Communities and human service organizations can greatly support and strengthen the lives of families; however, they are often challenged in meeting these important tasks. During the past three decades, several developments have affected how communities and organizations are addressing this challenge. First, there has been a shift of focus from the individual to an ecological perspective, including attention to families, schools, neighborhoods, and other systems affecting individuals. This change in emphasis highlights an increased awareness of the importance of the family and other systems for an individual’s development and functioning. The results are reciprocal in that positive influences from families and systems create strong individuals who make up strong families and, consequently, build a strong society.

Many agencies and organizations have implemented innovative family support programs in response, such as after-school programs, respite care, intensive home-based services, and mutual support parenting groups. At the same time, social science researchers began examining the ways in which neighborhoods and communities either support or hinder families’ efforts to produce healthy individuals. As knowledge about community strengths and challenges has grown, the focus of human services has broadened to include the neighborhoods of the families served. Major governmental and private funders have consistently begun to call for programs to strengthen both communities and the families living in them.

Second, driven by a growing consensus from both private and public funders that community-based programming must be fiscally accountable and deliver positive program outcomes, family-serving organizations and community
groups are being challenged to deliver outcomes at a higher standard. These challenges are occurring even as funding for community-based programming is becoming more limited. Thus, not only must programming meet higher standards, but programs must do so within an environment where resources to support families have become more limited.

Such changes have prompted many organizations and community groups to seek consultation, technical assistance, and specialized services from individuals, management-consultant firms, and university units such as institutes and centers. These partnerships offer support in areas such as strategic planning, program development, resource development, and program evaluation to advance the organization’s efforts to serve the community and to be responsive to requirements of funders. In some instances, these partnerships provide that avenue for incorporating program development, program evaluation, and other supports into existing organizational infrastructures. However, the capacity to carry out these numerous accountability requirements is often beyond the capabilities of many community-based organizations and programs, and thus partnerships with consultants are often pragmatic choices for organizations and community groups.

This book reflects the experiences of a group of faculty members, researchers, and practitioners affiliated with the Institute for Families in Society, an interdisciplinary unit of the University of South Carolina that seeks to enhance the well-being of families through research, education, consultation, and technical assistance at community, state, national, and international levels. Institute faculty are from fields such as education, sociology, psychology, social work, public health, geography, nursing, law, medicine, women’s studies, African American studies, and computer science. They represent a vast array of cultural backgrounds and professional and life experiences. While this book is grounded in research, it is also reflective of the lived experiences of the contributors.

As this book was being written, the institute was providing capacity-building consultation or technical assistance to more than 200 community-based organizations and institutions. A substantial portion of that work included evaluation support, organizational development activities, and the building of community coalitions and partnerships. As “coaches” or “capacity-building consultants,”

1. The term “coach” encompasses many ways of offering support and facilitating action. As traditionally used in athletics, it refers to one who instructs players in the fundamentals of a sport and directs team strategy (e.g., a basketball coach). More recently, this term has taken on broader uses, where the term “coach” may refer to persons in multiple settings or fields (e.g., education, psychology, arts, medicine) who assist others in achieving specific goals (e.g.,
Institute faculty and staff work as mediators (i.e., intermediaries effecting or facilitating change) to strengthen organizations and community groups, thus allowing these entities to increase their capacity to support and strengthen families.

Capacity building is not a simple process; it involves many tasks (e.g., reaching out to the community, building leadership, developing and planning for action) that require knowledge and skills. Participants in this community or organizational development process engage in numerous actions in support of these tasks, often with guidance from a consultant. Table 0.1 provides examples of tasks and the accompanying supportive actions.

In our experience as consultants providing capacity-building support, we believe the actions enumerated in table 0.1 are not separate and unique entities, occurring independently or in a specified step-wise progress. Rather, they are interdependent, interconnected, and iterative activities that support capacity building, and, as such, they provide the anchor for our work and this book.

In this book, we present a framework for organizational and community capacity building. We identify strategies and methods that are effective for consultants engaged in this work. Through vignettes and case examples, we illustrate lessons learned by a team of consultants who assist a wide range of family-serving community organizations and groups. The conceptualization of the chapters grew out of a structured collaborative process wherein the editors and contributors met regularly to discuss and critically review their experiences and to develop the book’s purpose, focus, and contents. Thus, whether chapters have one author or multiple authors, the work is accurately described as a collective of all of the contributors to this volume.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the importance of strong communities in the promotion of strong and healthy families. The authors address the needs of organizations and communities for capacity building to support families in their development and adaptation. The roles of the coach or capacity-building

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life coach, drama coach, birthing coach). In Empowerment evaluation: Knowledge and tools for self-assessment and accountability (Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman, 1996), the term “coach” is introduced in reference to empowerment evaluators who facilitate others in conducting self-evaluation. Inherent in the coaching role is fostering improvement and self-determination—helping others help themselves. Throughout this volume, the term “coach” builds on the work of Fetterman and colleagues and refers to “capacity-building consultants” who provide technical assistance to community groups or organizations to support and strengthen families.

2. Where organizations are identified in vignettes and case examples, permission has been given. In all other vignettes and case examples, identities are disguised.
# TABLE 0.1 Building Organizational and Community Capacity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Examples of Supportive Actions</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Reaching out to the community (e.g., Chaskin et al., 2001; Floyd et al., 2003; Kreztmann and McKnight, 1993; Kubisch et al., 2002) | • Contact stakeholders  
• Include diverse groups  
• Build bridges across groups  
• Facilitate cultural competency  
• Build partnerships and collaboratives |
| Building leadership (e.g., Chaskin et al., 2001; Floyd et al., 2003; Kreztmann and McKnight, 1993; Kubisch et al., 2002) | • Develop decision-making process  
• Develop governance (e.g., board)  
• Develop organizational structure and functions  
• Assure stakeholder (e.g., family) leadership  
• Clarify roles and responsibilities  
• Develop executive function and staff capacity  
• Develop governance policies and procedures |
| Developing a plan for action (e.g., Brown, 1995; Fetterman, 2001; Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman, 1996; Linney and Wandersman, 1991) | • Assess assets and needs  
• Define scope of work  
• Choose effective practices that build on assets and address needs  
• Choose strategies  
• Design tactics  
• Document plan for action  
• Develop process to ensure that plan is followed (e.g., logic model) |
| Obtaining needed resources (e.g., Kreztmann and McKnight, 1993; Mattessich and Monsey, 1992; Rabin 1992) | • Assess resource potential (e.g., people, materials, funds)  
• Develop resource/business plan (budget) to support action  
• Secure needed resources  
• Develop sustainability plan |
| Building infrastructure (e.g., Mitchell, Florin and Stevenson, 2002; Andrews, Motes, Floyd, Flerx, and Lòpez-De Fede, 2005) | • Develop management plan  
• Develop and manage operational policies and procedures  
• Manage resources (e.g., personnel, finances, property) |

*(continued)*
TABLE 0.1 Building Organizational and Community Capacity (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Examples of Supportive Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>• Facilitate teamwork (e.g., manage conflict, clarify roles)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stimulate productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assure quality (e.g., incorporation of evidence-based practices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Manage information transfer and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measuring success</strong></td>
<td>• Develop evaluation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., Fetterman, 1994;</td>
<td>• Monitor progress toward intended outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetterman, Kaftarian, and</td>
<td>• Review and respond to evaluative information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandersman, 1996; Fetterman</td>
<td>• Reflect on and articulate lessons learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Wandersman, 2004; Linney</td>
<td>• Redesign action as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Wandersman, 1991;</td>
<td>• Assure accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitmore, 1990)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promoting sustainability</strong></td>
<td>• Document capacity-building process and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., Kreitzmann and</td>
<td>• Disseminate information to stakeholders and public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKnight, 1993; Mattessich</td>
<td>• Communicate success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Monsey, 1992)</td>
<td>• Build on successes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

consultant in facilitating the work of family-serving organizations and community groups are presented.

In chapter 2, the authors examine the related but distinct activities of consultation, technical assistance, and service. They present a conceptual framework for providing technical assistance, including the discussion of relevant theories, such as empowerment theory, adult learning theory and change theory. Principles and methods for providing technical assistance are offered. Emphasis is given to coaching as a useful strategy for the provision of technical assistance.

Although issues of cultural competence are integrated throughout the volume, chapter 3 focuses specifically on that topic, emphasizing that cultural competence is an essential component of the practice of consultation and technical assistance. The authors examine critical attitudes and actions that facilitate the development of cultural competence for professionals, organizations, and
communities. They examine the ways in which consultants assist communities and organizations in providing culturally competent programs and services to families.

Chapter 4 points out that collaboration is both a highly valued strategy for community capacity building and a capacity-consuming process. This chapter reviews models for understanding and evaluating collaboratives, identifies dimensions of consultation and technical assistance to collaboratives, and describes both the capacity requirements for collaboration and the capacity-building benefits of collaboration.

Consultants are often called upon to support strategic planning efforts. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the strategic planning process with an emphasis on how to use this process to benefit community programs—not simply the development of a glossy document. This chapter builds upon the experiences of consultants who worked with the statewide school-readiness initiative in South Carolina.

Chapter 6 presents an approach to increase capacity for program self-evaluation for practitioners working with community-based agencies and organizations. The chapter describes the theoretical framework for this model of technical assistance. While the process of increasing an agency or program’s capacity to perform self-evaluation is complex, this chapter presents step-by-step details for accomplishing this task.

When capacity-building efforts are successful, organizations and community groups are better able to support and strengthen families. The concluding chapter highlights significant themes that recur throughout the volume: clarity of expectations and roles, individualization of efforts, the complexity of the work, the need to balance diverse tensions, ethical mandates and dilemmas, and the demands inherent in organizational and community capacity building. While the demands are great, capacity building is a vital cornerstone for creating healthy families and building a strong society. We hope that this book encourages you to join us in that quest.

References


Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993) *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.


Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations
Through Consultation and Technical Assistance