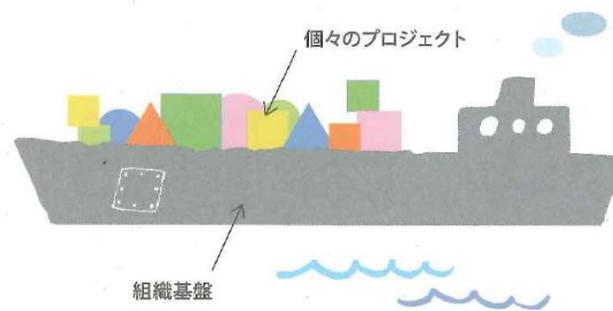# Why Capacity Building?

When a leader, project, network, or organization is successful, new projects and opportunities for growth emerge. But new opportunities may require new skills, additional resources, or changes to how a project or organization is currently operating. These challenges are normal and ongoing for all leaders and organizations and are not a sign of weakness, but often the result of healthy growth, risk taking, and adaptation. Capacity building helps to address these opportunities and a commitment to capacity building is a sign of strength in leaders and organizations.

The diagram below illustrates how a strong organizational and operational foundation supports successful projects. The boat represents the organization or network, while the packages are individual projects or activities. The packages may change over time or increase, and the boat must be strong, solid, and big enough to support these changes over time. Although we may be most interested in what is in the packages, they will never be delivered if there is a hole in the boat.

個々のプロジェクト

組織基盤

Acknowledgement: Japan NPO Center

How the Packard Foundation approaches Capacity Building

Capacity building is an important approach that is integrated into many of the Packard Foundation's investments. In the Foundation's work in the US and internationally, building strong leaders, organizations, networks, and fields are key to achieving programmatic success. The Foundation invests in capacity building in multiple ways, including through the Organizational Effectiveness program, which David Packard began in 1983. The Organizational Effectiveness program believes that investing in organizational and network capacity leads to increased effectiveness, which in turn leads to better programmatic outcomes. In the last 15 years, the OE program has provided capacity building support to more than 1,000 organizations.

What is Capacity Building?

Capacity building is broadly defined as:

An activity that helps organizations and networks, and the people within them, develop or refine skills, strategies, systems, and/or structures.

Capacity building develops…

- ➢ *strategy* – such as program design, communications, fundraising, or evaluation
- ➢ *operational strength*– such as financial administration or human resources management
- ➢ *leadership* – such as leading oneself, leading an organization, leading a network, or leading a movement
- ➢ *technical skills* - such as gaining depth of knowledge in particular topic, i.e. sustainable fisheries management
- ➢ *structures* – such as a developing a new organizational design or business model
- ➢ *general capacity* - capacity building can also refer to adding new capacity in the form of additional people or even teams that bring new skills and resources to an organization or network

Capacity building can help achieve program goals

- ❖ Successful leaders, organizations, and networks all have one thing in common: they have clear goals and a plan to achieve them – often called a strategy. Thoughtful strategies put forward a vision and a set of activities to undertake in order to reach a set of goals.
- ❖ Individuals, organizations, networks, and the field overall need certain capacities in order to carry out these activities.
- ❖ Capacity building strengthens individuals, organizations, and networks so they can carry out their strategies and achieve their goals.

How does capacity building happen?

Capacity building can take many forms, such as:

- ▪ On or off-site training courses
- ▪ Conference attendance
- ▪ Hiring an expert or consultant to carry out a customized project to build capacity
- ▪ Learning in a cohort or group with other leaders
- ▪ Personalized coaching from an expert and/or mentorship
- ▪ Partnerships or exchange programs between institutions to gain information or knowledge
- ▪ Support to cover general capacity
- ▪ If the field is lacking a certain skillset or function, support to launch or strengthen new institutions

Capacity building is about identifying where you are headed to achieve your goals and recognizing what skills and knowledge you need to get there.

Examples of Capacity Building Projects

Below are two examples of what capacity building projects look like on the ground and how they impact organizations and networks.

Organizational Case: Niparaja increases effectiveness through strategic planning

Niparaja, a small NGO working on regional conservation issues in the Gulf of California, Mexico, received an OE grant in 2013 to complete a new strategic plan with partnership from an external consultant. The consultant guided the organization through a process to revise the vision, mission, and key strategies of the organization, identify measures of success and partners to engage, and review current and potential funding sources. The process brought together staff to provide input into the plan and built engagement and commitment to the mission of the organization across programs. At the conclusion of the process, Niparaja had an action plan in hand to guide program growth and support the development of new alliances and donor relationships.

Network Case: Conservation Alliance – Connecting leaders working on sustainable seafood

The Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (the Alliance) formed in 2008 to connect NGOs and leaders working on fisheries conservation and sustainable seafood issues. The primary goals were to connect organizations and their work with one another, minimize conflicts, and strengthen the groups' collective action and strategic alignment. Since its founding, the Alliance has evolved from a disparate group of organizations to a coordinated network engaged in regular communication and collaborative strategy development on emerging issues related to the Alliance's shared sustainable seafood goals. Through its work, the Alliance has created two consensus based documents including the "Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood" and "Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects." It is these types of collaboratively produced products and the impact of these efforts that has inspired the Alliance to continue working together as the sustainable seafood movement has evolved.

What capacity building is right for you?

The Packard Foundation maintains a wiki with a number of assessments that can inform capacity building priorities, or reach out the Packard Foundation Organizational Effectiveness team for more information.

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For examples of capacity building programs in Japan, please refer to the website of Japan NPO center, Management Service Organization in Japan or reach out to Japan NPO center

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