...	7
Cannot determine..	7

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

One project that included meetings, conferences, and forums was the Northeast Alabama Development Forum. Project taskforce meetings and conferences brought together community members and community and business leaders in an effort to foster a regional approach to economic development, help develop an understanding of regional needs related to economic development, and encourage the development of grassroots and self-help organizations. Conference themes included education and the workforce, infrastructure, quality of life, the environment, and regional cooperation.

The East Kentucky Leadership Network's (EKLN) Youth Leadership Program also used conferences as part of its project activities, in this case as a way to encourage young people's civic engagement. Students participate in four conferences over the course of a year, including the EKLN's annual conference, which focuses on leadership development issues. Youth Leadership participants now account for 25 percent of the attendees of the EKLN conference. While activities related to this strategy were generally not directed at youth, the grant recipient described the importance of bringing youth to the table with adults and cultivating an atmosphere where young people are recognized as valuable contributors to the community. Conferences provided an effective avenue toward this goal.

While five projects focused exclusively on involvement-related activities (see table 4-1), this approach was most commonly used in conjunction with other strategies. As discussed above, projects generally chose to integrate different strategy-related activities to create a multifaceted approach to project implementation and therefore address often interrelated factors in capacity building. The two projects below serve as examples of the ways in which projects linked different strategies in a cohesive way to better serve the community and achieve project goals:

- The Elkhorn Creek Watershed Association was established to provide environmental training and education to students and community members, and to raise awareness about the importance of clean water and the role of community members in environmental protection. Toward this end, they conducted skills and knowledge activities, namely providing training in water testing and monitoring, as well as environmental education more generally. They also developed educational materials. Because the goal was not just to educate community members, but also get them involved in environmental protection efforts, they incorporated such activities as holding community forums, distributing the educational materials they developed to the local community, and requiring project participants to conduct community improvement projects.

- The CREATE Foundation combined involvement-oriented activities with vision and direction-oriented activities in the establishment of the Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi. The goal of the Commission was to assess where they were as a region, examine key issues affecting the quality of life in the region, and determine strategies for addressing those issues. Needs assessment and strategic planning are at the heart of the project's activities, helping inform the direction in which they want the region to head. Considering the region as whole brought together multiple stakeholders and their resources, including skills and ideas, and allowed them to understand how the various communities share a common future. To strengthen their needs assessment and strategic planning efforts, they also incorporated involvement-related activities. They created task forces to address such issues as economic development, education, and infrastructure, and convened hearings with experts that have evolved into quarterly meetings by the Commission.

Skills and Knowledge

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of projects relied on strategies designed to enhance skills and knowledge—e.g., organizing and conducting group instructional activities, conducting one-on-one instructional activities, and facilitating the distribution of instructional materials. Most of these training programs focused on the promotion of leadership skills (38 projects), but other topics—e.g., economic development (8 projects), civic development (5 projects), and technical issues such as strategic planning and grant writing (5 projects)—were also addressed (table 4-4). Evidence from the telephone interviews and site visits suggests that projects tailored their efforts to the needs and priorities of their communities. For example:

- Project Jump Start initiated internships to help high school juniors and seniors in the community learn skilled trades. The project, designed to address the community's

shortage of workers and businesses in skilled trades, used local tradesmen to mentor the students.

- The Southern Tier West (STW) Regional Planning and Development board built upon its history of providing technical assistance to local governments in New York State. STW facilitated the strategic planning and community improvement work of Community Action Committees (CAC) in Alleghany, Cattaragus, and Chautauqua counties. While it was always the intent of STW to provide training to the CACs, project communities expressed more interest in having STW help them determine the best way to implement their community improvement projects than in training. As the project developed, participants requested training in personal and professional leadership skills. STW responded to the feedback of the communities and implemented the project accordingly.

Table 4-4
Number of projects that conducted training and education activities geared towards different groups, frequency of participation, and types of training

Audience, frequency, and type of training and education	Number of projects
Audience	
Community members (adults)...	17
Community and business leaders..	15
Youth...	14
Elected and government officials..	5
Economic development professionals..	3
Targeted groups (e.g., women, low income, elderly)	3
Cannot determine	2
College students	1
Other..	5
Frequency (average hours of participation for the average participant)	
0-8 hours..	2
9-24 hours..	8
25+ hours...	17
Cannot determine	24
Type	
Leadership	38
Economic development..	8
Civic development..	5
Technical (e.g., grant writing, strategic planning)..	5
Environmental	3
Technological (computer related)	3
Train the trainer...	0
Other	12
Cannot determine	1

SOURCE: Document review of ARC grantees.

IMPLEMENTATION:
ALABAMA FLEX-E-GRANT

The Alabama Flex-E-grant program consisted of three full-day leadership workshops for high school students across six distressed counties in northern Alabama. The workshops involved youth in "experiential" hands-on training, including interactive exercises in planning, investigating, and communicating. Students were selected from grades 9 though 12, in public and private schools, based on their "community spirit," as determined by school guidance counselors, principals, and librarians. Students within the county groups were divided by community.

Day one included a lecture on the value of small towns and rural areas, assets-based planning, and the potential to build on assets to improve communities and lessons in how to identify assets. Students were assigned the tasks of listing the assets in their communities, creating a wish list of things they'd like to see in their community, and interviewing people (e.g., family, teachers) to determine their list of assets and wishes. Students were also given cameras to take pictures of their communities, including the things they could identify as assets and liabilities.

On day two of the workshop, students were asked to draw map(s) of their communities. Then the groups were asked to compare all the lists of assets and dreams. Students were presented with an introduction to planning methods and asked to create a master plan for their community. Students were asked to identify projects and relate them to their master plan. Then they were to go around their communities and consider their proposed projects, as well as think about other possible projects.

On day three of the program, students reported on their projects and ideas. They then had to prioritize the projects that they identified and decide on one project to propose to the mayor and city council. This involved discussing strategies for accomplishing their goals (i.e., thinking about whose help they would need, costs, impact, etc.). On that day or later, students then presented their ideas to local officials. Based on feedback, they revised their plans.

According to project staff, several lessons were learned about the implementation of youth leadership initiatives:

- It is important to secure local support.
- Local adults should be part of the process.
- Leadership programs should be continuous over years.
- Training should be hands-on, interactive, and collaborative. Students should feel as if they are parts of something larger, and they should feel connected to each other and their communities.
- Students should get to meet and interact with students from different schools within their region.
- Dynamics will be different from one county/community to the next. You have to allow room for differences in the way the leadership training is implemented.
- Prevent students from falling into usual roles—one aim of the training is to get students to see themselves and their communities in new ways.
- The curriculum should focus on helping students to understand what's good where they live, and should be devoted to giving students a sense of empowerment that they can make a difference.
- There will always be a range of resistance levels among adults, from the naysayers to the enthusiasts.
- Design the curriculum to be rigorous—get students to rise to a higher level.
- Give praise—young people don't get enough of it, and many have a negative opinion of their capacity. Student projects should be ambitious, but not overly so.

Most (51 of the 62 projects) projects used group instruction—and this group instruction was most frequently aimed at adult community members (17 projects), community and business leaders (15 projects), and youth (14 projects) (table 4-4). Only six grant recipients used one-on-one instruction as part of their project activities, but it was an important component of their projects. Examples include the Lake Cumberland Regional Justice and Victims Advocacy Project, which provided counseling to victims of domestic abuse, and the Alabama Sheriffs' Youth Ranches Leadership Program, which provides long-term placement to abused, neglected, and abandoned children. For this program, counseling and tutoring are offered as part of an effort to educate young people in the program and prepare them to be self-sufficient, productive adults.

Findings from the telephone interviews and site visits indicate that many grant recipients directed their training efforts toward young people in the community. This often reflected the recognition of the important role young people can play in community affairs. For example, the Spark Community Leadership Program began when those involved with a previous ARC grant decided that a youth leadership program would be a great vehicle for teaching young people in the community important leadership skills, while encouraging their involvement in cleanup of the Chattahoochee River. Toward that end, the program combined leadership development with training in environmental quality assessment techniques, and students participated on average between 9 and 24 hours. Other projects focused on adults in the community. The Sustainable Communities Initiative was created to help community residents gain a voice in the local policymaking process. Local residents were trained in leadership development and training extended over a 4-year period with sessions held every other month.

Almost half of the grant recipients conducting instructional activities did not specify in their project proposals the frequency of such activities (23 projects). Most of the remaining grant recipients provided project participants with more sustained exposure to instruction—with 17 providing participants 25 or more hours of instruction, 8 providing 9 to 24 hours of instruction, and 2 providing 8 or fewer hours.

Not all projects that focused on enhancing skills and knowledge conducted training. For example, the West Virginia Municipal League developed, produced, and distributed the Municipal Handbook for Elected Officials. This document was designed to serve as a guide for local municipal officials who often lacked formal training before taking office—and for whom there were previously no readily accessible guidelines on local government issues. The project was initiated when the West Virginia Municipal League realized there was a more efficient way to address the day-to-day inquiries of elected officials, for whom administration included public finance, economic development, planning, and effective service delivery.

Support

Support strategies typically involved generalized technical assistance and/or consultation or technological support. This strategy was generally used in conjunction with other types of activities. For example, the New Neighborhoods Project, SEDA-COG (a regional nonprofit development organization that provides leadership, expertise, and services to communities, organizations, and individuals in central Pennsylvania) provided technical assistance to the communities of Lewistown and Sunbury. The purpose was to help communities revitalize neighborhoods through community action, strategic

planning, and program and service development. Community outreach was also an important part of the project as the grant recipient sought to encourage citizen involvement in revitalization efforts through public meetings.

Another example is Southern Tier West, which provided technical assistance and consultation to communities embarking on planning and development activities. Given Southern Tier West's expertise in community development and their long history providing technical assistance, facilitating communities' capacity-building efforts was a natural role. They guided communities through the process of conducting needs assessment, strategic planning, and community development and improvement activities, while avoiding taking control of development and implementation efforts that were intended to be completed by the communities themselves.

Implementation Issues Addressed by Projects

During the telephone interviews and site visits, respondents were asked to identify any barriers or problems that they encountered—and steps that were taken to overcome them. As is discussed below, the problems that grant recipients encountered were generally not severe enough to prevent projects from implementing their approach. The most commonly cited problems included time and staffing constraints, attracting participant interest in the project, the isolation of and competition between communities, and limited resources.

Time Constraints

A few projects found it difficult to carry out all of their planned activities in the time allotted. For example, the Youth Leadership Initiative cited time constraints as a significant barrier, noting that they were behind from the beginning and always trying to catch up. However, the project was able to conduct the full range of activities it had planned, and achieved the outcomes it had set for itself. In fact, the general pattern among ARC capacity-building projects that participated in the telephone interviews and the site visits was that they were willing and able to be flexible in project implementation to address unanticipated barriers.

Other projects considered time constraints to be a slightly less important problem and simply regretted that they had many activities they wanted to carry out, but simply did not have enough time. For example, the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio stated that they were seeking to create an entirely new foundation with a very small staff. The amount of time and resources involved was considerable, and they felt that early efforts should have focused more exclusively on developing the organizational infrastructure rather than trying to do everything at once. As such, they had to scale back planned activities as they prioritized what they wanted to accomplish. For example, they did not provide as much technical assistance to philanthropic donors as they had initially planned. As the Foundation became more established, they were able to reexamine activities that had been deferred at the beginning of the project. Both these examples suggest a greater technical assistance role for the ARC in guiding projects toward more realistic expectations of what can be accomplished in a given time period, and what factors contribute to or hinder implementation of project activities.

Staffing

Although community members may value the benefits of a project, engaging their active support can be difficult. One project participant lamented that "we've moved from a society that is community-oriented to a society that's self-oriented," while another noted that service to the community through projects like these does not come naturally but, rather, must be cultivated. A strong leader can certainly play a powerful role in this cultivation. Numerous grant recipients indicated that having a leader with the ability to motivate others was extremely important, especially during the initial stages of the project. As one grant recipient stated, having a "sparkplug" person to get the project started ultimately made an enormous difference.

The importance of such a leader throughout the project cannot be underestimated. In this and previous ARC studies, staff turnover has been consistently raised as an obstacle to successful project implementation. Some project staff described their role as "a job for life," and expressed concern about the direction of the projects if they were to leave. Particularly in an uncertain financial environment, it is difficult finding skillful, charismatic leaders to take on a project for which funding is a constant struggle.

Attracting Participants

A few of the projects encountered difficulty attracting participants for their activities. For example, the West Virginia EMS Leadership/Management Skills Training Project found that their training activities coincided with at least two other EMS trainings in the area in which more than 250 people participated. Although project staff was not aware of the other events at the time they were scheduling their own training, the simultaneous offering ultimately reduced attendance.

In addition, some of the training projects (most notably leadership projects) found that passing costs onto participants reduced the number of people who could participate. While more than one project cited this problem, it was a relatively minor one that most projects were able to overcome. For example, Leadership East Kentucky was forced to charge $750 for tuition. While this amount prevented some individuals from participating in the program, the project had enough funds to offer a limited number of scholarships, and most other participants were able to get their employers or someone else to pay all or most of their tuition.

Lack of Interest

Several projects cited a general lack of interest in the community as a barrier to implementation. For example, Project Jump Start indicated it was difficult to attract students, and that young people in their particular community tended to enter the same occupations as their parents, were resistant to change, and thus were reluctant to enter the project's internship program. The same project also referred to residents' general passivity and lack of willingness to participate in other community initiatives. In some cases, this lack of participant interest was attributable to distrust and suspicion about project intentions and efforts. As a remedy, grant recipients emphasized the need for local ownership of the project. Moreover, respondents noted that when projects represent

collaborative efforts between local grassroots organizations and other entities from outside the community, a delicate balance must be achieved to promote the trust and support of community members—e.g., taking steps to obtain their input about the needs of the community and how best to address those needs.

Geographical Isolation

Geography, particularly a sense of isolation, was another barrier encountered by projects. The Sustainable Communities Initiative, for example, stated that many of its participants were far removed from the grant recipient, and it was difficult to manage the project from other parts of the state. Related to the issue of isolation was the difficulty of finding reliable transportation for prospective participants. For example, participants in some communities had difficulty getting to locations where activities were being held—and these problems were often compounded by such factors as inclement weather. The site visits, in particular, confirmed the isolated nature of the communities that received ARC support and the distances that residents had to travel to participate in project activities. Projects like the Sustainable Communities Initiative were able to lessen the impact of this obstacle, however, largely through the use of technology (e.g., the Internet and video conferencing).

Community Competition

More than one grant recipient referred to competition between communities and/or resistance to regionalism as a barrier to implementation. For example, the Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi indicated that people involved in the project "had to get past the football rivalries," and were not initially willing to think on a regional level. The project overcame this barrier by including an equal number of leaders from each community in the project. Similarly, the Northeast Alabama Development Forum indicated that its most significant barrier was resistance from local politicians to the notion of regionalism. Project staff felt that many of their politicians were beholden to their own constituents, making them inherently protective of the interests of their respective communities. This, in turn, complicated cooperation across community boundaries—especially across state boundaries.

Organizational Conflicts

The majority of telephone interview and site visit grant recipients cited collaborative relationships with community organizations as a crucial element in affecting change. While extolling the benefits of collaboration, grant recipients also described lessons learned regarding such relationships. For example, several respondents cited the importance of assuring that the collaborating organizations share similar goals—and that the commitment level of the participating organizations be at a similar level (or that the organizations be in a similar position to benefit from the project). Respondents noted that if a project is not as high of a priority for a key partner, the resulting imbalance can affect the work of others on the project. One project, in particular, faced delays in implementation for this very reason. Such delays can effectively halt a project's momentum, which may be difficult to restore.

Some respondents also noted that working relationships between organizations inevitably changed over time due to staff turnover, shifting organizational or individual priorities, and conflicts over responsibilities. One grant recipient noted that "the organizational buy-in [of a project partner] was not as great as the individual buy-in." When the mission of that key partner shifted away from leadership, they lost that partner's participation in the project. As such, they concluded that if similar efforts were going to be successful, the partners must be willing and able to respond effectively to changes in collaborative relationships.

Lack of Resources

Limited resources (e.g., funding, expertise, time, and staff) severely constrained the efforts of some projects. However, as discussed in chapter 2, every community has resources that can be tapped into, even though, as one grant recipient noted, these resources "are not easily visible in the most distressed rural communities." The project director of the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, which seeks to build philanthropic capital for regional improvement, asserted that substantial amounts of wealth and philanthropic resources exist in virtually every community, despite the high level of poverty or low level of average household income. While these resources may exist on a smaller scale, when pieced together they can provide an effective foundation for what a project is seeking to accomplish. Nevertheless, many projects were unable to maintain a formal mechanism through which such resources could be accessed and distributed efficiently and effectively. Establishing a relationship with a community organization that has more experience attracting funding is one solution. Less formal networking relationships can also provide much needed assistance in identifying local resources to leverage on behalf of a project.

Lack of a Needs Assessment

Ensuring that needs assessments elicit feedback from the appropriate community groups is vital. A few grant recipients whose projects were geared toward young people in the community acknowledged that youth were either not included in their needs assessment or were underrepresented. For one project, that exclusion had an impact on project implementation. In that case, the grant recipient developed a project that directed student activities toward an issue identified by adult community members as a priority; however, the students participating in the project expressed interests in a different direction. The grant recipient made mid-course adjustments in the project activities to respond to student feedback, but emphasized that students' opinions should have been used to inform the project from its inception. One project emphasized the connection between a good needs assessment and project sustainability. The grant recipient, whose project was inactive at the time due to a lack of funds and community passivity, recommended that future grantees conduct a community survey to assess needs and willingness to participate, as well as to establish grassroots support. These examples underscore the value of accurately assessing the needs of the community as identified by the community members themselves, and the necessity of continually gauging community needs to reflect changing community priorities.

Sustainability

Grant recipients were asked about the current status of their projects during telephone interviews and site visits. An overwhelmingly number of those grant recipients stated that their projects were still operational—with nearly four times as many active as inactive projects. Some were conducting activities and serving beneficiaries that are essentially the same as when they first began, while others have expanded the scope of their activities and the participants that they serve. Others had adapted their activities to fit the changing priorities of their communities, which demonstrates one advantage of community capacity-based projects rooted in the community.

IMPLEMENTATION:
BIG UGLY FAMILY EDUCATION

In its efforts to build community capacity, the Big Ugly Family Education project conducted a range of instructional activities, designed to make improvements at the community level and on an individual basis. Primary activities included the transformation of a dilapidated old school building into a community center, in which activities designed to encourage greater parental involvement in education, continuing education and welfare-to-work support activities for adults, and volunteer activities aimed at encouraging youth and adults were offered.

In implementing these and other activities, the project encountered several barriers that collectively, show a community that is not accustomed to working together. First, getting people to participate in the early stages of the project was probably the most significant problem. While people were more than willing to sign up or otherwise express interest in participating, some did not remain committed. This was especially important with respect to volunteers, whose shifting workload in turn meant that fewer people ended up doing larger amounts of work.

In addition, many community members expressed impatience with respect to how project funds could be spent and the difficulties involved in obtaining permission for funds to be spent on particular areas. People knew that grant money was received and that money existed, but failed to understand why they could not, for example, simply go to a store and write a check for supplies.

A third problem with respect to implementation was that there were instances in which people in the community talked behind the backs of project leaders and others who played a significant role in the project. There was resentment among some residents (not many but enough to cause problems or be a nuisance) when others ascended to leadership positions or took active, visible roles in the community.

Although no longer receiving grant funds from the ARC, the Big Ugly Creek community center remains open and holds similar activities on an ongoing basis. The center now relies primarily on private donations and fundraising. Costs are minimal, essentially involving only paying for staffing and operating (e.g., utilities) the center. The center relies heavily on VISTA and AmeriCorps members.

Although still very much in operation, no specific steps have been taken to expand the scope of the project. Project staff believe that they already have the capacity to serve anyone and everyone in the community, due to the relatively small size of the community. Nevertheless, the revenue streams that support the center are by no means stable. Therefore, according to the project director, securing enough funds and resources to sustain the project is difficult enough and takes priority over any plans for expansion.

The most fundamental reasons cited by grant recipients for being able to sustain their projects were the abilities to attract funding from a wide variety of funding sources and to have project costs absorbed into stable community institutions, like local chambers of commerce, schools, or governmental agencies. The latter signifies local ownership of the project and encourages greater commitment and responsibility for the project's viability. Grant recipients conducting leadership or civic development activities also reported a growing reliance on user fees or tuition. In general, these fees have not been prohibitive to participation, because participants turn to local organizations for sponsorship.

Several grant recipients also cited that projects are most difficult to maintain during the initial start-up phase, but operating costs diminish and become more manageable over the course of the project. This situation does not seem specific to any certain type of capacity-building project, as grant recipients commenting on this aspect of sustainability were conducting adult leadership projects, youth civic and leadership projects, and community improvement projects. This finding does not, however, minimize the continual effort required to maintain a viable funding stream. In fact, at least one grant recipient that has received considerable national attention for the project's work noted that success can deter some potential donors, who may feel that the project no longer needs their financial support. A number of the grant recipients have been highly proactive in seeking out additional funding opportunities, but there are grant recipients who explain that private money can't find them and they can't find private money. Having a staff member who is familiar with grant writing and can navigate the process can make an important contribution to a grant recipient's ability to secure additional funding. As a case in point, one grant recipient attributed the current project's inactive status to the fact it no longer has someone in a grant-writing position. Moreover, a large number of grant recipients stated that technical assistance in the area of grant writing would be extremely helpful in their efforts to find new and varied sources of funding.

Our findings suggest that another danger of success lies in the push for expansion. Several grant recipients stated that the success of their projects had led individuals and organizations external to the grantee organization to push for the grantee to serve more people and offer more services. Many grant recipients fought this natural inclination to expand upon their success, citing the need to protect the success of the project already in place and to consider long-term funding viability. Rather than find themselves overextended in a funding environment not conducive to expansion, they are cautiously weighing any intended benefits from expansion with the exigencies of their current projects.

Summary

The range of activities employed by ARC-funded capacity-building projects closely reflects the distinct needs of the communities from which the projects originated and which they hoped to address. The most common activities used by grant recipients were related to the skills and knowledge and involvement strategies. Activities related to the vision and direction and the support strategies generally played a more supplemental role. Despite the diversity of the communities and the projects, there were common barriers to implementation among them, including staff commitment, participant interest, geographic isolation, and negative norms. Projects were able to trouble shoot implementation-related problems, however, as demonstrated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of these projects remain active.
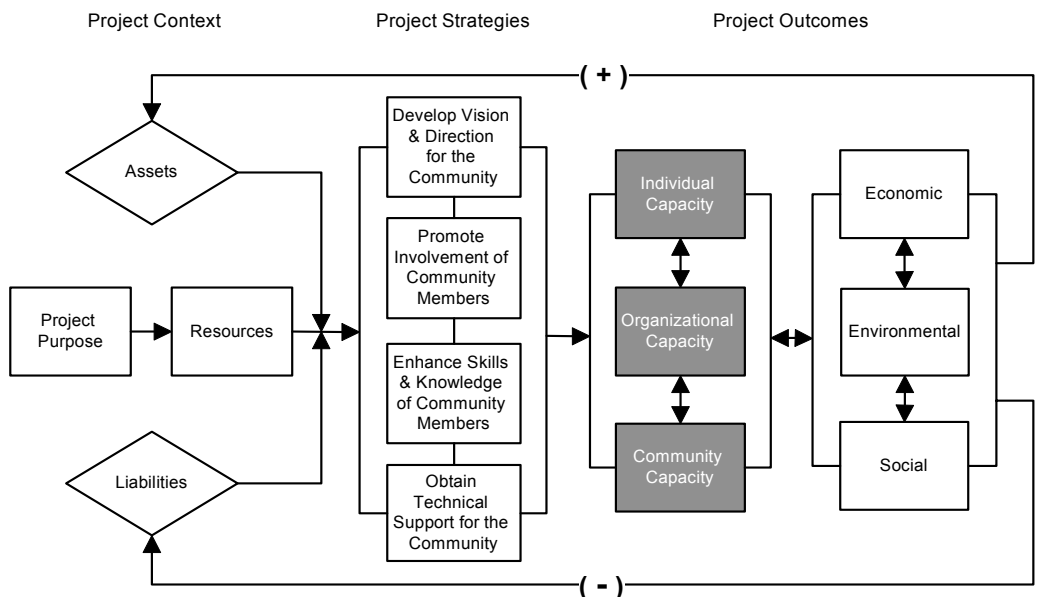
Chapter 5

<u>P</u>roject <u>A</u>ccomplishments and <u>I</u>mpact

A ssessing the impact of the diverse set of community capacity-building projects funded by ARC is a considerable analytic challenge due to the panoply of interrelated and changing players, forces, and interests within the complex social systems of communities. Further, because of this complexity, it is difficult to attribute large-scale effects (e.g., higher per capita income, decrease in poverty rates) to project activities with absolute certainty. It is even more difficult to comment on longer term systemic changes within communities as a result of project work.

Review of the case study and telephone interview projects revealed that many of the ARC-funded community capacity-building projects, regardless of the ambitiousness of their aims, involved challenge to the status quo and efforts to alter people's ordinary modes of behavior and thinking. Naturally, small-scale short-term projects of the sort funded by ARC are limited in the extent to which they can affect profound changes within communities bounded by tradition and established norms. We can, however, more modestly identify with reasonable confidence some tangible changes in individuals, organizations, and communities as a whole that were most likely the result of project activities (see exhibit 5-1). It will be shown that there is substantial evidence that the ARC-funded projects made impressive inroads toward building the capacity of communities and altering individual and organizational norms of behavior and thinking.[22]

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[22]Findings presented in this chapter are based on a subset of the 100 ARC-funded community capacity-building projects—the 12 case study projects, and the telephone interviews with 25 projects (7 projects were interviewed by telephone and were also the subject of case studies). The findings may not, therefore, be representative of all 100 ARC-funded community capacity-building projects.

Exhibit 5-1
Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects:
Enhanced Capacity Outcomes

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

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Assets

Develop Vision
& Direction
for the
Community

Individual
Capacity

Economic

Project
Purpose

Resources

Promote
Involvement of
Community
Members

Organizational
Capacity

Environmental

Enhance Skills
& Knowledge
of Community
Members

Liabilities

Obtain
Technical
Support for the
Community

Community
Capacity

Social

(-)

Goals are a broad-based description of an intended outcome; therefore, each goal in the logic model is linked to an example set of outcomes. (See appendix A for examples of outcomes that pertain to each goal.) The example outcomes are intended to aid projects in identifying their own outcomes and projecting measurable benchmarks.

The capacity goals and outcomes on the ARC Community Capacity Logic Model are organized into three broad categories: individual, organizational, and community.

- **Individual capacity goals** encompass improvements that are realized by individual community members—e.g., enhanced skills, enhanced empowerment, and increased awareness of community issues.

- **Organizational capacity goals** include improvements that are realized within and across community organizations— e.g., increased collaboration, enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, and enhanced stability/growth.

- **Community capacity goals** refer to improvements that are realized at the community level—e.g., improved planning, improved community self-reliance, increased civic participation, increased political participation, enhanced community pride, improved infrastructure, and improved educational opportunities.

While all of these goals and outcomes are treated as distinct in the logic model, in practice they are interrelated. For example, projects that aim to enhance skills (an individual goal) may find that their efforts also result in increases in community pride or civic participation (community goals).

Impact on Individuals

Many of the ARC-funded capacity-building projects had project activities geared toward building individual capacity. For example, many projects incorporated group instructional activities, mentoring, and counseling. Analyses indicate that individuals benefited in three main ways from project activities: enhanced skills, greater sense of empowerment, and increased awareness of community issues.

Enhanced Skills

The case studies and telephone interviews provided evidence from project staff and participants that the activities carried out by many projects enhanced and developed the skills and knowledge of individuals in communities. Specific skills included problem solving, investigating, planning, and organizing. Also included were communication and collaboration skills, management skills, personal skills, and public speaking skills. Many projects also were successful in educating individuals about local governance, local history, and community structure and organization.

For example, the Hale BOPP project is a leadership program designed to develop the leadership skills of selected 11th and 12th grade students throughout Hale County, Alabama. Through educational and enrichment activities, student leaders are encouraged to "take a proprietary approach to their home community and ownership of the responsibility for building a better Hale County for the future." Site visit interviews revealed that students developed a variety of important skills through participation in project activities. Chief among these was collaboration—students attested to having learned how to work constructively together toward common goals. Several mentioned the profound effects of their visit to the Challenger Learning Center in Birmingham, where they participated in a 2-hour space flight simulation project that was intended to build teamwork and problem-solving skills.

In addition, the Hale BOPP project focused on enhancing students' knowledge of local history, culture, and governance. For example, through slides, television, and drama, students were introduced to "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," James Agee and Walker Evans' portrayal of tenant farming in Hale County during the Great Depression. At another time, they took an overnight trip to Montgomery where they visited both houses of the State Legislature and took a tour of the State Capitol Building. On other days, students were introduced to various aspects of local culture, including music, dance, and theatre performances. Students reported an expanded knowledge and appreciation of their communities and of the world around them as a result of the project's innovative activities. One student noted: "It opened a whole new world to me...I saw that there are so many different things going on in life!"

Enhanced Empowerment

There is considerable evidence that many project activities led to increased confidence and sense of empowerment among individuals—many people interviewed professed the realization that they can make a difference, in the lives of other people within their communities, as well as their own. For example, according to project staff and participants, the most significant accomplishment of the Appalachian Leadership Academy, conducted by the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD), was the increased number of people in the community who have not only the competence necessary to fill leadership positions, but, more importantly, the confidence and willingness to serve as a leader. Many participants joined the program with a degree of reluctance only to graduate from it with a sincere desire to aspire to higher positions and positions of leadership within their communities.

The Ohio-West Virginia HI-Y (high school YMCA) youth leadership camp provides leadership training for teenagers at Camp Horseshoe in the mountains of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest. Activities revolve around building skills in problem solving, planning, and organizing, with focus on community service. Participants learn by doing, working in teams, and developing problem-solving skills by planning and

implementing local community projects. Participants then apply the lessons learned at camp to other areas of their lives. According to an HI-Y advisor, the camp provides a kind of idealized community that serves as a model to the young people that attend: "They don't have [back home] what we're offering here. They don't have the sense of community, the friendships. WE create our own community here. It's an unreal world in a way, a world we'd love to see. It gives them some type of vision." According to the camp director, they see changes in participants after the first week of the camp session, changes "in attitude, in self, and as they relate to the broader community….Some of the kids do go home and do something. They start their own HI-Y group and some pull it off in spite of the roadblocks."

Besides the skills acquired through leadership training and activities, teenagers acquired a new sense of their place within their communities: "When they leave the program, they never look at the world in the same way. They realize they have obligations too, to a purpose beyond self." The HI-Y youth leadership camp thus seems to have been highly successful in transmitting values of personal empowerment and responsibility.

The development of young people's self-confidence and individual capacity for service is of considerable benefit to the communities in which they live. Projects carried out by one group of teenagers have included visiting with and planning activities for the elderly, peer tutoring, and organizing to raise money for Christmas trees, decorations, and gifts for poor families. Another group helped build and now maintain a community playground and collected 60 pounds of soda can tabs that they donated to the Ronald McDonald House, which recycles them for cash. Another group conducted a blood drive, a coat drive, a stuffed animal drive, and trick or treating for canned goods that they donated to a local food pantry. In addition to the good done by these activities, several respondents noted that the community's views of its young people are becoming more positive, thanks to HI-Y participants. The project director noted that the changes occurring in individuals at the youth leadership camp will have both short-term and long-term payoff in communities as these participants grow older.

Increased Awareness of Community Issues

There are strong indications that project activities led to greater awareness of local community issues among participants and other community members. Many individuals touched by the ARC-funded community capacity-building projects became more aware of local issues and experienced an awakening to their own potential and the need for action in their communities. For example, the East Kentucky Leadership Network project (EKLN) aims to engage teens and adults in the civic life of their communities. Young people attend conferences and serve on local public boards to learn about community issues and the political decision-making process. The project director noted that the most important outcome of the project at the individual level is increased awareness of both the salient issues facing the community and how to address them.

While the individual impacts of enhanced skills, enhanced empowerment, and increased awareness of community issues were discussed separately above, it should be noted that they were often interrelated in practice, especially with respect to leadership training projects. In sum, taken as a whole, many of the capacity-building projects set into motion profound changes within individuals, affecting how they view their communities and how they understand their roles within them. Perhaps more importantly, there are indications

that these changes are leading individuals toward more proactive roles with respect to improving their own lives as well as the quality of life in their communities.

Impact on Organizations

Besides the impact of ARC-funded community capacity-building projects on individuals, many projects were successful at developing and enhancing the capacity of organizations within communities. *Organization* is defined here as an aggregate of individuals who work cooperatively and systematically toward a common set of goals under common guidelines. The types of organizations that benefited from community capacity-building projects included community development organizations, governmental agencies, chambers of commerce, businesses, and schools. Findings from the site visits, telephone interviews, and document review indicate that organizational capacity was built in a variety of ways, including increased collaboration, the enhancement of organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and enhanced stability and growth (each represented in the *organization outcomes* component of the logic model). These aspects of impact on organizational capacity are treated in turn below.

Increased Collaboration

Collaboration across organizations within communities is a key condition for building capacity. Communities that generate the involvement of organizations that pool (often limited) resources are able to work more effectively toward common goals. Also, the organizations and agencies of smaller communities are often critical nexuses of power and influence, and their cooperation, support, and involvement is essential to coordinating and carrying out community action. Further, collaboration between organizations and agencies not only helps to strengthen communities, but also builds the capacity of the organizations involved.

Findings suggest that many ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were effective in galvanizing the support of community organizations and agencies. Many projects received aid in the form of technical assistance, outreach, or additional funds and other resources from outside organizations. For example, the Big Ugly project (West Virginia) successfully assembled a team of individuals from various organizations to carry out project activities: the West Virginia University Extension Service provided technical assistance; the Save the Children Foundation provided additional funding and resources; and the Lincoln County Public School System provided logistical support and help with outreach, primarily by encouraging and facilitating parent and student involvement in the project. The Elkhorn Creek Watershed project (New York) served as a catalyst for many new partnerships between organizations in the region that subsequently brought to bear necessary resources for the protection and understanding of the watershed (e.g., a $20,000 study of fish habitat conducted by the state conservation agency).

In addition, many of the community capacity-building projects generated new links and lines of communication between organizations and the subsequent sharing of ideas and alignment of community-oriented goals. In some cases, collaboration and exchange occurred across organizations within an entire region. For example, ARC funds helped to

establish the Foundation of Appalachian Ohio (FAO), a community development organization centered in Nelsonville, Ohio, that assumes the mission to "provide a leadership role to promote collaboration" and serve as a neutral convenor of organizations and individuals in the region. Through its partnership with organizations such as the Ohio University Extension Service, and the Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD), and the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations, FAO has delivered workshops and training on a number of topics for various target audiences across the region. One important by-product of these regional meetings is networking and the sharing of ideas and information. To take another example, the Northeast Alabama Development Forum project was successful in establishing new networks and avenues for cooperation in its efforts to raise awareness about the need for regional cooperation among community leaders.

IMPACT:
HURLEY COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The original goal driving Hurley Community Development (HCD) was to decrease the exodus of community members by promoting conditions for local economic growth. The decision to use ACLP funds to clean up the local river and nearby roads was based on the idea that a cleaner community would be the first step in attracting employers to the area. According to project staff, Hurley is now 90 percent cleaner than it was prior to ACLP funding. Although cleanup efforts have not resulted in local economic growth, the quality of life for Hurley's residents has improved. In addition, the net result of HCD's activities has contributed to increases in the capacity of individual residents and community organizations.

At the individual level, the two ACLP projects increased the community's awareness of important community issues. For example, the environmental education program that was implemented at the community schools helped to raise students' awareness about litter, litter prevention, recycling, and environmental issues. Parents, through their children, also learned the importance of taking responsibility for the environment and the community in which they live.

HCD's capacity to effectively and efficiently serve the community was also enhanced. First and foremost, the agency was incorporated and gained 501(c)(3) status. Their nonprofit status has helped them to "stand alone as a self-sustaining community organization." In addition, HCD's capacity to provide home repair assistance—from minor structural repairs to replacing roofs—increased to 294 volunteers in 2003. Another new activity, the food pantry, grew out of a need to provide assistance to local families that do not meet eligibility requirements for (or receive inadequate supplies from) existing food banks. While the program began with an HCD member distributing frozen dough from her home, the organization currently has a fully stocked pantry run out of the HCD building. At one point, the distribution program served as many as 275 local families.

Perhaps most importantly, ACLP efforts helped to increase Hurley's community capacity. Civic participation increased considerably as residents of all ages have become involved with community improvement activities. Without the help and volunteer hours of community members, thousands of pounds of trash would have stayed in the river and on the roads, hundreds of individuals would not have benefited from the food pantry, and many local families would have homes in need of major repair. In addition to increased participation, there are visible signs of increased community pride. For example, over 300 local community members attended the Second Annual Community Pride Day, and Hurley received second place in Keeping America Beautiful Day.

Enhanced Efficiency and Effectiveness

In addition to promoting various types of collaboration among organizations, findings suggest that some ARC-funded community capacity-building projects helped develop the efficiency and effectiveness of specific organizations. For example, the West Virginia Municipal League (WVML) realized that there was a more efficient way to address the ongoing day-to-day queries of the 233 represented municipalities regarding aspects of local government. WVML was receiving too many calls and overlapping requests for assistance, especially from newly elected officials who had no formal training before taking office. In some cases, due to the high volume of requests for assistance, responses were delayed. The main problem addressed was the inefficiency of this system for addressing the problems/questions of elected officials. Also, it might be said that newly elected officials did not have a readily accessible set of guidelines for making daily decisions. As a result, the ARC-funded project on conducted by WVML produced the Municipal Handbook for Elected Officials, a valuable resource for elected officials. Now, rather than requesting information from WVML (and sometimes waiting for a response), officials need only pull the handbook from the shelf for the information they are seeking. According to the project director, this added considerable efficiency to WVML as an organization, freeing up staff time for other responsibilities.

The West Virginia EMS Leadership/Management Skills Training Project serves as another example of a project that increased organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The need for these skills was identified through the West Virginia EMS Technical Support Network's daily contact with EMS agencies in its role as technical assistance provider, and was corroborated by the National Association of State EMS Directors' 2000 national survey "Challenges of Rural Emergency Medical Services, Opinion Survey of State EMS Directors." The project director explained that EMS agencies in the state are largely voluntary, and often family run, with many struggling to navigate increasingly complex health care regulations. Given the essential services that EMS agencies provide, the West Virginia Technical Support Network provided a comprehensive, focused training opportunity, along with much-needed financial support to EMS agencies to strengthen their business operations and management. Forty-three of West Virginia's counties were represented at the training, and there was at least a 7.6 percent increase in the number of EMS agencies that had management points in their licensure files, thereby demonstrating the broad reach and success of the project.

Findings from the site visits show that in several cases, ARC funding was used to build the capacity and effectiveness of organizations devoted specifically to community development, and that has led to dramatic results. For example, staff of the Foundation of Appalachian Ohio noted that without the ARC grant, it would have been very difficult to accomplish what they have in the short time this organization has been in existence. According to one respondent, it takes some foundations 20 years to establish themselves the way FAO has in 5. FAO has already awarded $500,000 in grants for economic and community development projects and has built up a $2 million endowment. ARC provided the seed money that has already harvested impressive rewards for this region of Ohio.

Enhanced Stability and Growth

Related to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, many ARC-funded community capacity-building projects benefited organizations by contributing to their stability and growth. In many cases, the organizations that benefited were community development organizations that, because of ARC funding, were able to ensure their continued operation and expand the scope of their efforts and even spawn spinoff organizations.

One non-community-development organization that grew as a result of ARC funding was the Elkhorn Creek Watershed Association. The Elkhorn Creek Watershed Project was funded to improve McDowell County's water resources through testing, monitoring, and education. With the grantee's assistance, multiple partners, including local schools and government, recreational groups, and homeowners, established the association to resolve the problems and address the needs of the watershed. The nonprofit organization still operates today, more than 7 years later.

Some organizations were able to expand the scope of their community development activities, in part as a result of ARC-funding. For example, the Appalachian Leadership Academy, conducted by the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD), has been expanded to the statewide level. COAD now operates the original Appalachian Leadership Academy, designed for and open to those in the 29-county Appalachian Ohio region, as well as the statewide Community Action Leadership Academy, designed for and open to anyone working for a community action agency in the state of Ohio.

As stated earlier, ARC-funding contributed to the generation of spinoff organizations and groups that contribute to community development and the building of social and economic capacity. For example, the work of MACED and the Owsley County Action Team helped create other nonprofits within Owsley County, including the Owsley County Fund for Excellence (devoted to increasing high school graduation rates), the Eastern Kentucky Goat Producers Association, and the Vegetable Producers Association. According to one respondent, "Both MACED and the Action Teams have learned that creating and nurturing 'spin off' organizations from its projects can be a powerful way of building social capacity and increasing the flow of resources to a community."

Impact on Communities

While individual and organizational impacts involve changes to circumscribed populations within communities, the third type of impact identified in this evaluation involves larger scale changes to communities as a whole. The types of impact on community capacity documented in this section are broader in reach and reflect profound changes in the ways in which communities think collectively about their capabilities, aims, and future, as well as in how they are able to mobilize citizens toward the common good, develop infrastructure, and advance educational opportunities. The achievements of ARC-funded community capacity-building projects are summarized below, with respect to these community-level capacity outcomes.

Improved Planning

Findings from site visits, telephone interviews, and the literature review conducted for this evaluation make clear that many community development practitioners and experts believe that a community strategic plan is a critical first step and necessary condition of capacity building. In addition to providing a blueprint for the future of a community, the strategic planning process serves as a catalyst for new partnerships and constructive, collaborative thinking and problem-solving among diverse segments of a community's population.

Study findings suggest that communities with ARC-funded projects specifically geared toward strategic planning were successful at galvanizing diverse participation, identifying assets and liabilities, and collaboratively generating well-constructed plans. The scope of planning varied from one project to the next—some projects worked toward broad community-wide or regional strategic plans, while others focused on narrower domains within communities, such as downtown revitalization, housing, and environmental resources.

The Lewisburg New Neighborhood Project (Pennsylvania) involved, with the technical assistance of the Susquehanna Economic Development Association-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG), strategic planning for the downtown revitalization of the communities of Lewistown and Sunbury. The project was successful at gaining feedback and suggestions from community members by way of well-attended community meetings. The project achieved its goal of identifying 30 stakeholders for planning teams in both communities and identifying 30 neighborhood advocates and constituents for strategic planning. The project director indicated that as a result of this project's ongoing work, there are already more businesses in downtown Lewistown, and there are more inquiries from investors from inside and outside the community, specifically as a result of efforts to help restore several buildings in the downtown area. One example is the restoration of the recently vacant Embassy Theater in Lewistown, which now serves as an unofficial community center where activities and events are offered on a weekly basis.

The Southern Tier West Leadership and Civic Development Initiative (New York) project expected participating communities to conduct fairly sophisticated needs assessments to identify problems locally, "supporting the notion that a community which can identify its problems can usually bring about its own solutions." An aspect of the needs assessments was "asset mapping," that is, raising awareness of local available resources. According to findings from the telephone interview, the facilitation process that directed project participants to think independently about local needs, problems, and assets, was highly successful. Evidence of this outcome is "the adoption and implementation of strategic plans in these communities, and implementation of components of those plans."

> **IMPACT:**
> **ALABAMA FLEX-E-GRANT**
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> Up to 30 students from each of the six distressed counties participated in the youth leadership workshops. The workshops aimed to develop skills in investigation, planning, strategy, communication, and implementation of plans. The knowledge component of the workshops consisted of introducing new concepts that helped students to understand their communities and how they function. Participating students who were interviewed noted that many of these concepts were new to them and helped them to understand not only their own communities, but also how those communities differed from others.
>
> Groups of students collaboratively planned community projects (e.g., putting up new road signs, downtown beautification, establishing a youth community center) based on their researched assessments of community assets and liabilities. Once groups devised their projects, they were taught about local leadership and governance and encouraged to implement their plans by approaching and working through local city counsels.
>
> The skills component of the Alabama Flex-E-grant program involved the acquisition and development of skills related to observation, investigation, weighing alternatives (judgment), and collaboration as these pertain to community development. Students interviewed noted that the workshops were different from school in that they worked interactively in teams and conducted much of their investigation in the field. They liked the independence, and they gained greater confidence in their own judgment as a result.
>
> Some of the groups' projects were implemented, while others were turned away as too ambitious or costly. In one case, students were told by the city counsel to first conduct a community-wide needs assessment with respect to a proposed youth community center. In any event, students reported an increased understanding of local governance, leadership, and power. Project staff noted that participating students were being educated for the first time about how their communities work (and how they sometimes fail to work).
>
> In the interviews, students also revealed an enhanced awareness of issues in their communities and an awakening to their own abilities and potential to affect change. One student noted that "We see our community from a new perspective." Another student said "We see the good and the bad now," and another said "We appreciate more what we have." (The site visitor noted the interesting repeated use of the first person plural "we" by students, reflecting perhaps their sense of group identity and cohesiveness.) Several other students reported having a greater sense of belonging to a community and being tied to others. The case study of the Alabama Flex-E-grant program indicated that many of the students who participated were significantly changed by the experience and plan to continue to apply their new skills, knowledge, and awareness to the benefit of their communities.

Improved Community Self-Reliance

One important outcome of many ARC-funded community capacity-building projects, whether intended or not, was an increased sense of community self-reliance. Site visit and telephone interview findings revealed that many projects led to a renewed sense of independence and the belief that the community itself is the best shepherd of its own resources and direction.[23]

The Big Ugly Creek Community is routinely left out of the surrounding areas when it comes to receiving benefits and services. The site visit to the Big Ugly Family Education

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[23]The outcome of improved community self-reliance is viewed here as a psychological orientation, where a community discovers that it can take control of its resources and provide direction and guidance from within. The actualization of community self-reliance manifests itself in many other outcomes represented in the logic model (e.g., enhanced stability/growth, enhanced political and civic participation, and improved planning).

project (West Virginia) revealed that the ARC grant brought recognition in the community that local organized efforts could be effective. The single most important accomplishment cited by project staff was that their efforts "left a legacy of what people themselves could do rather than waiting for others." This project helped the community members realize they did not have to idly wait for benefits and services, but that they could provide them—albeit on a smaller scale—themselves.

Given the prevalent sense of powerlessness and passivity in many Appalachian communities, the development of the sense of self-reliance and independence is a significant achievement. Speaking of the MACED Sustainable Communities Initiative project (Kentucky), the project director noted: "Residents in both communities that participated in the project tell us that the Action Team has brought a new sense of optimism about the community's future and its own capacity to control that future. While hard to quantify, this cannot be underestimated in communities that have become cynical in the face of over a century of exploitation and poverty." The MACED project resulted in "strong, independent…action teams, with their own boards, that have become leading agents in the community for comprehensive community development."

Increased Civic Participation

Perhaps the most common outcome of ARC-funded community capacity-building projects was increased civic participation. Many projects were successful at generating and maintaining the participation of diverse populations in a variety of community-based efforts, including individuals who had never volunteered for community service in the past.

For example, the Lewisburg New Neighborhoods project successfully involved community members in the strategic planning process. The site visitor noted that the single most important accomplishment of the project is that "it has led to more people getting involved and realizing that they have a stake in their community." The Ohio-West Virginia YMCA Youth Leadership project included activities such as visiting with and planning activities for the elderly in the community, peer tutoring, and organizing a Christmas tree program. The project director noted: "When [students] leave our program, they never look at the world in the same way. They realize they have obligations too, to a purpose beyond self."

One aspect of civic participation is the cultivation of a sense of obligation to one's community. Many of the ARC-funded projects, especially those with leadership components, were successful

> **Ohio-West Virginia YMCA Youth Leadership Project**
>
> The project director told the story of some students who decided to do a clean-up of a little park in their community. Some gentle-men from the Lions Club came by and asked them what they were doing. The kids told them they were cleaning up the area, and the Lions Club members said they would help. Then some ladies from the local garden club came by and also asked what they were doing. The kids told them, and the ladies said they would help too. The result wasn't just a beautiful place in the community, but that 16-year-olds were working along side 70- and 80-year-olds. "That's an invaluable result, the connection of those generations doing something together." He extolled this idea of civic life, that someone asks "what are you doing?" and then says, "I'll help."

at transmitting this value, not only to project participants, but also to those within communities touched by project activities.

In addition, participation in many cases helped break down social barriers between racial/ethnic groups, age groups, and social classes within communities. For example, the Hale BOPP project (Alabama), a leadership program for high-achieving high school students, included a wide range of public service and community improvement activities. Many students who were interviewed noted that the most profound effect of their participation was getting to interact with and understand students from different parts of Hale County, a region historically segregated along racial/ethnic lines. The project's final report included several telling journal entries from participating students: "It makes me feel good to know that there are some people, like this group of teenagers, who can get together and forget about race and gender differences. And it is good to know that we can read about the history of Blacks and Whites and realize from our own experience that a change has come." Another student wrote: "When we first met as a group, we were strangers with a name tag for identification. Now, all of us are connected by this experience. Every single one of us is now more culturally diverse along with being more prepared to be leaders."

Increased Political Participation

One aspect of community capacity is a citizenry that is politically active and familiar with the functions and workings of government. Several ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were successful at promoting political involvement and educating community members about local governance. For example, the East Kentucky Leadership Network project encouraged young people to serve on local public boards and introduced them to various facets of local and state governance. One feature of the project was shedding light on the political process and building the confidence of young people to encourage their participation. The project director gave the example of a student named J, who received a scholarship to attend a White House conference in Washington, DC. "He walked right up and introduced himself to Hal Rogers, Congressman of Kentucky's 5th District. He even managed to get a meeting with the Secretary of HHS. He called one of the project staff members and said 'Hey R, I'm up here in DC. I have a meeting with Tommy Thompson in 30 minutes, what do you want me to say?'"

Another project successful at promoting political involvement was MACED's Sustainable Communities Initiative. The Letcher County Action Team, funded through this initiative, established "Fiscal Court TV," a public access broadcast of the county fiscal court meetings. Letcher County faced a multitude of problems that led to low levels of community political participation. In an effort to begin to combat this problem, the Action Team televised the county's fiscal court meetings. Not only did community members begin to watch and become interested in the fiscal court meetings, but attendance at the meetings went from 5 or 6 to 40 to 50 community members.

The Carroll/Garrison/Jefferson Leadership Program was designed to "provide potential leaders with the knowledge, skills, and experiences which would enable them to provide leadership in their community" and "increase the 'pool' of available leadership in the three counties." The Ohio State University Extension, which conceived of and implemented the program, saw a need for a program for people who are in leadership

positions but have not been trained how to be leaders. This also extended to community members as a whole who have the potential to take on leadership roles in the community, but who perhaps do not have the skills needed to be an effective leader. Moreover, the Extension "wanted [community members and leaders] to know how government influences their lives." As part of the program, participants learned about public policymaking, public speaking, community development, and community service. They also traveled to Washington, DC, to learn about the federal government, preparing ahead of time by reviewing the congressional schedule and talking to legislative aides about important community issues. Participants were given a 6-month follow-up survey to discuss what they learned, how they had applied that new knowledge to their lives, and what changes they had made personally and professionally. One participant, who was a candidate for local office, noted how much he benefited from the lessons on public policy and public speaking. A member of the County Commission who participated had never been to Washington, DC, and said that learning about how the federal government works was valuable to his work. Another participant, who had never held any type of office before the program, had become the president of his union. All of the survey respondents indicated they were either volunteering in the community had plans to do so.

Enhanced Community Pride

Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which a project may lead to enhanced community pride, there is anecdotal evidence that ARC-funded community capacity-building projects had this effect in many communities. Site visit and telephone interviews repeatedly provided testaments to a new sense of pride in communities as a result of project activities. For example, the Aliceville museum project (Alabama) involved needed renovations and led to an increase in visitors both from inside and outside of the community. The project director noted that local community residents would come back to visit the museum: "Some come back and talk about my history and can see the town from their own families' perspective." Pride is demonstrated in local letters to the editor, community members providing both monetary (membership) and physical donations to the museum, informal conversations, and local families bringing out of town family members to visit the museum.

Many of the ARC-funded leadership projects enhanced community pride. One common reflection, especially of young people who had participated in leadership programs, was that people were able to appreciate the uniqueness and value of their communities in a new way. For example, the Hale BOPP project (Alabama) included activities specifically geared toward raising awareness of the assets of Hale County, aiming to persuade talented young people to settle locally after college. Many of the students who were interviewed said that they had greater pride in their county and communities as a result of their participation in the project and indicated that they intended to return to Hale County after finishing college.

Improved Infrastructure

Another aspect of community capacity is infrastructure, defined here as the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community. This includes transportation and communications systems, water and power lines, and public institutions such as schools, post offices, recreation centers, and prisons. While many

ARC-funded projects aim to enhance infrastructure in communities, these are generally under the purview of other ARC programs (e.g., telecommunications, transportation). However, site visits and telephone interviews reveal that some ARC-funded community capacity-building projects did improve infrastructure in various ways.

For example, the Owsley County Action Team, as part of the MACED Sustainable Communities Initiative, purchased and established Action Place, a community center, offering meeting space and a computer lab for such purposes as college classes, school work, youth training, and preparation of income taxes. The computers allow access to programs that community youth might not have at home or elsewhere. One respondent noted that a community member used an Action Place computer to prepare a resume that helped her to get a job. Other results of the work of the Owsley County Action Team include new street lighting on a local highway and the addition of a police officer, which has resulted in decreased vandalism in the community.

Longer Term Impacts

The discussion of the impacts and achievements of the ARC-funded projects has been limited to those involving the development of capacity at various levels. However, the ARC-funded community capacity-building projects benefited communities in ways that go beyond enhanced capacity. These include outcomes that one would expect to follow eventually from built capacity, such as increased employment and commerce, improved water quality and land use, and improved health and safety. These outcomes are categorized in this report and in the logic model as long-term economic, environmental, and social outcomes (Exhibit 5-2).

Exhibit 5-2
Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects:
Community Development Outcomes
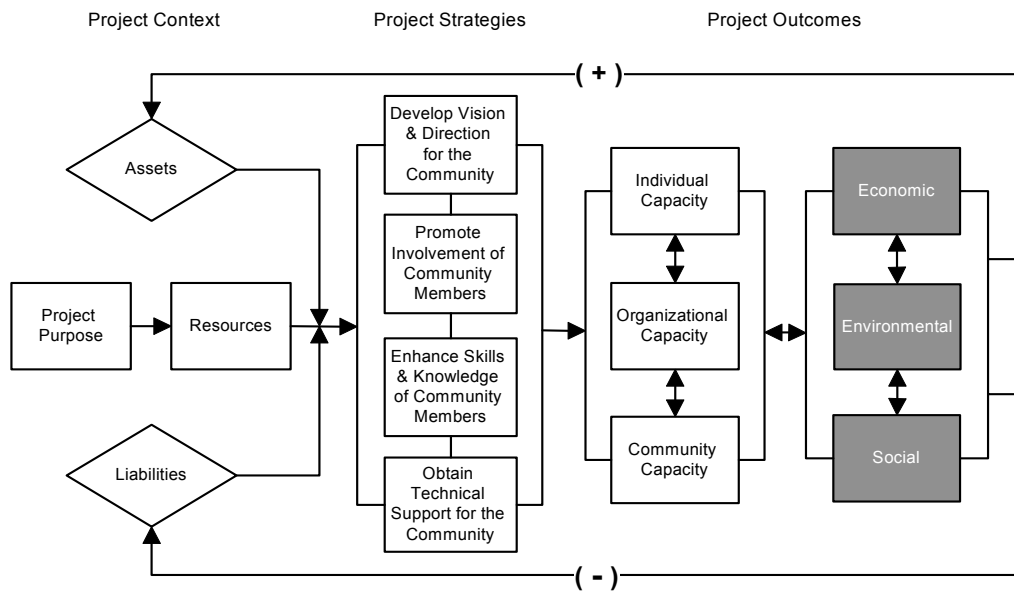
Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

Goals are a broad-based description of an intended outcome; therefore, each goal in the logic model is linked to an example set of outcomes. (See appendix A for examples of outcomes that pertain to each goal.) The example outcomes are intended to aid projects in identifying their own outcomes and projecting measurable benchmarks.

The community developmental goals and outcomes on the ARC Community Capacity Logic Model are organized into three broad categories: economic, environmental, and social.

- **Economic goals** refer to improvements in the economic well being of the community—e.g., increased tourism, increased commerce, increased/improved employment, and decreased outmigration of community members.

- **Environmental goals** include improvements to the environmental conditions within the community—e.g., improved water quality, improved air quality, improved soil quality, improved land use, and increased/improved recycling.

- **Social goals** refer to improvements to the social well-being of the community—e.g., improved health, improved learning, increased safety, improved governance, and improved community housing and structures.

The Aliceville Museum and Cultural Arts Center Renovation, an ACLP continuation grant, continued previous efforts to renovate and expand a local history museum and revitalize downtown Aliceville, an area that had many old buildings that "were real eyesores." The project cited several community capacity outcomes such as increased community pride and participation, but they also anticipated such economic outcomes as increased tourism and increased commerce.

With the help of ARC funding and community volunteers, this project was able to create an attraction that successfully brought tourists of all age groups into the Aliceville community. During the grant period, six tour buses came to Aliceville with the specific purpose of visiting the museum, a highly visible sign of improved tourism. Not only did museum attendance improve, but the increased tourism improved the sales and revenues of the community businesses, especially the downtown restaurant. The increase in visitors to the community also gave downtown business owners a reason to improve the appearance of their storefronts.

One project achieving economic, social, and environmental outcomes was the Elkhorn Creek Watershed Association Project. Before ARC funding, there were no sewage treatment systems in the watershed and few residents had septic systems, meaning that human waste was piped directly into Elkhorn Creek. Prior to the onset of this project, the grantee also saw that many community members were continuing to litter and pollute the creek, thereby negating their efforts to do a major clean up. At that point, they saw the need for environmental education and selected and trained six youth "crew members" to do water quality testing and raise the environmental awareness level of community residents. The crew members went into the community and educated and solicited the support of homeowners, local government, schools, and other community groups. Those groups and individuals came together to form the Elkhorn Creek Watershed Association to resolve the problems and address the needs of the watershed.

This project and the association have helped to improve the water quality of Elkhorn Creek, improve the health and well-being of community members, and increase tourism to the community. More than 7 years later, the association is still working to improve the water quality in the region. In addition to bringing much needed attention to the region's poor water quality, the association has worked to make laws requiring septic systems in all new homes/buildings and to enforce stricter building codes, which have contributed to the improvement of the water quality. Community members' health has improved, not just because the water is cleaner, but because they are more aware of diseases that may occur as a result of coming into contact with contaminated water sources. The improved water quality has and will also continue to help the region economically because it will attract fishermen to the area.

While ARC-funded community capacity-building projects certainly gave rise to various economic, environmental, and social changes, evidence in most cases is largely anecdotal and nonsystematic. Many site visit and telephone interview respondents noted anticipated benefits, but understood that such benefits to their communities would take time to manifest and were beyond the scope of their work. These longer term development outcomes will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Summary

Site visit and telephone interview findings provided significant qualitative evidence that the ARC-funded projects were largely successful at building capacity at different levels. Project outcomes were viewed as falling into three main types of capacity outcomes—individual, organizational, and community. At the individual level, projects enhanced the skills and knowledge of community members, increased awareness of community issues, and developed people's sense of empowerment. Many projects benefited organizations by increasing collaboration and the sharing of ideas and strategies for community development, and by enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness, as well as their stability and growth. Projects also benefited communities more broadly by improving strategic planning, enhancing the sense of community self-reliance and pride, increasing civic and political participation, and improving infrastructure and educational opportunities.

Study findings reveal that many projects had outcomes and achievements at more than one level of capacity, suggesting a richness and efficiency of approach with respect to capacity building. Qualitative evidence from across the site visits and telephone interviews support the view that many projects had far-reaching effects in communities. Some of these effects involved significant changes in orientation and attitude, toward both communities and social and political duty and service. Many projects led to greater awareness of community issues, a greater sense of community pride and self-reliance, and a stronger commitment to community service. Also, many projects were successful at convincing people of their own capacity for self-improvement and change. Besides these important psychological and attitudinal changes, projects gave rise to more concrete benefits, including the development of individual skills and knowledge, increased collaboration, the strengthening of community organizations and infrastructure, increased volunteerism, and improved planning.

IMPACT:
BIG UGLY FAMILY EDUCATION

In many respects, a community can be thought of as a group of individuals; therefore, the capacity of a community is enhanced by improving the skills and knowledge of, and bringing about a greater sense of empowerment among, its individual members. The Big Ugly Family Education project was no exception.

For example, the transformation of a dilapidated school building into a community center provided a location to which children could go on a daily basis—after school, on weekends, or during the summer—to read books, use computers, or engage in constructive activities under the supervision of adults. While the computers and other resources provided at the center could not be considered state of the art, they were a vast improvement over what existed just a few years prior, which was next to nothing. As a result, according to project staff and parents, the children's skills and knowledge were enhanced and they had exposure to subjects that they otherwise might not have had.

While it can be said that the project had a series of accomplishments, most did not come easily. The project encountered numerous obstacles along the way, especially in its initial stages, as described in prior chapters. Nevertheless, the optimism displayed by the project's leadership, according to one project participant, spread throughout the community in an unprecedented way and ultimately led to a greater sense of empowerment in the community as a whole. In the minds of numerous community members—even those who were the least pessimistic—the idea that individuals could successfully collaborate in rebuilding or enhancing their own community would have been unimaginable a few years ago. This unprecedented sense of empowerment continues to underlie project activities.

Although this increased sense of empowerment was not necessarily specified as a desired outcome at the outset, it was ultimately the single most important outcome cited by project staff. The fact that the project left, in the words of the project director, "a legacy of what people themselves could do rather than waiting for others" is more important than any outcome provided to any one individual or group of individuals. It is precisely this mindset that will continue to have a positive effect well into the future.

It should be noted that the individual, organizational, and community levels are highly interrelated. For example, benefits to individuals may also benefit communities, and benefits to community capacity may also increase organizational capacity. It could be argued that none of the specific outcomes described in this chapter would, in and of themselves, be sufficient to affect long-lasting change in communities. The fact that many ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were multidimensional in their outcomes, and impacted individuals, organizations, and communities at once, argues for their utility and value.

Performance **M**easurement

As shown in the previous chapter, the ARC-fund community capacity-building projects were successful in building various types of capacity in many communities within the Appalachian region. The benefits of these projects to individuals, organizations, and communities were far reaching and significant. One could argue further that such enhanced capacity has paved the way for longer term economic, environmental, and social benefits, as well as increased community assets and decreased liabilities.

It should be noted, however, that our conclusions about program impact are primarily based on the observations, reflections, and judgments of project staff and participants themselves, rather than on more concrete and documented forms of evidence. As is discussed throughout this chapter, while many of the anticipated outcomes delineated in proposals to the ARC appear to have been achieved, claims of project success could not be substantiated with hard data. In some cases, this is because the desired outcomes that projects described in their proposals were not sufficiently clear, specific, and measurable—and therefore could not provide data-based tangible evidence of project success. In other cases, projects did not invest in the data collection activities required to demonstrate the immediate or long-term impacts of the efforts. Over the long term, these two problems will ultimately hinder the Commission's ability to document the range of benefits resulting from its community capacity-building projects.

The chapter addresses project impact within the context of ARC's performance measurement system. Specifically, it examines whether projects achieved their stated goals and focuses on the extent to which projects identified clearly defined, specific, and measurable outcomes. The analyses are based exclusively on the 30 case study and telephone interview projects.[24]

Policy Context and Measurement Issues

Under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), even a fully implemented project cannot be considered successful until it provides tangible evidence that it benefited the individuals and communities it served. A systematic and accurate assessment of project achievement requires a performance monitoring system that can be used to demonstrate not only that projects carried out their proposed activities, but also the extent to which those activities ultimately benefited individuals and communities. For such a system to work effectively, activities and related benefits must be clearly defined

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[24] There were 12 site visits for case studies, and 25 telephone interviews with projects, with overlap between these groups of projects. Of the 12 case study projects, 7 also participated in telephone interviews.

and measurable. Further, projects should have realistic plans in place to obtain valid and reliable data that can be used to document progress toward their outcomes.

There are two broad types of data that federal grant projects can collect and disseminate. *Output* data provide information on the type and level of services provided to participants—e.g., "The project will serve 60 participants in a leadership training program." *Outcome* data document the condition or circumstance of program participants after a service has been provided—e.g., "The project will increase tourism-related revenue in the community by 25 percent." Prior to 1993, many federal agencies primarily relied on output data to quantify the types of services they were providing. However, under GPRA, federal programs must also use outcome data to demonstrate improvements that have occurred as a result of their services. Until the institution of GPRA in late 1990s, there were few ARC guidelines in place promoting the inclusion of outcomes in applications and final reports. In 1998, this situation changed when the Commission developed application guidelines that were oriented toward GPRA and designed to improve the quality and consistency of the proposals submitted to ARC. Under these new guidelines, applicants are required to describe the objectives of their proposed project, provide an explanation of how the effort pertains to one or more of the Commission's five strategic goals, and offer a rationale for their proposed approach. They must also describe the "output and outcome benefits to be derived from the project—with particular emphasis on the extent to which the benefits to the area being served by the project will be realized on a continuing rather than a temporary basis."[25]

The new guidelines also encourage applicants to provide numeric benchmarks that specify the number of individuals or organizations that will receive services and benefit from the ARC-funded activities. The use of numeric benchmarks provides the Commission and its projects with specific targets against which immediate and long-term progress can be measured. As such, the delineation of numeric benchmarks represents a critical cornerstone of ARC's evolving performance monitoring strategy. It should be noted that because of this shift, the community capacity-building projects included in this study were subject to different reporting requirements. For example, of the 30 case study and telephone interview projects discussed throughout this chapter, 12 were initiated before the new 1998 application guidelines (and were therefore not required to quantify how their participants would benefit from their proposed activities), 7 were initiated at the time these guidelines were introduced, and 11 were initiated after the guidelines were in place.

ARC is not unique in its efforts to come to terms with performance measurement—many agencies and organizations are struggling with similar accountability issues and taking steps toward installing stronger measurement systems. For example, several federal grant programs have established application and reporting procedures that are designed to establish links between project goals, activities, outcomes, and measurable outcome indicators.   ARC has demonstrated considerable interest in and commitment to continuing to improve and enhance program accountability as evidenced by the commission of this evaluation, which was directed to focus in particular on the strengths and weaknesses of ARC's current performance measurement system.

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[25]ARC Project Application Workbook.

MEASUREMENT:
NEW OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL FOR WOMEN

Outcomes proposed by the New Opportunity School were capacity based and focused primarily on the individual level, and to a lesser extent, the community level. From its inception, the school has collected considerable information from the women who participate in the school's activities, particularly those in the residential program. It collects baseline data such as information on income, public assistance, and health insurance. The school also administers short pre- and post-tests, session evaluations, a 6-month follow-up survey, and a biennial follow-up survey that tracks women's progress after the program.

The school puts a premium on the quantitative data they collect about the number of women who are employed, enrolled in school, or both after completing the program and set the following numerical benchmark for this outcome: "Of the residential participants 20 (70%) are expected to get a job or return to school." A recent follow-up survey has shown that 76 percent of the school's graduates achieved this goal.

The school also sets numerical benchmarks for participation in its programs. Outcome statements on participation include the following: "Regional leadership workshops will be held in 8 ARC counties; overall attendance is expected to be 140" and "28 women will attend residential sessions." The school's web site is used to publicize the school's reach among women in the community. It notes that since being founded in 1987, more than 400 women have graduated from the residential program; in 2003, nearly 800 women were served by at least one of the school's programs, including the outreach workshops and the counseling services offered at the school.

Other outcomes proposed by the school were broader and more difficult to measure as a result. Examples include "increased awareness of community leadership opportunities in rural Appalachia" and "increased awareness of leadership abilities and changes in leadership, academic, and career self-efficacy." Rather than relying solely on anecdotal information to document outcomes such as these, however, the school uses the pre- and post-tests and follow-up surveys to collect information. In addition, they collect qualitative data by documenting women's stories in their own words through letters and comments included on the evaluation forms that express what the school has meant to them. The narratives provide a compelling testament to the impact that the program has had on the lives of the women who have participated in the school's programs.

Staff members described the importance of the data they collect in their fundraising efforts because the data demonstrate to potential funders the success the women have after leaving the program. The staff also uses feedback from the session evaluations to guide program development and implementation. While the baseline data are collected as a required part of the application process, follow-up data necessary to documenting the school's achievement of outcomes has been more difficult to collect because of the considerable time commitment needed by the staff. For example, after the biennial surveys are sent out by mail, the staff tries to conduct telephone follow-up to increase the response rates. There have been times when the telephone follow-up has not been pursued as aggressively as they would like, however, because of the limited number of staff available to do it.

Staff discussed other factors that hinder the follow-up data collection. The school has been in existence for 17 years, and it becomes increasingly difficult with the passage of time to keep current contact information on graduates, particularly women who graduated from the program. In addition, "circumstances" have often prevented the women from accomplishing the goals they set for themselves after they graduate from the program. Specifically, health-related problems including depression can have debilitating effects, particularly for women who have not had the benefit of adequate health care. Health-related issues have prevented some of the women from returning to school or seeking employment, and were also cited as a reason why some women have had to withdraw from the program after they've been accepted. As a result, some women are not eager to complete the survey. As a staff member explained, "We all want to talk about our successes—but not our failures."

ARC is in the midst of a strategic planning process to evaluate and improve its programs and activities. Much of the focus of this process will be a reevaluation of its current performance measurement system, so that the agency will, in the future, be able to demonstrate clearly the results of its work and show that the nation's investment in Appalachia through ARC is worthwhile. Much of this reevaluation will involve consideration of the role of the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART) in assessing program and project impact within ARC's performance measure system.

Outcomes Anticipated by ARC-Funded Community Capacity-Building Projects

In order for a performance measurement system to work effectively, various criteria must be satisfied. First, the outcome statements put forward by projects must be clear, relevant, and measurable (Craig 2002; Hart 1999). Second, projects must have the means and methods available to measure specific outcomes, and these must be employed appropriately. This section examines the content, clarity, and measurability of the outcomes proposed by ARC-funded community capacity-building projects. In order to assess the outcomes, we conducted a systematic review of the proposals submitted by the 30 case study and telephone interview sites. (As part of this review, we also identified outcomes contained in the ARC memorandums that were prepared for these 30 projects.) The purpose of the review was to evaluate the content, clarity, and measurability of the original outcomes proposed by these projects, as well as to assess the extent to which they achieved their anticipated outcomes. Our familiarity with these projects was helpful in categorizing the outcomes by type, in determining whether or not the outcomes were actually achieved, and in assessing the extent to which projects were able to measure and document their proposed outcomes. For these reasons, we did not include the other 70 capacity-building projects in this analysis.[26]

It should be noted that the distinction between outputs and outcomes is often blurred with respect to community capacity-building efforts because capacity, like outputs, may be viewed as a *means* toward further ends or benefits. That is, many outcomes that involve the building of capacity do not *directly* involve benefits to individuals, organizations, or communities in the traditional sense—rather, they generally increase the potential of individuals, organizations, and communities to lead to some benefit at a later point in time. For example, one proposed outcome for a strategic planning project was that "the project will determine the long-term (20-40 years) needs and potential of the region." While one could argue that such an outcome indeed enhances a community's capacity for future develop, it is hard to see how it directly benefits the community. For these reasons, we refer to all such outcome and output statements in the following sections as "outcomes."

In addition, the definition of clear and measurable outcomes is notoriously difficult for community capacity-building projects. One reason is that many of the benefits resulting from such efforts are not easily quantifiable, such as enhanced community pride, empowerment, and community self-reliance. Further, many of the more quantifiable outcomes are hard to measure in a cost-effective manner. For small-scale and/or short-

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[26] Since the 25 telephone interview projects were selected at random, it may be the case that findings presented are representative of the entire study sample (100 projects), although this cannot be stated with certainly.

term projects with limited resources for data collection, it is even more difficult to assess whether the activities ultimately contributed to longer term economic, environmental, or social outcomes. For these reasons, the identification and measurement of clear and relevant outcomes is a considerable challenge for community capacity-building projects.

Distribution of Project Goals and Outcomes

In order to gain a better understanding of the types of outcomes put forward by projects, we culled 179 outcomes from proposals and ARC memorandums among the 30 site visit and telephone interview sites. These outcomes were first classified into one of the six enhanced capacity (i.e., individual, organizational, community) and developmental (i.e., economic, environmental, social) goals represented in the logic model. Within each goal, the outcome statements were then coded by type—for example, outcome statements for the individual capacity goal were coded as enhance skills, enhance empowerment, and increase awareness of community issues (see exhibit 6-1 for examples of outcomes by goal type). If the wording of an outcome did not clearly suggest a particular category, we considered the outcome in light of the project's fuller context—i.e., efforts were made to capture the intent of the project (based on project documentation and site visit and telephone interview notes) without extrapolating too far beyond the literal phrasing of the outcome statement. Also, some of the statements were pulled from the "benefits" section of the ARC memorandums, and so may not have been intended as formal outcomes. Despite these caveats, the coding of outcomes into types provides considerable insight into what projects expected to achieve as a result of their activities.

Exhibit 6-1

Examples of outcomes identified by ARC community capacity-building projects

Individual
- Provide potential leaders with knowledge, skills, and experiences which would enable them to provide leadership in their community organizations (*enhanced skills*).
- Better educate and enlighten children and adults about the history and culture of our cotton based economy (*increased awareness of community issues*).
- Changes in leadership, academic, and career self-efficacy (*enhanced empowerment*).

Organizational
- Encourage the interaction among businesses, community groups, government, and schools (*increased collaboration*).
- Develop CAP's institutional capability to provide youth training by developing a curriculum, demonstrating a model of organizing and training youth (*enhanced efficiency and effectiveness*).
- No less than 30% increase in museum attendance and membership (*enhanced stability/growth*).

Community
- The project will determine the long term (20-40 years) needs and potential of the region (*improved planning*).
- STW will assist interested communities in gathering committed individuals and help them gain the knowledge and experience needed to address their own problems (*improved community self-reliance*).
- Involve at least 60 Creek residents in community volunteer activities (*increased civic participation*).
- Participants will be encouraged to become more involved in local government and run for public office (*increased political participation*).
- Organize the second annual community pride day—attract 600 people and provide free food and entertainment for all (*enhanced community pride*).
- Improve the downtown business district—Add 3 street lights and 1 bench (*improved infrastructure*).
- The project will provide the opportunity for local community college students to learn about the diversity of existing leadership styles and opportunities (*improved educational opportunities*).

Economic
- Draw students and out of town visitors to the community and prompt more commercial redevelopment (*increased tourism and increased commerce*).
- Within 4 years, at least 25 percent (5) of interns [will be] established in their own trade business (*increased employment and increased commerce*).
- If the sewage problem was resolved, angling recreational use would increase and contribute significant dollars to the local, depressed economy (*increased tourism*).
- These neighborhood planning and organizing efforts will…demonstrate the methods and means for fostering new growth and investment and help attract regional interest to each participating community (*increased commerce*).
- In the long term, participants will be more likely to return to Hale County and make personal investment in the community (*decreased outmigration*).

Environmental
- Improve the local environment—clean 25 miles of river, maintain 26 miles of recently cleaned river, and remove 3 dumpsites (*improved water quality and improved land use*).
- Nearly 18,000 parcels of land in the two counties will be examined and classified (*improved land use*).

Social
- At least $600,000 of housing assistance (potential CDBG program funds) will be targeted for housing assistance over the next four years in these two counties (*improved housing*).
- Project will educate and provide much needed technical assistance and resources to local leaders throughout the state (*improved governance*).

NOTE: Examples were taken from project proposals and memorandums.

As shown in table 6-1, most (85 percent) of the 179 outcomes proposed by the 30 projects were capacity based (i.e., individual, organizational, or community).[27] The remaining 26 outcomes (15 percent) were development outcomes (economic, environmental, or social), suggesting that most projects were setting their sights on shorter term capacity-building goals. However, discussed later, this finding also suggests that projects were focusing on enhancing their short-term capacity without considering how their efforts could ultimately benefit the economic, environmental, and social conditions of their communities.

Of the 179 outcome statements, 55 (30 percent) were classified as individual, 25 (14 percent) as organizational, and 73 (41 percent) as community outcomes. Of the 26 developmental outcome statements, 11 (6 percent) were economic, 7 (4 percent) were environmental, and 8 (4 percent) were social outcomes. Across the 179 outcome statements that we reviewed, the most commonly proposed were enhanced skills (22 percent), increased civic participation (15 percent), improved planning (11 percent), and increased collaboration (9 percent). These statements align well with the types of project activities described in chapter 4—i.e., skills training, strategic planning, and holding meetings, conferences, and forums.

Table 6-1

Types and number of outcomes for the 30 case study and telephone interview sites

Type of outcome	Number	Percent
Total	179	100
Capacity Outcomes	153	85
Individual	55	30
Enhanced skills	40	22
Increased awareness of community issues	7	4
Enhanced empowerment	8	4
Organizational	25	14
Increased collaboration	17	9
Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness	5	3
Enhanced stability/growth	3	2
Community	73	41
Improved planning	20	11
Improved community self-reliance	14	8
Increased civic participation	26	15
Increased political participation	2	1
Enhanced community pride	5	3
Improved infrastructure	2	1
Improved educational opportunities	4	2
Development Outcomes	26	15
Economic	11	6
Increased tourism	2	1
Increased commerce	2	1
Increased/improved employment	5	3
Decreased outmigration	2	1
Environmental	7	4
Improved water quality	4	2
Improved air quality	*	*
Improved soil quality	*	*
Improved land use	3	2
Increased/improved recycling	*	*
Social	8	4
Improved health	1	1
Improved learning	3	2
Increased safety	*	*
Improved governance	2	1
Improved community housing and structures	2	1

*No outcomes statements were proposed.

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[27]In fact, of the 30 site visit and telephone interview sites included in this analysis, only one project did not propose at least one capacity outcome. This particular project proposed three economic/increased employment outcomes, all involving an increase in new jobs for project participants. The project might have also proposed an increase in individual skills as an outcome, but did not.

MEASUREMENT:
HURLEY COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Although the Hurley Community Development (HCD) tackled a wide range of community improvement initiatives, the resulting impact on the region's economy and overall quality of life went undocumented. For example, the project used photographs and testimonials to document the 25 miles of road and river that was cleaned, but did not document the resulting environmental and social impacts (e.g., decrease in chemical pollutants, increase in number of persons using the river for recreational purposes). And while they obtained a count of the number of individuals that attended Community Pride Day, they did not measure the effect of their participation on overall community pride.

In spite of the fact that HCD did not collect any outcome data, the interviews with HCD volunteers elicited several practical and innovative ideas on the type of data that they might have collected to assess project impact. For example, one volunteer suggested tracking the number of complaints made by residents about local conditions to assess increased community empowerment. The volunteer reasoned that an increase in complaints could serve as a proxy for an increase in the number of community members who desire change and feel empowered to make that change happen. Another suggestion for assessing increased community pride was to post an open-ended question (e.g., how do you feel about your community?) in a common gathering place (such as a grocery store or post office). By leaving a paper tablet and box by the question, the volunteer indicated the project could have compared monthly comments to determine increases or decreases in community pride.

HCD did use a "windshield survey" to (1) document the physical layout of the community; (2) obtain a basic understanding of existing social, economic, housing, and environmental resources in the community; and (3) explore physical factors that might limit Hurley's future planning and growth. To administer this survey, a VISTA volunteer and several other individuals spent a week in June 1998 driving by each physical structure in the community—including houses, businesses, bridges, creek banks, and road sides. Each structure was rated on a five-point scale (i.e., excellent, good, fair, poor, abandoned). According to the survey, 70 percent of the 1,714 residences in Hurley were single family dwellings, 29 percent were mobile homes, and less than 1 percent were multiple family dwellings. In addition, 65 percent of the dwellings were in good or better condition, 20 percent were in fair condition, and 10 percent were in poor shape. The results of this windshield survey were used to document the need for a coordinated effort to improve the physical condition of the community's dwellings. However, because the volunteer left the community, there has been no further efforts to re-administer the survey to document the current conditions of community homes resulting from the HCD home repair program.

Quality of the Outcome Statements

One important purpose of a performance measurement system is to assess systematically the impact of project activities across an entire program. However, performance measurement systems are only as good as the actual outcomes contained within them. Outcomes must be relevant, clear, specific, and measurable. One common method for achieving clarity in outcome statements is to provide benchmarks or numeric goals that can be used to assess whether a target has been met. The use of numeric outcomes enables an assessment of both the extent and impact of a particular service. If the outcomes proposed by projects do not satisfy these criteria, performance measurement may be compromised.

Our review indicated that most of the 179 outcome statements did not satisfy these criteria. First and foremost, only 37 percent of the outcome statements involved a numeric benchmark that could be used to determine the scope of the intended impact and

assess whether the outcome had been achieved (see table 6-2).[28] As a result, many of the outcome statements were overly broad and difficult to measure in a meaningful way, as illustrated by the following examples:

- "Increase the extent to which participating communities use sustainable principles when making community development decisions."

- "Develop leadership, problem solving, communication and organizational skills among a broad cross section of promising Appalachian youth."

- "Help instill a sense of pride and community awareness (for youth participants)."

- "Establish an effective environment and process in which regional consensus can occur."

- "The initiative will equip the region's future leaders with the leadership skills necessary to guide Ohio Appalachia through change and into a viable future."

Table 6-2
Number and percent of outcome statements with and without numeric benchmarks for the 30 case study and telephone interview sites, by outcome type

Type of outcome	Total	With numeric benchmarks		Without numeric benchmarks	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	179	45	37	134	63
Capacity Outcomes	153	99	35	54	65
Individual	55	34	38	21	62
Organizational	25	19	24	6	76
Community	73	46	37	27	63
Development Outcomes	26	13	50	13	50
Economic	11	4	64	7	36
Environmental	7	4	43	3	57
Social	8	5	38	3	62

Certainly all of these proposed outcomes are laudable and relevant in their aims—and may have occurred as a result of ARC funding. However, each was insufficiently specific and failed to indicate how it would be determined if the outcome was ultimately achieved. This lack of specificity was prevalent in many of the outcome statements we reviewed, thereby hindering the Commission's ability to systematically document the success and impact of its investment in community capacity-building activities.

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[28]Six of the 30 projects did not provide any numeric benchmarks in their proposals. However, four of these six projects were initiated before 1998, the year in which ARC revised its application and reporting guidelines. The other two were Flex-E-Grant projects that oversaw smaller projects presumably with number benchmarks—in these cases, the outcomes proposed were fairly general in order to encompass a wide range of outcomes covered by the projects subsumed by the Flex-E-Grant.

Several factors may have been responsible for this lack of specificity. First, many of the outcome (and output) statements were crafted before ARC's revised 1998 application and reporting guidelines. Thus, less emphasis may have been given at that time to the quality and measurability of statements of impact (both outputs and outcomes) in project applications. Similarly, it is possible that before 1998, grantees and project coordinators treated many output and outcome statements as qualitative in nature and had not determined how to measure them effectively.

Second, given the nature of community capacity-building endeavors, crafting meaningful *and measurable* outcome statements can be challenging—especially in the absence of a conceptual framework of what such projects can be expected to accomplish.   For example, what sorts of measures can appropriately reflect increased awareness of community issues, enhanced empowerment, or improved planning? As is discussed in chapter 7, the logic model we have developed is designed to address this issue.

Third is the inherent difficulty of developing numeric benchmarks for many of the benefits associated with community capacity building projects. For example, 13 of the 26 outcome statements pertaining to increased civic participation included a benchmark (e.g., "Each local youth leadership group will have completed at least 100 hours of actual service designed to improve their community").   However, only 3 of 14 outcome statements pertaining to improved community self-reliance—and 1 of 7 outcomes for increased awareness of community issues—included a benchmark. Thus, while some types of capacity-building outcomes are relatively easy to quantify, others are difficult to measure—especially if projects are not in a position to invest additional resources in data collection activities. This finding ultimately has implications for how future capacity-building projects select benchmarks, since they may feel pressured to specify outcomes that are convenient to measure rather than those that faithfully represent the full scope of their impact and achievement.

MEASUREMENT:
ALABAMA FLEX-E-GRANT

The following outcomes were proposed for the Alabama Flex-E-Grant program:

1) At least 180 youth from six distressed counties will participate in the Youth Leadership workshop, modeled after Youth Your Town;

2) A model curriculum will be created for high school students that emphasizes community visioning, planning, priority setting, and implementation;

3) At least 180 youth from six distressed counties will initiate and complete six small community projects;

4) At least six larger scale community project ideas will be developed for funding, each with targets/outcomes;

5) Increased number of youth taking on leadership roles within communities and counties;

6) Increased number of youth participating in community capacity-building projects.

While we refer to these statements as outcomes, they might all better be described as outputs. Three of the six statements involved numeric benchmarks. The last two statements were not sufficiently specific, in that no numeric benchmarks were included. Since the program was not yet completed at the time of the site visit, it was not possible to determine whether all of the six outputs were successfully achieved. It appeared at the time of the site visit that each of these goals would be attained, although the last two could not be easily measured.

Extent To Which Case Study Projects
Achieved Their Intended Outcomes

Most (70 percent) of the 179 outcomes proposed by the case study and telephone interview projects were successfully achieved (table 6-3). Of the remaining 53 outcomes, 16 were not achieved, 17 were proposed by projects that were still open (and therefore could not yet be categorized as successful or unsuccessful) and 20 lacked information regarding level of attainment. Excluding the two open projects, each of the projects included in this analysis achieved at least one outcome.

Table 6-3
Number and percent of outcomes achieved for the 30 case study and telephone interview sites, by outcome type

Type of outcome	Total	Yes		No		Unable to determine		Open	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total........................	179	126	70	16	9	20	11	17	9
Capacity Outcomes	153	114	75	12	8	15	10	12	8
Individual............	55	43	78	5	9	3	5	4	7
Organizational ...	25	18	72	1	4	3	12	3	12
Community	73	53	73	6	8	9	12	5	7
Development									
Outcomes................	26	12	46	4	15	6	23	4	15
Economic	11	3	27	3	27	4	36	1	9
Environmental	7	4	57	1	14	2	29	0	0
Social	8	5	63	0	0	0	0	3	37

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The attainment of outcomes was higher for capacity outcomes than for developmental outcomes (75 and 46 percent, respectively). While this observation is of interest, the small number of developmental outcomes makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about this pattern. However, it is worth noting that projects appeared to have difficulty obtaining data that could be used to ascertain whether an outcome—especially developmental outcomes—had been achieved. This mirrors our finding from the site visits that the evidence provided in support of project success was mostly anecdotal. In fact, most of the 30 case study and telephone interview projects did not collect any data about their implementation and impact. Interviews with project staff revealed several reasons for this—e.g., the difficulty of collecting data, a lack of resources or funding for data collection activities, lack of expertise and experience in data collection and evaluation methods, and the belief that such data collection was not formally required by ARC. In addition, only a few of the projects appeared to believe that the collection of such data would further their own immediate interests (e.g., to attract future funding, to improve activities), and some viewed data collection as an external imposition.

MEASUREMENT:
BIG UGLY FAMILY EDUCATION

The Big Ugly Family Education project was fairly typical in the sense that, as a community capacity building project, many of its intended benefits were not easily quantifiable. In fact, none of the project's stated outcomes sought to capture the impacts the project had on community capacity.

However, the project did set an extensive set of unambiguous, numeric benchmarks with respect to participation. Virtually the entire set of stated outcomes pertained to participation levels, i.e., the number of persons who participated in a particular activity. The benchmarks for participation established by the project at the outset were relatively high considering the small population of the community and, according to project records, all of these benchmarks were met without exception.

Outcomes such as these were very important to a project of this nature, since one of its fundamental goals was to encourage participation among community members who had never participated in such activities before. Nevertheless, the project director repeatedly emphasized how useful it could have been to collect information on "more meaningful" outcomes. Although the figures with respect to participation were important, the performance measurement conducted by the project consisted essentially of "bean counting." The intent of this project was to build community capacity by enhancing the skills of individual community members; therefore, *meaningful* in this context would have consisted of measurements that determine not only how many persons participated in a particular activity, but the impact that participation had on an individual's knowledge or skills as well.

For example, in addition to counting participants, the true impact of the project could have been determined in part through such measures as functional literacy rates. Since the project emphasized family education activities and the development of basic skills among community members, the project director felt it would have been useful to compare functional literacy rates among individuals prior to and following their participation in the project.

Although the project director had other, similar ideas with respect to enhancing performance measurement, the project did not have the resources to conduct such measurements. The project director himself, as a result of his education in the field of community development, had a working knowledge of performance measurement, but he could not have conducted such measurements on his own. Neither did he have the staff to designate persons to a task such as this. Moreover, even if the project had had funds necessary to hire an outside evaluator, it would not have been cost-effective to have done so due to the limited size and scope of the project. Although he fully acknowledged the importance of performance measurement, the project director felt it was crucial that in a project that was this limited in size and scope, and in a community that was so distressed, it was even more important to devote every dollar and every effort to providing new opportunities.

Among the few projects that did collect data, their activities consisted of surveying program participants at the conclusion of the program (usually leadership training). The Youth Leadership Initiative measured some indicators of change, such as school dropout, poverty, and college enrollment rates, but did so only during the year the grant was awarded. Staff felt it was more useful to use the funding for the purposes of program continuation rather than data collection or evaluation, which is consistent with what many other projects suggested. Due to their relatively small amount of funding, they believed it was necessary to invest every dollar in the program itself, even at the expense of data collection and evaluation.

While several leadership training projects indicated that they would have liked to conduct follow-up surveys with program participants, others felt that collecting data to assess

their impact would have been difficult, if not impossible. For example, one project indicated that it had no ideas about how one would measure increases in such outcomes as community pride, which is a typical objective of projects. One project noted that without specific requirements from ARC, they did not feel obligated to demonstrate impacts in a formal way.

More than one project believed that it would not have been worthwhile to collect data or conduct an evaluation of the program unless it was done by professionals or experts. For example, the Leadership East Kentucky project stated that although its members were familiar with evaluation, they did not know precisely what types of data would be needed to conduct such an assessment, nor how such data could be collected properly. This project felt that data collection and evaluation was too big of a task to merely receive guidance on, and that more than that was needed. They noted that hiring professional evaluators would have been useful, but at the same time felt that it was unrealistic.

Summary

Our review of 30 ARC-funded community capacity-building projects indicates that many of the outcome statements put forward by projects were not sufficiently specific and measurable, and most were not associated with numeric benchmarks. Also, most projects did not invest in data collection and documentation of the benefits associated with their efforts. This may have been due to several factors. First, many of ARC's community capacity-building projects were initiated before 1998, the year in which GPRA began to exert its influence on ARC's application and reporting requirements. Second, there is an inherent difficulty in crafting outcome statements for community capacity-building projects. Third, project staff often lacked the resources, know-how, and funding for data collection activities. Many also did not view data collection as a formal requirement by ARC.

Nonetheless, the Commission's system for monitoring, documenting, and measuring project performance will need to be revised if it is to support the collection of meaningful data on the impact of its community capacity-building projects. It is our contention that a more viable performance measurement system would require more carefully crafted outcome statements, along with additional guidance and support from ARC to projects on collection and measurement issues (see chapter 7 for detailed recommendations).

Moreover, these findings should not be taken to imply that the ARC-funded community capacity-building projects were not actually successful in achieving their goals. On the contrary, from the perspective of project staff and the current evaluator, most of the proposed outcomes were achieved. And as was shown in chapter 5, many projects were highly successful at building capacity in their communities at various levels.

Chapter 7

Summary and **R**ecommendations

Summary

ince 1995, the ARC has invested nearly $12.5 million in 168 community capacity-building projects. This evaluation examined the context within which these projects were implemented, documented the range of activities they conducted, and examined the outcomes that resulted from their efforts.[29] Special emphasis was placed on the extent to which projects were able to achieve the outcomes they had delineated in their proposals to the ARC—and the impact these projects had on the quality of life in the affected communities.

With respect to implementation, projects conducted numerous activities suited to particular project goals and used strategies attuned to the particular needs, assets, liabilities, and available resources of their communities. Looking across all projects, the single most prominent activity—cited by 51 percent of projects—was conducting a group instructional activity such as a workshop or course. Other common activities included strategic planning (35 percent), meetings, conferences, and forums (28 percent), and technical assistance and consultation (26 percent). Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of projects relied on strategies designed to enhance skills and knowledge—e.g., organizing and conducting group instructional activities, conducting one-on-one instructional activities, and facilitating the distribution of instructional materials. The problems that grant recipients encountered were generally not severe enough to prevent projects from implementing their approach. The most commonly cited problems included time and staffing constraints, attracting participant interest in the project, the isolation of and competition between communities, and limited resources.

The weight of both the qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that a clear majority of projects succeeded in achieving real results. Many projects were successful in enhancing the skills, sense of empowerment, and awareness of individuals, affecting how people view their communities and their own place within them. These changes in modes of thinking and behavior are leading individuals toward more proactive roles with respect to improving their own lives and the quality of life in their communities. Many projects developed and enhanced the capacity of organizations within communities, increasing collaboration, and enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, stability, and growth. And others had broader impacts on communities as a whole, affecting the ways in which communities think collectively about their assets, their aims, and how they are able to mobilize citizens toward the common good. Projects successfully implemented activities

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[29]Most of the findings were based on data collected from 25 telephone interviews and 12 site visits to projects (many of the site visit projects also participated in telephone interviews). Some of the findings were drawn from a document review of 100 of ARC's community capacity-building projects.

promoting improved strategic planning, community self-reliance, and increased civic and political participation.

Quantitative analysis shed some light on project aims and outcomes. Most (85 percent) of the 179 outcome statements pulled from the proposals of 30 case study and telephone interview projects were capacity based (i.e., individual, organizational, or community). The remaining 26 outcomes (15 percent) were development outcomes (economic, environmental, or social), suggesting that most projects were setting their sights on shorter term capacity-building goals. Of the 179 outcome statements, 55 (30 percent) were classified as individual, 25 (14 percent) as organizational, and 73 (41 percent) as community outcomes. Across the 179 outcome statements, the most commonly proposed included enhanced skills (22 percent), increased civic participation (15 percent), improved planning (11 percent), and increased collaboration (9 percent). Further, most (70 percent) of the 179 outcomes proposed by the case study and telephone interview projects were successfully achieved, according to project staff.

Despite these positive quantitative and qualitative findings, the ARC will have to do a better job in the future of measuring, tracking, and reporting performance of the program. While many of the projects that we examined had clearly contributed to community improvements, these contributions were rarely documented in a systematic manner. This lack of hard evidence of community impacts can be attributed to several interrelated factors. First, many projects never delineated the longer term measurable outcomes that would occur as a result of their efforts. As a result, the *outcomes* that they reported to the ARC focused primarily on the types of activities conducted and the number of persons served—as opposed to the tangible benefits that resulted from these services. Second, even projects with clearly specified outcomes lacked the resources and expertise to collect and analyze the level of data that would be required to demonstrate their success. Third, many of the project staff we interviewed intuitively knew that their projects had made a positive impact on the surrounding community—and therefore did not consider expending additional resources to document that impact. Finally, absent a requirement from the ARC, most projects lacked the incentive to collect and report outcome data. However, while the collection of such data might seem inconsequential to local stakeholders (especially given the resources required to collect and analyze reliable outcome data), such evidence would clearly facilitate the ARC's efforts to demonstrate the impact its projects have made at the community level.

In spite of this concern, we believe that there is substantial qualitative evidence that the ARC-funded projects made impressive inroads toward the building of capacity at different levels within communities. Further, given its focus on and success in generating the conditions and the prerequisites for community development and long-term economic growth (e.g., leadership skills, organizational collaboration, citizen participation, strategic planning), the ARC's capacity-building program clearly represents a unique and essential component of the Commission's continuing efforts to enhance the quality of life of the people of Appalachia.

Recommendations

In previous studies, we have recommended that the application and reporting guidelines for the ARC's individual project areas (e.g., education, vocational education,

telecommunications) be revised. Specifically, we have advised that the Commission develop separate guidelines (or supplemental materials) that provide customized application and reporting instructions, as well as examples of outcomes for a particular issue area. We have also suggested that the Commission facilitate projects' access to information about how to collect and analyze data. The following discussion is therefore designed to build upon our previous recommendations by identifying specific steps that ARC might take to enhance the application and reporting guidelines for its community capacity-building projects.

Reinforce the ARC application materials provided to community capacity-building applicants. The Commission has developed a wide range of materials designed to provide prospective applicants with generic guidance on what constitutes a successful proposal, as well as specific examples of the types of community capacity-building activities it is looking to support. For example, in 1998, the Commission published an application workbook designed to improve the quality and consistency of the proposals submitted to ARC. Under these generic guidelines, applicants were urged to describe the objectives of their proposed project and describe the output and outcome benefits to be derived from their efforts. A second publication, *Preparing a Grant Proposal: Five Steps in the Proposal Writing Process*, describes steps that organizations can take to develop successful grant proposals, including (1) identifying a problem that can be addressed through grant funding, (2) describing expected outcomes, (3) devising a proposed approach, (4) locating funding sources, and (5) writing a proposal. While this guide is designed to provide generic advice for securing grant funding from a wide range of sources, its principles can be applied to the development of ARC proposals.

We therefore recommend that ARC reinforce the general blueprint set forth in these publications by developing additional materials aimed at helping applicants consider the range of steps required to execute their proposed approach and document the resulting community benefits. Exhibit 7-1 provides seven guiding questions that community capacity-building applicants might address in their proposals. Beginning with project purpose, these questions are designed to help applicants consider the range of issues they will need to address over the life of their project—most notably the link between their proposed approach and the capacities they are trying to enhance, the community conditions they are seeking to improve, and the data they will use to document project success.

Exhibit 7-1
Guiding questions for ARC community capacity-building projects

1. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your project?
2. What resources—within and outside of your community—do you have at your disposal to conduct your project?
3. What factors within your community are likely to affect the implementation and success of your project?
4. What strategies and activities will you use to achieve your goals?
5. How will project activities enhance the capacity of individual community members, organizations within your community, and/or the overall community?
6. As a result of enhancing your community's capacity, how will your economic, environmental, and/or social conditions improve?
7. How will you know if capacity has been enhanced and conditions have improved?

While this framework could be applied to other ARC project types, these questions are especially salient for those community capacity-building projects that are struggling to articulate how their enhanced capacity will ultimately contribute to their community's economic, environmental and/or social well-being. In fact, the very nature of the Commission's Goal 3 initiatives suggests that these questions would help projects launch the needs assessment process that is inherent to most community capacity-building efforts. By addressing these seven questions in their proposals, applicants would provide ARC with a better sense of whether the proposed project meets the Commission's definition of community capacity-building. The use of this framework would also promote continuity across projects in terms of the emphasis that is placed on developing a longer term vision of what community capacity-building initiatives are intended to achieve.

Provide prospective applicants with examples of community capacity-building outcomes. The Commission clearly recognizes the need for its applicants to use their proposals to set realistic, achievable, and measurable outcomes. In *Preparing a Grant Proposal: Five Steps in the Proposal Writing Process*, organizations are encouraged to focus on how their efforts will benefit participants and the broader community: "As a result of your intervention or activity, what will occur? How will things change? What will the world—or your community—look like once you fix the problem or change the situation?"

However, only 45 of the 179 outcome statements that we identified in the case study proposals contained a numeric benchmark—and even these tended to focus on the number of persons who would participate in an event or activity. While all of the numeric benchmarks that we reviewed were necessary and useful, they failed to address many of the capacity and community well-being outcomes that can be associated with community capacity-building projects.

In an effort to help prospective community capacity-building projects address these questions in their proposals, we recommend that the ARC provide applicants with supplemental materials that demonstrate the range of outputs and outcomes that might be attributed to a generic community capacity-building project. The logic model presented throughout this report provides an example of the type of tool that might be posted on the ARC web site. (Appendix B provides the introductory screen shots for the logic model. The electronic attachment contains a full working version of the logic model.) The model, which portrays the relationship between a project's intended purpose, activities, and outcomes, can be used to provide applicants with illustrative examples of intermediate and long-term outcomes that are commonly associated with community initiatives (see appendix A). These examples—organized by capacity outcomes (i.e., individual, organizational, community) and community development outcomes (i.e., economic, environmental, social)—could be used to provide prospective projects with a common point of reference for selecting relevant and meaningful outcomes linked to project activities. They could also help the Commission assess whether a given project has considered all of the immediate and longer term outcomes that might result from its intended design.

We further recommend that the Commission work more closely with individual applicants to help them specify (1) the goals and outcomes that their projects are designed to address, (2) the numeric benchmarks against which their progress can be assessed—and the timeframe within which these benchmark will be achieved (see exhibit 7-2), (3) a

description of the methodologies that will be used to assess whether the numeric benchmarks was achieved (see exhibit 7-3 and the discussion on data collection methods that follows), and (4) a description of how and when the data will be reported to the ARC. While some of this could be accomplished by posting a tool like the logic model on the Commission's web site,[30] many projects will likely benefit from having extended discussions with ARC staff (or other experts recommended by the ARC) on topics pertaining to performance measurement. In fact, the experiences of the Hurley Community Development Project suggest that such guidance (provided at an ACLP meeting) can greatly enhance a project's focus by helping local stakeholders develop realistic and measurable benchmarks for their ARC grant.

Exhibit 7-2
Examples of community goals, outcomes, and corresponding benchmarks

Goal	Outcome	Benchmark
Individual Capacity: *Enhance skills*	Increase in skills of community members	20 community members who received training will increase their leadership skills in 2005
Organizational Capacity: *Increase collaboration*	Increase in number of service providers using input from community members to determine priorities and make decisions	15 local service providers will report using input from community members to make decisions in 2005
Community Capacity: *Enhance community pride*	Increase in the number of suggestions for community improvements from residents	50 community members will suggest a community improvement in 2005
Economic: *Increase tourism*	Increase in hotel business	Over the next 3 years, all community hotels will increase their yearly revenues by at least 5 percent
Environmental: *Increase recycling*	Increase in the number of local businesses that recycle	Over the next 2 years, 90 percent of local businesses will be recycling
Social: *Improve quality of community housing*	Decrease in the number of community homes needing major repair	Over the next 2 years, there will be a 25 percent decrease in the number of community homes that need major repair

Exhibit 7-3
Examples of benchmarks and corresponding data sources

Benchmark	Data Source
20 community members who received training will increase their leadership skills in 2005	Pre/post survey of trainees—e.g., survey trainees before and after training to document improvement in their knowledge or skills
15 local service providers will report using input from community members to make decisions in 2005	Interview local service providers to assess whether they have increased their review of input from community members
50 community members will suggest a community improvement in 2005	Conduct an informal survey (e.g., an open-ended question in a common gathering place such as a grocery store) to obtain suggestions from residents about community improvements

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[30] An introduction to the logic model includes an overview of how to transform goals and outcomes into measurable benchmarks.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">**Exhibit 7-3**
Examples of benchmarks and corresponding data sources (continued)</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">**Benchmark**</td><td align="center">**Data Source**</td></tr>
<tr><td>Over the next 3 years, all community hotels will increase their yearly revenues by at least 5 percent</td><td>Analysis of local tax records</td></tr>
<tr><td>Over the next 2 years, 90 percent of local businesses will be recycling</td><td>One-time survey of all local businesses to document the proportion of businesses that are using recycling procedures</td></tr>
<tr><td>Over the next 2 years, there will be a 25 percent decrease in the number of community homes that need major repair</td><td>Windshield survey of residential structures to rate neighborhood dwellings on a five-point scale—should be conducted every year to document decreases in the number of homes in need of repair</td></tr>
</table>

Provide projects with written materials on potential data collection and analysis practices. Most of the sites that participated in the telephone interviews and case studies did not make good use of data to assess whether their outcomes had been achieved. Rather, projects relied on anecdotal evidence, used imprecise data collection methods, or failed to collect follow-up data that could be used to track progress over time. Like the previous ARC projects that we evaluated, several factors contributed to this lack of data—e.g., the difficulty of collecting data on the impact of community capacity-building efforts, a lack of financial resources, a lack of expertise regarding evaluation techniques, a lack of understanding about how locally collected data could be used to document success and improve future activities, and lack of a requirement by the ARC to collect and analyze data.

While collecting data can be difficult and time consuming, findings from the literature review and site visits suggest that some of the outcomes that projects propose can be addressed through analysis of easily accessible existing records—e.g., county tax records, school enrollment records, police reports, employment and unemployment statistics, organizational meeting minutes, medical records, and hotel receipts. These data can often be found in county offices or the local chamber of commerce, as well as through such state and federal agencies as the Bureau of the Census, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Department of Commerce. By publicizing these existing sources, ARC may be able to help projects devise strategies for obtaining and analyzing public data that can be used to demonstrate improvements in a given condition (e.g., unemployment, hotel occupancy rates) over time.

For other outcomes, projects may need to be encouraged to collect new data through one-time surveys, pre/post surveys and assessments (e.g., to measure changes in participants' skills or knowledge) and interviews (conducted in person or over the phone). In addition to these formal methods, several case study respondents provided practical suggestions for obtaining project-related data, including the following:

- **Shotgun surveys.** One ARC project suggested using informal surveys to obtain basic feedback from residents. For example, to assess whether community pride is increasing, a project might post an open-ended question (e.g., How do you feel about your community?) in a common gathering place (e.g., a grocery store). By leaving a

paper tablet and box by the question, projects can collect informal data that can be analyzed on a periodic basis.

- **Windshield surveys.** This survey, commonly administered from an automobile while driving around a neighborhood, can be used to assess the physical condition of all residential structures in a community. Specifically, the survey is used to rate each dwelling in a geographic area on a five-point scale. Conducting the same survey on annual basis enables project staff to determine if there has been a decrease in the number of homes in need of repair.

- **Counts of participants.** A simple way to collect basic program data is to obtain an accurate count of all persons who are participating in an activity or event. If individuals are willing to provide contact information (e.g., through a sign-in sheet), the resulting list can serve as the basis for a follow-up survey.

The ARC may need to help individual grant recipients develop low-cost plans for collecting and analyzing data. While working with individual projects—collectively or in a workshop setting—can be time consuming, we believe that the potential rewards are substantial. By their very nature, community capacity-building projects should be making continuous use of data to inform their consensus-building and decision-making efforts. As such, the Commission's efforts to help community capacity-building projects make maximum use of data would represent a valuable investment with many long-term benefits.

Even if the ARC is not in a position to offer such assistance to all of its grant recipients, we believe that simply encouraging grantees to invest the time and resources required to document their impact, and making available information about appropriate data collection methods, is likely to be helpful. While a few of the respondents that we interviewed expressed concern that time spent collecting and analyzing data could better be used providing direct services, others expressed a desire to make decisions that are data driven—and to collect the type of data that could be used to attract additional funding sources. During several site visits, an extended discussion about potential data collection strategies prompted grant recipients to conclude that they had missed a promising opportunity to document the impact of their initiative. For example, one site that had used a low-cost survey to assess the need for a given intervention did not re-administer the same survey at a later date. This failure to repeat the survey had less to do with a lack of resources and more to do with project staff never considering that a comparison of pre- and post-intervention data could be used to demonstrate the efficacy of their approach. In this case, a timely suggestion by the ARC would have likely resulted in the collection of data that would have ultimately helped the Commission demonstrate the impact of its portfolio of community capacity-building projects.

Reinforce ARC's reporting structure. If the ARC is to be in a position to identify innovative and successful community capacity-building practices, its staff will need to be able to systematically access more detailed information about the implementation and impact of its projects. Other federal agencies and programs (e.g., National Science Foundation, Star Schools Program, Technology Opportunities Program) have imposed new requirements that significantly enhanced the quality of final reports that projects submit at the end of their grant. While ARC grant recipients are currently required to submit a final narrative and financial report when they complete their project, findings

from our document review suggest that a lack of mandated uniform reporting requirements has resulted in an uneven quality to these closeout reports.

A final report submitted by the Sustainable Communities Project to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (which provided the grant recipient with supplemental funding for the Sustainable Communities Project) demonstrates the range of findings and insights that community capacity-building projects might be able to share with Commission staff. Specifically, this report addressed key evaluation questions[31] and described specific accomplishments that resulted from the project's investment in two communities. Equally important—and especially useful for other communities seeking to adapt the sustainable community development model—the final report includes a candid description of challenges that the project encountered, an in-depth discussion of lessons learned, and an assessment of whether the overall approach could be replicated elsewhere.

We therefore recommend that the ARC develop uniform closeout report guidelines that are to be used by all of its community capacity-building projects. Exhibit 7-4 provides an example of the topics that the ARC's community capacity-building projects might be required to address in their final reports. Collected over time, we believe this information would enhance the ability of program staff to assess the implementation and impact of the Commission's community capacity-building projects. While some grant recipients might continue to rely primarily on anecdotal information, the use of standard reporting guidelines—coupled with the requirement that projects report on their intermediate and long-term outcomes—would likely enhance the Commission's ability to obtain consistent data that can be used to assess project and program success. In addition, interviews with case study respondents suggest that projects would actually welcome more structured reporting requirements, so long as those requirements are not onerous or unrealistic.

Conclusion

Many Appalachian communities still lack the basic prerequisites for sustained long-term economic growth and well-being, including the various types of individual, organizational, and community capacity outlined in this report. The community capacity-building projects funded by the ARC between 1995 and 2003 made significant inroad towards laying the groundwork for the long-term development of the communities in which they operated. Perhaps more importantly, they spurred far-reaching changes in modes of thinking and behaving that may have repercussions across the region for years to come. It is these changes from within, as well as the collective, concerted, and conscious effort to advance communities, that will, in the long-run, allow all of the people of Appalachia to enjoy the same quality of life as Americans in other regions of the country.

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[31] (1) Have we increased the social capacity of communities where we are working? What are the organizational, problem-solving and group process skills gained by local citizens? (2) In what ways have the action teams and spinoff groups been incorporated into the public policy-making process?

Exhibit 7-4
Example of potential ARC guidelines for
community capacity-building project final reports

Background—Provide a short statement regarding the need for this project. What problems did you hope to solve when you applied for ARC funding?

Activities—Describe in detail what actually happened during this grant cycle, and explain how you implemented the project activities. If there were significant changes to your program during the course of the project, or if the project was implemented differently than described in your original proposal, please describe those changes here.

Description of Project Benefits—Provide a description of how your project (1) enhanced the capacity of individuals and/or organizations within your community and (2) contributed to communitywide improvements. Also, assess the extent to which your project has addressed the problems or needs that you identified in your original request for ARC support.

Outcome Data—Provide any data that documents the outcomes associated with your project. Data will vary according to the type of project you completed, and it may be difficult to provide data at this time. However, it is very important to gather this kind of information so both your organization and ARC can document our successes. At a minimum, report on the extent to which you met the numeric goals that you identified in your original request for ARC support.

Problems Encountered—What would you do differently if you were starting this project again? Describe any major problems that may have occurred during the implementation of your project. Knowing the types of difficulties you encountered and how you resolved them will be helpful to other technology grantees that may be interested in replicating your program.

Program Continuation and Sustainability—This section should describe whether and how you intend to continue program activities after the end of the ARC grant period. Will the program continue with other funding, and if so, what other sources of funds have been identified? If the program is to be discontinued, has it served its purpose, or is there still a need to solve the problems you were addressing? What additional steps are being taken to obtain other resources needed to continue the project?

Conclusions and Recommendations—This section summarizes your project and the lessons learned during its implementation. Include a review of your successes and suggest ways that your experiences may be helpful to others.

Attachments—Attach any material that helps to describe your project and documents your success, such as photographs, news clippings, maps, videotapes, or web site addresses. Also, please attach copies of any written evaluations that may have been completed for your project.

SOURCE: Adapted from the ARC Grant Administration Manual.

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APPENDIX A:

LOGIC MODEL MATRICES

ENHANCED CAPACITY GOALS & OUTCOMES		
	Goal	**Outcome**
INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY	Enhance Skills	• Increase in the number of community members taking advantage of training activities • Increase in the skills of community members (e.g., technology, water quality monitoring, grant writing, home repair) • Increase in the leadership capabilities of community leaders (or potential community leaders)
	Enhance Empowerment	• Increase in the number of community members who file complaints about government services • Increase in the number of community members who feel they are in a position to affect change within their community • Increase in the number of community members who report the confidence necessary to fulfill a leadership position • Increase in the number of community members who participate in self-improvement activities for the first time (e.g., ESL or literacy courses)
	Increase Awareness of Community Issues	• Increase in the number of community members who are familiar with community issues (e.g., education environmental, and health issues) • Increase in the number of community members who are aware of how their actions effect the community • Increase in number of community members who have defined a role for themselves in improving their community • Increase in number of letters to the editor that focus on community issues
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	Increase Collaboration	• Increase in the number of community organizations that co-sponsor events, activities, and projects • Increase in the number of prominent community organizations (e.g., largest employer in the region) that participate in community events • Increase in the number of community organizations that are represented on the board of directors of other organizations • Increase in the number of service providers using input from community members to determine priorities and make decisions • Increase in the number of collaborative efforts to obtain a common goal • Increase in the number of organizations that have established formal referral procedures with other community agencies
	Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness	• Increase in the number of services/training programs provided by community organizations • Decrease in the number of duplicated public services offered across community organizations • Increase in the number of eligible individuals receiving services provided by community organizations • Increase in the number of community organizations that use data to inform decision making • Increase in the number of community members who are satisfied with the quality of services provided by community organizations • Increase in the number of organizations that have established formal referral procedures with other community agencies
	Enhance Stability/Growth	• Increase in the number of community organizations that expand their membership • Increase in the number of community organizations that expand their intergenerational participation/leadership • Increase in the amount of funding raised by grants, special events and community sources • Decrease in the number of community organizations requiring outside funding to sustain their operations

ENHANCED CAPACITY GOALS & OUTCOMES		
COMMUNITY CAPACITY	**Goal**	**Outcome**
	Improve Planning	• Increase in the use of community needs assessments and feasibility studies to inform strategic planning • Increase in the number of visits by community members/organizations to study successful planning procedures in other communities • Increase in the number of elected officials (or their representatives) attending community planning sessions • Increase in community efforts to assess progress towards goals • Increase in the number of community decisions that are made based on a community vision statement/plan
	Improve Community Self-Reliance	• Increase in community expertise to tackle specific problems • Decrease in the reliance on external sources to address community issues • Increase in external investment in the community • Increase in the number of local donations towards community development efforts
	Increase Civic Participation	• Increase in the number of community members who attend public meetings or participate on local boards • Increase in the number of volunteers at community events • Increase in number of hours donated by volunteers • Increase in the number of individuals participating in community events for first time • Increase in the number of youth participating in community events for first time • Increase in the number of community members participating in a neighborhood watch group
	Increase Political Participation	• Increase in the number and diversity (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) of community members running for public office • Increase in the diversity (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) of elected officials • Increase in the number and diversity of community members who are registered to vote • Increase in the number and diversity of registered voters participating in primary and municipal elections • Increase in the number of campaign contributions from local individuals • Increase in the number of local ballot measures initiated by community members
	Enhance Community Pride	• Increase in the number of community members who express pride in their community • Increase in the number of suggestions for community improvements from residents • Increase in the number of community members who take pride in their homes (e.g., plant gardens, remove trash, decorate for the holidays)
	Improve Infrastructure	• Improved conditions of community roads and bridges • Improved quality of and access to public transportation • Increase in the number of community members with reliable/well-functioning cars • Increase in the number of recreational facilities (e.g., basketball courts, playgrounds) • Increase in the availability of public meeting space (e.g., parks, community clubhouse) • Increase in the number of households with computers/internet access • Increase in the number of businesses with computers/broadband internet • Increase in the number of law enforcement officers
	Improve Educational Opportunities	• Increase in the skills and knowledge of community K-12 teachers • Increase in the recruitment/retention of K-12 teachers • Increase in the number of students taking advantage of educational opportunities provided by community organizations • Increase in access to technology (e.g., in the classroom, public access sites) • Increase in the number of environmental education programs

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS & OUTCOMES		
	Goal	**Outcome**
ECONOMIC	Increase Tourism	• Increase in the number of individuals visiting community attractions • Increase in hotel business (e.g., number of guests, monthly revenues) • Increase in restaurant business (e.g., number of patrons, monthly revenues) • Increase in the number of community members employed as a direct or indirect result of tourism • Increase in the number of community attractions that are aligned to a community vision statement/plan
	Increase Commerce	• Increase in the number of community businesses • Increase in the diversity of community businesses • Increase in local business activity (sales/revenues) • Increase in the number of businesses owned locally • Increase in the number of community businesses that are aligned to a community vision statement/plan
	Increase/Improve Employment	• Increase in the number of jobs available within the community • Increase in the diversity of jobs available within the community • Increase in the number of local residents who are employed • Increase in the wages earned by community members • Decrease in the community unemployment rate • Decrease in the number of miles community members commute to work • Increase in the number of community members who are satisfied with their occupational status
	Decrease Outmigration of Community Members	• Increase in the number of community members who choose to remain in the community • Increase in the number of community members who are able to remain in the community • Increase in the number of youth who remain in the community • Increase in the number of returning residents (e.g., college graduates)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS & OUTCOMES		
	Goal	**Outcome**
ENVIRONMENTAL	Improve Water Quality	• Decrease in the number of complaints of poor water taste, appearance, and/or smell • Decrease in the levels of bacteria, amoebae and microbes in the water • Increase in the percent of streams that community members can drink from • Increase in the number of local water sources that community members can swim/fish in • Improvement in the health of fish found in local water sources
	Improve Air Quality	• Decrease in the number of complaints about air quality • Increase in the number of days that air quality standards are met
	Improve Soil Quality	• Decrease in the area of land affected by soil erosion • Decrease in the area of land affected by salinity
	Improve Land Use	• Decrease in the amount of development occurring in environmentally sensitive areas (wetlands, flood plains, prime farmlands, costal zones) • Increase in the amount of development occurring within five minutes of stores, transit, schools, etc.
	Increase/Improve Recycling	• Increase in the number of pounds of refuse recycled • Increase in the number of local businesses that recycle • Increase in the number of community neighborhoods that recycle • Increase in the number of community members who recycle

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS & OUTCOMES		
	Goal	**Outcome**
SOCIAL	Improve Health	• Decrease in the number of work/school days missed • Increase in use of free or reduced cost health care and clinics • Decrease in the number of community members using illicit drugs • Decrease in the infant mortality rate • Decrease in the number of uninsured individuals • Increase in the number of children with immunizations
	Improve Learning	• Increase in graduation rates • Increase in GED attainment • Increase in literacy rates • Increase in the number of AP courses successfully completed • Increase in the average GPA for K-12 students • Increase in college admission rates
	Increase Safety	• Increase in the number of crimes reported in the community • Decrease in the number of crimes committed in the community (e.g., crimes related to domestic violence, drugs, assault) • Decrease in the number of traffic deaths (e.g., alcohol-related traffic deaths) • Decrease in average 911 response time
	Improve Governance	• Increase in the number of community members who are satisfied with their elected leaders • Increase in the number of community members who perceive that their elected officials share their values and concerns • Increase in the number of community members who feel they have a say in local, state, and national governance • Increase in the visibility of local issues at the county, state, and national levels • Increase in the responsiveness of elected officials
	Improve Community Housing and Structures	• Increase in the number of homes that are owner-occupied • Decrease in the number of community homes/buildings/schools needing renovation/major repairs • Decrease in the number of homes with failed septic systems • Increase in the number of new homes that are built energy-efficient

APPENDIX B:

SCREEN SHOTS FROM THE
LOGIC MODEL INTRODUCTION

Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects

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Introduction

The ARC Community Capacity Logic Model is designed to help stakeholders assess the requirements for a community capacity project. By illustrating the link between available resources, proposed activities and anticipated outcomes, it can also help partners forge a common understanding of their project's purpose, approach and structure.

During the *planning* stage, the model can help stakeholders maximize their available resources and specify measurable outcomes. Throughout project *implementation*, the model can serve as a "check" as to whether the effort is on its proposed track—and to keep participants focused on the ultimate goals of their efforts.

◄ ►

What is the ARC Community Capacity Logic Model?

The ARC Community Capacity Logic Model is a visual representation of the **resources** you have to design and implement your project, the **contextual factors** that can affect the implementation and/or impact of your project, the **activities** you plan to conduct, and the **outcomes** that you hope to achieve.
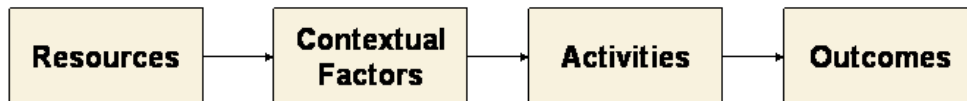
```
Resources  →  Contextual   →  Activities  →  Outcomes
               Factors
```

Logic models traditionally depict a process that flows from left to right—from resources to outcomes. For your project, it may be useful to reverse this flow. Sometimes projects find it more useful to "work backwards," starting with identifying anticipated outcomes and then determining the activities and resources that will be needed to achieve these outcomes.

◀ ▶

Key Terms and Concepts

Resources	Contextual Factors	Activities	Outcomes
▼	▼	▼	▼
Resources are the inputs (e.g., financial; organizational; material; personnel) that your project may rely on to conduct activities.	Contextual factors refer to the community assets and liabilities that can affect the implementation and/or impact of a project.	Activities are what your project does with your resources to bring about changes or results.	Outcomes are what your project hopes to accomplish or change in your community as a result of project activities.

◀ ▶

Logic Model for ARC's Community Capacity Projects

The ARC Community Capacity Logic Model incorporates strategies and outcomes that have been used or suggested by other community capacity projects. It is designed to help projects illustrate how their proposed approach will affect change in their community.
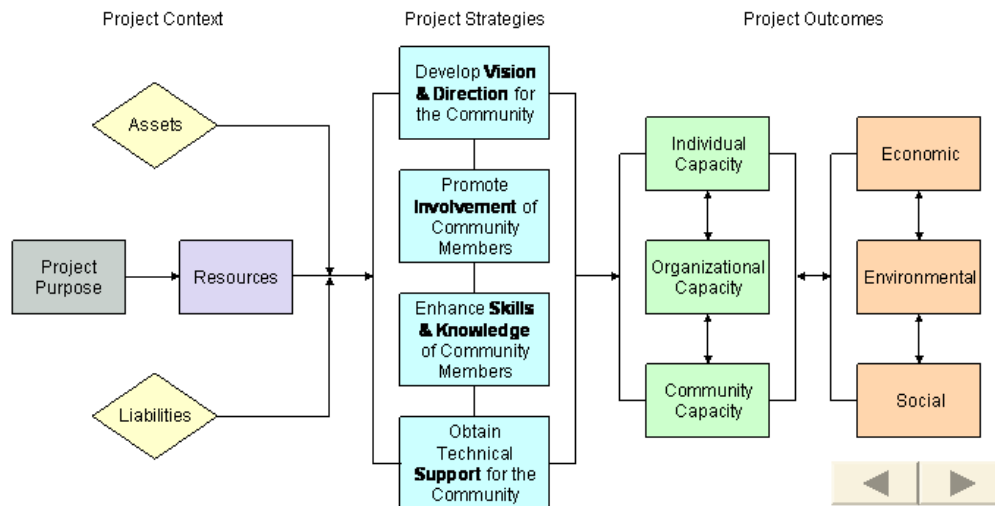
Guiding Questions

The logic model includes 7 Guiding Questions that are designed to help communities develop their logic model and identify the components of a successful community capacity project.

1. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your project?

2. What resources—within and outside of your community—do you have at your disposal to conduct your project?

3. What factors within your community are likely to affect the implementation and success of your project?

4. What strategies and activities will you use to achieve your goals?

5. How will project activities enhance the capacity of individual community members, organizations within your community, and/or the overall community?

6. As a result of enhancing your community's capacity, how will your economic, environmental, and/or social conditions improve?

7. How will you know if capacity has been enhanced and conditions have improved?

1. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your project?

Project Context

Project Strategies/Activities

Project Outcomes

Assets

Project Purpose

Liabilities

Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community

Promote **Involvement** of Community

Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members

Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Individual Capacity

Organizational Capacity

Community Capacity

Economic

Environmental

Social

Click on the Project Purpose box to see how community problems correspond to a project's purpose.

◀ ▶

2. What resources—within and outside of your community—do you have at your disposal to conduct your project?

Project Context

Project Strategies

Project Outcomes

Assets

Project Purpose

Resources

Liabilities

Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community

Promote **Involvement** of Community

Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members

Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Individual Capacity

Community Capacity

Economic

Environmental

Social

Click on the Resources box to see where and what resources can be obtained.

◀ ▶

3. What factors within your community are likely to affect the implementation and success of your project?

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

Project Strategies:
- Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community
- Promote **Involvement** of Community Members
- Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members
- Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Project Context:
- Assets
- Liabilities
- Click on the diamonds to view definitions and examples of community assets and liabilities.

Project Outcomes:
- Individual Capacity
- Organizational Capacity
- Community Capacity
- Economic
- Environmental
- Social

4. What strategies and activities will you use to achieve your goals?

Project Context   Project Strategies   Project Outcomes

Project Strategies:
- Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community
- Promote **Involvement** of Community Members
- Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members
- Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Project Context:
- Assets
- Project Purpose
- Resources
- Liabilities

Project Outcomes:
- Individual Capacity
- Community Capacity
- Economic
- tal
- Social
- Click on the strategy boxes to see the lists of example activities commonly used in community capacity building projects

5. How will project activities enhance the capacity of individual community members, organizations within your community, and/or the overall community?

Project Context

Project Strategies

Project Outcomes

Assets

Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community

Promote **Involvement** of Community

Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members

Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Liabilities

Individual Capacity

Organizational Capacity

Community Capacity

Economic

Environmental

Social

Click on any of the boxes to view goals and examples of their corresponding outcomes.

◀ ▶

6. As a result of enhancing your community's capacity, how will your economic, environmental, and/or social conditions improve?

Project Context

Project Strategies

Project Outcomes

Assets

Project Purpose

Resou

Develop **Vision & Direction** for the Community

Promote **Involvement** of Community

Enhance **Skills & Knowledge** of Community Members

Obtain Technical **Support** for the Community

Liabilities

Individual Capacity

Community Capacity

Economic

Environmental

Social

Click on any of the boxes to view goals and examples of their corresponding outcomes.

◀ ▶

7. How will you know if capacity has been enhanced and conditions have improved?

As part of this process, you will also need to identify a practical method for obtaining data to assess progress toward your benchmarks. While collecting data can be difficult and time consuming, the resulting information can prove useful in determining whether you have achieved your stated goals.

In some cases, you will be able to rely on a review of existing records to ascertain whether your outcome has been achieved. In other cases, you may need to create a new data source to document project success.

◀ ▶

7. How will you know if capacity has been enhanced and conditions have improved?

You should be able to transform each of your goals and outcomes into a measurable benchmark—i.e., numeric targets that your project is striving to meet. The use of benchmarks will enable you to assess whether (and to what degree) your goals and outcomes have been achieved.

Whereas goals and outcomes can be somewhat general, benchmarks have to be very specific. They also need to indicate the timeframe by which the benchmark will be attained—e.g., *"75 percent of graduating high school seniors from the class of 2005 will attend a college or university."* Finally, benchmarks need to be simple and unambiguous statements that can be easily understood by all community residents.

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