



# Models of Community Capacity Building in the delivery of Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)

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# Introduction

At the most basic level, community capacity building attempts to increase a given community's capacity to solve its collective problems. However, the term is used in a wide range of social, economic and environmental policy contexts and has often been confused with community development. The main difference between community capacity building (CCB) and community development is that the latter places a much greater emphasis on a cross-sector approach to tackling social and economic issues, with the community involved in identifying its need and defining the desired outcomes. Conversely, CCB focusses on the community's involvement in initiating action and creating a bottom-up and joined-up approach to solving multi-faceted problems.<sup>1</sup>

Some key objectives of CCB include:<sup>2</sup>

- strengthening of community identity and the sense of belonging among community members;
- building frameworks that facilitate sustainable change; and
- empowering communities to address their concerns.

A broad set of principles guide CCB with a focus on the need for comprehensive planning and asset development. They serve to foster collaboration among community-serving entities (i.e. organisations, community groups, individuals) as a condition for sustainable community change.<sup>3</sup> Some of the most common principles of CCB are:

- tailoring of programs specifically to the needs of a community;
- involving the community or community members in the planning, building cohesive relationships and external partnerships;
- building community skills and resources; and
- using existing resources within the organisation or community.

CCB in the settlement context seeks to support migrant and refugee communities, groups and organisations to collectively increase the social participation, economic participation and personal well-being of community members. Its purpose is to ensure that the successful settlement of individuals and positive outcomes are sustained in the long term. The approaches that may be applied to this are multiple and can be summarised into different models that fall under two broader approaches: relational CCB models and collaborative CCB models. In some instances, hybrid versions of the models are developed.

This paper provides an overview of the different models of CCB by going deeper into the specific focus of each approach, its advantages and possible outcomes. It also provides case studies to demonstrate its practical application to settlement services.

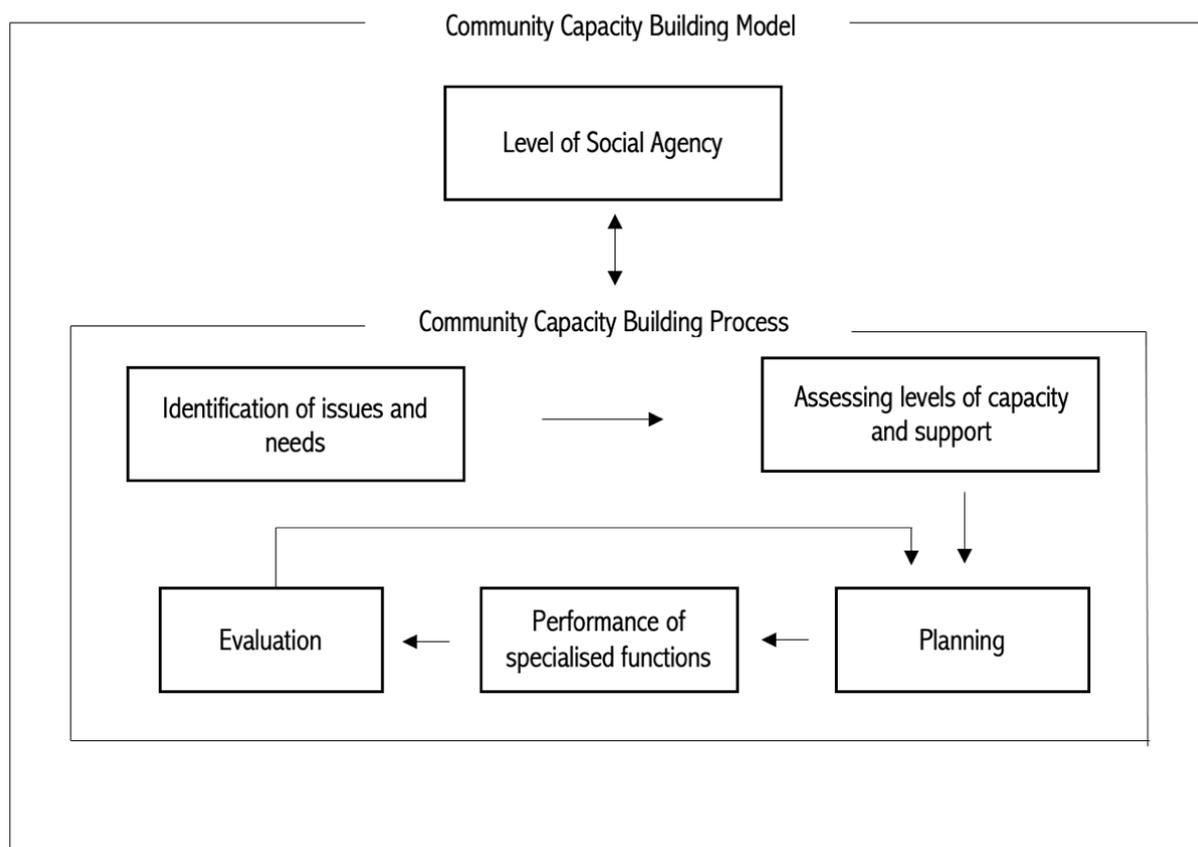
This paper was developed by the SETSCoP Secretariat based on the work of the CCB Sub-Group run by SETSCoP. It draws on the insights and case studies of the members.

# Community Capacity Building Models

Every community has a certain level of capacity that is based on several factors such as available resources, level of commitment and sense of community. In order to engage and further build the capacity of communities, CCB models are employed. CCB models incorporate a process that is influenced by and at the same time influences the level of social agency that is central to the model.<sup>4</sup> Social agency exists on an individual, organisational and network level. Each level embeds community capacity and can be used to engage or enhance it. CCB models focus on using different levels of social agency to further build capacity in the whole community or at a particular level.

Overall, the CCB process follows four general steps:<sup>5</sup>

1. Identification of issues and needs
2. Assessing levels of capacity and support
3. Planning of program (including outcomes)
4. Performance of specialised functions
5. Evaluation



The level of social agency (individual, organisation or network) is involved in the identification of issues and needs, the assessment of levels of capacity, the planning, the performance of

the specialised functions, and the evaluation stage. Similarly, the identification of issues and needs, the levels of capacity and support but also the evaluation of a program, can inform what level of social agency will allow for the most adequate and efficient response to the need and thus what model will be best suited.

An important part of all CCB models is the potential for direct involvement of the community during the whole process.

## **Relational Community Capacity Building Models**

Within the relational CCB model, CCB revolves around the development of and the building on existing relationships between people and/or organisations. To be successful, it requires trust, a mutuality of purpose and an understanding of the reason for the relationship. These relationships allow for collaboration and a deeper understanding of not only the needs and issues, but also of what a person or organisation has to offer to the community.<sup>6</sup> There are different types of relational CCB models separated into individual or organisational collaboration models.

### Community Leadership Model

The community leadership model is a CCB model that is focused on building human capital in individual members of a community. By investing in their training and development, this model tries to influence an individual's ability to contribute to the community either as a collective resource or through their individual contributions.<sup>7</sup>

Working directly with individuals has many advantages. Often, community members have specific knowledge that might help address an issue or need in a sustainable way. Working with community members to capitalise on the knowledge they hold and employing it to develop a sustainable solution, further increases a community's capacity to deal to similar concerns in the future.<sup>8</sup> The general purpose of the community leadership model is to create engaged communities that are better equipped to maintain and increase the community's well-being through the training and development of community leaders.

The community leadership model can take many forms, but often it is focused on leadership development. Leadership sits at the core of a community's capacity to initiate activities, strengthen community identity, and advocate for community interests.<sup>9</sup>

## **MiCare – Partnerships, Strengths, and Inclusion**

Over four years, MiCare has been identifying leaders within the Syriac Northern-Iraq communities through their casework services. Initially, MiCare wanted to support the community to further develop ideas and establish priorities.

Through the engagement of the leaders, MiCare was able to confirm specific needs such as educational needs, the need to engage youth, health needs, among others. By collaborating with community leaders, MiCare was able to engage volunteers from the Syriac Northern-Iraq communities to deliver weekly activities that addressed their needs.

Increasingly, leaders started to work with MiCare through key steps towards making larger aspirations a reality. This development allowed the community to join a network of collective learning and resource sharing where local issues and challenges are discussed.

By involving community members in addressing the challenges and needs specific to their community, MiCare empowered the Syriac Northern-Iraq communities to continuously discuss and address local issues and shared challenges through different partnerships, such as with local governments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Organisational Collaboration Models

In the organisational collaboration models, organisations set up partnerships to deliver CCB programs. Collaboration allows organisations to combine their resources to deliver specific CCB programs.<sup>10</sup> By increasing their programmatic capacity, organisations can respond to gaps affecting their CCB delivery. These gaps can take many forms. For instance, they can be related to infrastructure, finances, human resources or knowledge. As a result, collaboration can allow organisations to more effectively respond to community concerns.

The two most common types of organisations that settlement service providers collaborate with in CCB are ethno-specific organisations or other mainstream services. There are different collaboration styles that can be employed. For instance, there can be a lead organisation that makes the final decisions in relation to a CCB program. Alternatively, organisations can decide to co-design and co-lead a CCB program.<sup>11</sup> Either collaboration style can be implemented in the organisational collaboration model.

### **Organisational Collaboration Model: Ethno-specific Organisations**

Ethno-specific organisations can act as agents of the community and therefore working with ethno-specific organisations can help identify community needs and concerns. Collaboration with ethno-specific organisations can create a motivation within a community to engage in the CCB program. Generally, the programs following this model often look beyond individual community members and want to ensure that the capacity building has support within the wider community and is thus sustained when the program ends.<sup>12</sup>

The main advantage lies in the fact that ethno-specific organisations carry an understanding of the community's specific culture. Tapping into this knowledge can help identify attitudes and beliefs that determine behaviour and, as such, inform CCB programs to be culturally responsive, making it more sustainable and empowering to those participating in it.<sup>13</sup>

### **Host International – Emerging Communities Incubator**

Host International developed the Emerging Communities Incubator program to co-design processes and coaching to equip CALD community leaders to independently meet the settlement needs of their community members.

Through their engagement with Zomi Innkuan Adelaide (ZIA), Host International learned about the current issues and needs of the Zomi people from Burma. After this consultation, they set up a strategic planning workshop where community leaders were introduced to the concept of co-design and SWOT analysis to identify the top 3 settlement issues and needs of their community.

The community leaders together with ZIA incorporated the priorities into a Community Action Plan designed to assist ZIA to achieve their goals. Host International continuously supports ZIA through coaching support and training workshops which has empowered the organisation and community leaders to achieve specific results for their community.

### **Organisational Collaboration Model – Mainstream Organisations**

There are certain community needs and concerns where CCB programs would benefit from a collaboration between settlement service providers and other mainstream organisations. Sometimes the capacity needed within a community is to address a complex need or concern. Settlement providers might not be experts in this area, while other organisations are.

Building relations and collaborating with mainstream organisations goes beyond making services more accessible. It allows for community issues and needs to be addressed in earlier developmental stages.<sup>14</sup> Settlement practitioners are closely involved with the community and can pick up on community concerns well before mainstream organisations do. By delivering CCB programs in collaboration with mainstream organisations, community capacity can be built pro-actively with the appropriate expertise.

An important pitfall of CCB through collaboration with mainstream organisations is the development of a top-down approach to CCB. When engaging mainstream organisations, it is important to keep the community involved throughout the process and maintain a bottom-up approach.

## Structural Community Capacity Building Models

### Social Cohesion Community Capacity Building

Social cohesion CCB seeks to enhance social cohesion by increasing the social capital of communities. This model focusses on developing trust between communities and with the broader Australian society to increase the social capital of that particular community. When there is a high level of trust, new and varied social relationships are developed. As such, this model assumes that social cohesion is not static but is greatly impacted by levels of trust between the community, organisations and society. By increasing a community's social capital, social cohesion can be enhanced.<sup>15</sup>

The effective utilisation of social capital is crucial in this model and is facilitated through social networks and contacts.<sup>16</sup> The process of building trusting relationships, mutual understanding and shared experiences and actions that bring communities and institutions together is at the centre of this model. By further building and expanding a community's network, community experiences increase. Expanded networks can influence the frequency and intensity of participation in Australia society, generate opportunities and enhance connectedness within and across communities.<sup>17</sup>

There are many ways through which this model can be employed. However, one of the most common examples are events. Their popularity stems from their essential role in creating an understanding of the culture of the community laying the foundation for a social relation or connection to be formed. Other examples are community initiatives, forums, mentoring projects, etc.

#### **STARTTS – Communities in Cultural Transition (CiCT)**

CiCT is a community-driven service actively assisting groups, associations, and members of small and emerging refugee communities to empower them and contribute to their independence. The program focusses on restoring relationships and networks between individuals, families and other social groups. It aims to help all elements of social capital within a community by bonding, bridging, and linking.

The program acknowledges the strengths refugee communities bring to Australia, including their culture, social capital, knowledge, skills, etc. CiCT operates on different levels to engage the refugee community. Not only does it engage a panel of expert consultants in various fields to help refugee organisations build their governance capacity, it also holds annual forums for individuals, groups and communities from refugee backgrounds.

Since 2015, the annual forums create a platform to share stories and learn from each other. It acts like a bridge between different communities, services, governmental agencies and mainstream society to encourage mutual learning and enable refugee communities to heal and thrive in Australia.

## Hybrid Community Capacity Building Models

Hybrid CCB models are used in many contexts within settlement. These models address complex needs and issues that require capacity building on multiple levels. For instance, the model is a combination of a community hero model but facilitates the development of the community hero in collaboration with another organisation.

It is important to remember that hybrid models are not necessarily better than the other models. Deciding which CCB model to use should be based on what is the most efficient and effective way to build community capacity and resources to address the concerns raised.

### **Access Community Services – Community Leaders Connect Forum**

Through the Community Leaders Connect Forum, Access Community Services (Access) worked with the Logan City Council (Council) to strengthen community work in Logan. Together the community, Council and Access developed a Terms of Reference which outlined that all are equal partners in responding to the needs of the city. The focus is on areas that need further collaboration and response.

The program brings together Council and community leaders to discuss challenges and needs and respond together with action-focused strategies to move forward together with Councillors, the community development team and support from Access. Furthermore, Access ensures that other groups that work with them are linked to the forum to ensure that the needs of their communities are met.

# How to choose a CCB Model

Choosing a CCB model is not always simple. There are several different models that could be implemented effectively, however, some models may be better suited and more efficient to address a specific concern. The following are some simple steps to consider when making a decision on which CCB model to employ.

## **1. Gather information**

This first step happens organically and is not a separate action to the usual work settlement providers do. Through their engagement with community, providers are given unique insights into the concerns and needs of the community and its members.

Valuable information reaches settlement providers in various ways. Often their case work provides them with insight into how community members are feeling and what alarms them. Additionally, many providers have established relationships with ethnic organisations and community leaders who will come to the settlement providers with community concerns.

## **2. Ask the important question**

The most important question to ask when your organisation moves to address any issues or needs is whether it can be addressed through CCB. Sometimes CCB might not provide a fitting solution, for instance there are issues that can only be solved through government policy changes.

## **3. Identify the task ahead**

When a trend is identified and you have decided that the concerns are best addressed by building community capacity, it is important to lay out the task ahead of you. Some questions that can help guide you are:

- Which specific problem-solving capacity are we trying to build?
- Are we trying to build partnerships?
- Are we trying to build infrastructure?
- What do we need to address this concern?

## **4. Find the most appropriate level of social agency**

Once you have identified the task ahead, you can ask yourself which level of social agency will allow you to address the problem most efficiently. There are two things to consider at this step:

- Which level of social agency will allow me to most effectively and efficiently address the concern?
- Is there capacity at this social agency level to address the concern?

Some levels of social agency are more appropriate to build community capacity. By choosing an individual level of social agency, you might be able to provide a more personalised approach to CCB. While structural community capacity models can tackle deeper issues that manifest themselves in different ways, relational ones can be more appropriate to address pressing concerns for communities.

When choosing your CCB model you need ensure that you optimise available resources and do not draw on ones that are already stretched thin. For instance, some ethnic organisations might not have capacity to take on the delivery of another program. Similarly, if community leaders are already championing multiple programs or are raising awareness on a multitude of topics, they might not have the capacity to take on anything else.

### **5. Establish whether there is a need for outside expertise**

On some occasions you might come across community needs that require the expertise of other entities. It is important to note that all CCB programs are informed by expert knowledge on the issue you are trying to address. However, the level of expertise required might differ in each situation.

All CCB programs regardless of model, should be informed by the cultural knowledge within the community. When identifying the need for outside expertise, we are referring to expert knowledge that might not be present within the community. Should you identify this need, you will have to look into an Organisational Collaboration Model with mainstream organisations or a Hybrid model.

### **6. Combine the gathered information**

After you have followed all of the above steps, you will have to put all the information together to conclude which model is the most appropriate to address the trend identified.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of CCB is difficult to define and is mainly guided by a broad set of principles rather than a pre-defined set of characteristics. It is important to remember that even though CCB exists in many different forms and looks different across the settlement and community sector, we can identify commonly used models of CCB.

All models have their advantages; however, some might work better in a certain situation than others. Which model of CCB is employed therefore depends on different factors such as the purpose of the CCB activity, which community you are supporting, and the resources available to the organisation and the community. It is important for organisations to understand the differences between the models so that the most efficient one can be employed in their CCB activities.

## End Notes

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