



Full paper published in **The Changing Nature of Country Towns**
(order forms located on the conference website)

Measuring Community Capacity: An Electronic Audit Tool

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Introduction

In this chapter, we present an electronic template to measure community capacity in rural places. Although the template can be readily adapted for other purposes, it was designed specifically to measure community capacity to support local primary industries. The template draws on established rural and community theory and research, provides a scientific tool for communities and government departments to profile and increase community capacity, and is based on residents' on-the-ground understandings of the concept. Here we present the template, its outputs, the methodology employed in its development, its conceptual foundations, and its uses for policy and community development¹.

Several years ago, the Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) sought to develop an instrument to measure the capacity of a rural community to support the development of local primary industries and economic growth. Such an instrument was needed for several reasons. Firstly, it is well recognised that community capacity contributes to economic growth and social development in rural communities (Luloff 1996, 1998; Flora 1998; Claude, Bridger & Luloff 1999). Secondly, in response to this evidence, governments seek to increase community capacity, or assume that a community already has the required capacities to conduct a funded project. So PIRSA needed a tool to measure a community's capacity and match this against capacities targeted by various funding programs. Thirdly, existing instruments are too subjective, general, or narrow; based on vague definitions of community capacity; uninformed by established rural and community theory and research; and/or designed for different contexts. Fifthly, PIRSA required community capacity data that could be integrated with other existing databases of, for example, industry capacity, markets, and the natural environment. Finally, an instrument was needed that is meaningful to, and readily used by, rural people themselves.

This paper was subject to a double-blind peer review process.

ISBN number 1920948848

Published on-line by the Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities, La Trobe University

www.latrobe.edu.au/csarc/2ndconference/refereed

¹ For full details of the template and its development see the full technical report of the project (Cheers, Kruger, and Trigg, 2005), which can be obtained from Hilton Trigg at Rural Solutions SA, Port Lincoln Office, Port Lincoln Office, PO Box 1783, Port Lincoln SA 5606 or email trigg.hilton@saugov.sa.gov.au.

So we designed a template to meet the needs of all stakeholders - residents, government, and local industry. Specific aims were to work with two communities to develop the template, trial it by conducting audits in these communities, and engage residents in a community capacity building planning process based on the audit. In keeping with stakeholders' objectives, we focused on a community's capacity to support the growth and development of local primary industries and, through this, the local economy. Nevertheless, we believe that the template can be used, with minor modifications, to measure community capacity for other purposes, such as supporting the development of health and human services, or building community capacity *per se*. Requirements for the template were that it must be based on, and true to, coherent concepts and frameworks; informed by existing theory and research; as objective, precise, and comprehensive as possible; based on hard data; capable of producing sound, valid, quantitative results and graphic outputs that are easy to interpret and useful for community planning; user friendly, easy to complete, and engaging; and accessible to all rural communities using locally available hardware and software. It was developed by a team comprising PIRSA and Rural Solutions SA staff, CRARD social scientists, and community participants. We used a participatory case study design involving two rural, primary industry-based communities in South Australia.

Step 1: Preparation. Initially, PIRSA and Rural Solutions SA team members contacted a key local person in each community, visited the communities, and engaged community participants. In each community, participants formed a local group to work with the research team. At the same time, we read literature reviews on community capacity and related concepts that had previously been conducted through CRARD (Cheers, 2002a,b; Edwards, Cheers & Graham, 2003; Cheers, Edwards & Graham, 2004a,b; Edwards and Cheers, 2004) and scanned other literature, searching for potentially useful concepts, frameworks, and instruments.

Step 2: Conceptual development. A conceptual framework was constructed to underpin the template, drawing on preliminary work by PIRSA (McClure & Cock, undated, 2003), established rural and community sociology theory and research, and a community strength framework (Cheers et al, 2004a, b). We decided to organise the framework and template according to sectors (e.g. *primary industries, employment, and education and training,*) and capacities (e.g. *management and leadership*). We then drafted a list of sectors in preparation for the first community workshops. During these, we introduced participants to the project, obtained their feedback on the draft conceptual framework and sectors, identified some capacities for each sector, brainstormed indicators for these capacities, and had preliminary ideas about how capacities might be presented in the template. Following these workshops, the research team finalised sectors and drafted a list of capacities. Finalising sectors involved sending the draft list to all community participants for comment followed by telephone conversations with them. Eventually, a draft matrix of 16 capacities by 11 sectors was constructed, which subsequently went through several iterations in discussion with community participants.

Step 3: Operationalisation. Having decided which sectors and capacities would be included, we now had to work out how the capacities would be operationalised, or actually presented, in the template. This meant establishing how they were understood by community participants and developing indicators for them. This is what we did in the next workshops. Following these, the research team finalised capacities, drafted a

template format, and drafted indicators for each capacity for finalisation at the next workshops.

Step 4: Template construction. In consultation with two ‘community advisors’ in each community, the researchers drafted *statements* to present each capacity on the template, devised a scale to measure their strength, and drafted indicators for discussion at the next community workshops (see below). During these workshops, we did a final review of capacities and indicators, changed statement wording, made final decisions about scales to be used on the template, and reviewed draft descriptions for each sector (see below). The researchers then finalised capacity statements, indicators, and scales, sector descriptions, and an introduction to the template. We also finalised the electronic version of the template² and entered existing statistical data about the communities into it.

Step 5: Audits and strategic planning. Each community then conducted a community capacity audit. Graphic outputs were generated from the template, which were then used in planning workshops to review each community’s capacity profile and develop capacity-strengthening strategies.

Definition

The Aspen Institute (1996) defines community capacity as “*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*” (cited in Black and Hughes, 2001: p.18). According to Black & Hughes (2001: p18), *commitment* is “the community-wide will to act, based on a shared awareness of problems, opportunities and workable solutions” and “heightened support in key sectors of the community to address opportunities, solve problems and strengthen community responses”; *resources* are the “financial, natural and human assets and the means to deploy them intelligently and fairly”; and *skills* are “all the talents and expertise of individuals and organisations that can be marshalled to address problems, seize opportunities, and add strength to existing and emerging institutions”. While this definition is a useful starting point, it fails to distinguish *explicitly* between community resources and community capability, does not specify what a *community* capacity is, rather than, say, an *industry* capacity; and assumes that the same community capacities contribute equally to all purposes. Various capacities could well be more or less useful for the purpose at hand.

Our definition builds on the Aspen Institute’s definition, responds to these criticisms of Black and Hughes’ (2001) definition, and focuses on the purpose at hand: to measure community capacity to support local primary industries.

Community capacity comprises the resources a community has that potentially can be used for primary industry growth, and the community’s ability to use these for this purpose in changing economic, social, and environmental contexts.

² The electronic form of the template was developed by Justin Dixon of Rural Solutions SA in consultation with the research team.

Resources include, for example, financial and human assets, physical infrastructure such as facilities, the talents of individuals and organisations, relations between people and between organisations, access to services outside the community, and community attitudes toward local primary industries.

What a *community* resource is depends on how ‘community’ is understood. Because the template is intended for use by rural communities, it is based on the classical understanding of a *community of place* as *people living in the same location and their relations with each other* (see, e.g., Wilkinson, 1991; Cheers et al, 2004a,b). Here, ‘people’ includes social structures such as organisations, clubs, and social groupings.

A community resource, then, is inherent in the people, organisations, and relations that comprise the community; the community’s relations with its external networks, partnerships, and organisations; and the services available to it.

‘Inherent in’ means produced, sustained, owned, and/or used by the people, organisations, and relations comprising the community. Community resources usually are not specific to a particular industry or enterprise. Even when they are, they are freely available to the wider community for a range of purposes.

Community capacity can be audited either generically or for a particular purpose. So the question arises as to whether community capacity is a generic concept or depends on the purpose of the audit. Can we measure community capacity *per se* or only a community’s capacity to achieve a particular goal? There are three options. Firstly, community capacity can be regarded as constant in a community at a particular time regardless of the audit’s purpose. Logically, then, the same capacities should be audited regardless of the purpose and each contributes equally to total community capacity. Alternatively, community capacity can be viewed entirely according to a particular purpose (see, for example, Landscape and Social Research, 2003). In this case, which capacities are included in an audit, and the relative contribution of each to total community capacity, depends entirely on the purpose at hand. The third view is that although the concept *community capacity* remains the same regardless of the audit’s purpose, how it is operationalised in a particular audit depends on the purpose at hand. In other words, the same capacities are included in all audits of community capacity although how much each contributes depends on the purpose. For example, leadership in primary industry probably contributes more to the community’s capacity to support local primary industries than leadership in religion. Accordingly, the relative contribution of various capacities to total community capacity to achieve a particular purpose is an empirical issue to be assessed as part of the audit. This template is informed by this view.

Rural sociological theory

The template is informed by theory and research from rural sociology, notably network theory, and a comprehensive framework of community strength, which incorporates community interaction theory, entrepreneurial social infrastructure, and social capital as these relate to communities of place. Our definition of community capacity encompasses both relations within a community, or *horizontal ties*, and those

of local people and organisations with the community's external environment, or *vertical ties* (Warren, 1963: pp.237-8). Both are incorporated into the template. So, too, are the *strong ties* of dense networks of close relationships and the *weak ties* connecting people and organisations with networks they are not normally part of (Granovetta, 1973).

Community strength is defined as *people (encompassing individuals, groups, and organisations) in a locality engaging with each other and the social infrastructure³ for community betterment* (Cheers et al, 2004a,b) (Figure 1). *People (and organisations) engaging with each other* is incorporated into many capacities in the framework (e.g. networks and partnerships). The notion of *community betterment* focuses an audit on a purpose, whether it is community betterment generally or a particular activity, such as development of local primary industries. *Engagement with the social infrastructure* is the concept *community capability*.

Figure 1: Community strength framework (Cheers, Edwards and Graham, 2004a, 2004b)

With one possible exception, all components of what is called *social infrastructure* in the community strength framework are incorporated into the template. The exception, *community narratives*, is not included because it is not a capacity as defined here and cannot be measured simply in a quantitative template. Even so, the entire audit can be viewed as a community narrative because it is a story that at least some people in the community are collectively telling about its capacity.

Community attitudes, or shared understandings of what is worthwhile in and for the community, appears on the template as a distinct capacity. What is called *community resources* in the community strength framework embraces both infrastructure and capabilities as these are defined in the template framework. *Social relations*, the fourth component of social infrastructure, includes (1) the *patterning* of the links amongst people, organisations, and groups, and (2) *social capital*. Both are incorporated into the template, *social patterning* in a number of capacities, especially *networks and relationships*, and *social capital* as a capacity in its own right.

Flora et al (1997: pp.627-29) identified three dimensions and seven indicators of entrepreneurial social infrastructure, all of which are incorporated into the template. These are the extent to which, in a community of place:

- Different opinions, views, and attitudes are legitimated by acceptance of controversy, depersonalisation of politics, and focus on process;
- Local resources are mobilised through individuals investing in the locality both individually and through collective structures; and

³ The term *infrastructure* is used differently in the community strength and community capacity audit template frameworks.

- Social networks are diverse and inclusive, and have dense interlinkages and permeable boundaries.

While entrepreneurial social infrastructure emphasises purposes and outcomes, community interaction theory emphasises social engagement, networks, and partnerships. According to community interaction theory, a community has four components: locality, local society, social fields, and a community field. The locality is where the community is located geographically, the boundaries of which are identified by the community at the beginning of an audit. The local society is how the interaction, networks, and social relations are organised in the community. It includes informal relations such as groups of friends semi-formal social structures such as families, and formal ones such as organisations. These are all incorporated into various capacities on the template. A local society has several social fields. Each of these is made up of people who share a common interest, such as business development, sport, or religion, and the relations between these people. Social fields are referred to as sectors in the template. But a local society is not a community unless it has a 'community field'. In the community field people get together for the benefit of the entire community, not just particular interests. The community field is made up of "*all those acts that contribute to the interests of the community as a whole by interlinking and coordinating the other social fields ...*" (Wilkinson, 1991: pp.35-36). The community field is the *social organisation* sector in the template.

Finally, *social capital* is usually defined in terms of trust, reciprocity, and norms inhering in relations between people (e.g. Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Portes, 1998). Norms usually referred to include cooperativeness, mutual support, partnership, and the like. Social capital is presented this way on the template.

The Template

The template was designed to be simple and clear; user friendly; easy to understand and complete; engaging; true to its conceptual framework and relevant research and theory; accessible to virtually all rural communities using locally available hardware and software; useful for planning by communities and governments; and capable of producing valid quantitative results and graphic outputs that are easy to interpret, have immediate visual impact, and are useful for community planning. It is written in *Microsoft Access 2000* because this program is widely available, easy to use, sufficiently powerful, and can produce the required outputs quickly. The template is designed to be completed collectively by people from a community in interaction with each other rather than by a sample or population of individual respondents. This is consistent with the macro concept of 'community' on which it is based, in contrast to viewing 'community' as simply the aggregation of individuals.

Sectors

Thinking in terms of sectors is so common throughout society that the concept seems universally obvious, which was the case in the two communities. A sector is defined for the template as a sphere of human activity in a community.

The template is partitioned into 11 sectors, each of which is described on the initial screen for that sector. Table 1 presents these together with the operational definitions developed for them during the project. Sectors are *social organisation*, *primary*

industry, business, financial services, education and training, employment, environment, health and human services, sport and recreation, arts and entertainment, and religion. They are presented in this order on the template for three reasons. *Social organisation* is first because it focuses on the community as a whole and the template is presented on the first screen as a tool designed to audit the capacity of the entire community. Placing *primary industry* next is consistent with the purpose of this particular audit. The other sectors are ordered according to how directly they bear on primary industry development (e.g., *business* compared with *religion*), and how closely related they are (e.g. *business* and *finance*).

Capacities and sub-capacities

Sixteen capacities were identified for the template: *mass, programs, access, information, marketing, financial resources, human resources, facilities, equipment, management, leadership, networks and relationships, government, politics, social capital, and attitudes* (Table 2). They are ordered this way on the template. Some capacities have two or more sub-capacities although not all of these appear for that capacity in every sector. For example, the capacity *access* has the sub-capacity *use of informal networks* only in the employment sector. Some capacities change their character from sector to sector. For example, the capacity *access* is defined in the *social organisation* sector as access to community and economic development organisations and services *within* the community because these organisations usually only service the local community. In contrast, in the *education and training* sector, *access* is presented as access to programs and services provided by both *local and non-local organisations*.

Capacity assessment

For each capacity and sub-capacity, the template measures community perceptions of the following:

1. *Capacity strength (CS)* – the strength of the capacity;
2. *Capacity importance (CI)* – how important the capacity is for total community capacity for the purpose at hand (e.g. to support local primary industries);
3. *Capacity contribution (CC)* - how much a particular capacity contributes to total community capacity relative to the others; and
4. *Capacity confidence (CO)* – how confident auditors are in their assessment of the strength of the capacity.

For each of these variables, the mean of sub-capacity scores for the variable is taken as the score for that capacity in the sector. Figure 2 contains a screen from the template demonstrating how these variables are presented on the template.

Capacity strength (CS) is measured on a 4-point likert scale on which auditors record the extent to which they (collectively) agree or disagree with a statement provided (the *capacity strength statement*) (see Figure 2). For example, the statement for the capacity *mass* in the *social organisation* sector is: *'This community has the community and economic development organisations and services it requires'*. Capacity strength statements are introduced with this question:

What is your assessment of your community's capacity in the ----- [e.g. Social Organisation] Sector using the indicators provided? Indicate your assessment by clicking whether you 'strongly disagree', 'disagree',

'agree', or 'strongly agree' with the following statements using the indicators provided.

A likert scale was chosen because it is easy to understand; direct, clear, and concise; demands a definitive response; a proven tool with generally high validity and reliability; and familiar to most people. A 4-point scale was chosen to avoid a mid-point, which we⁴ agreed could be used invalidly as a 'don't know' option.

Assessment of capacity strength should be based on valid and precise information. We decided that a full community stock-take (e.g. of meeting rooms, telephones, and staff) would be far too onerous for communities to undertake, resulting in low template usage and invalid data. At the other extreme, auditors could simply make an entirely subjective, global judgement about the strength of the capacity, which would reduce validity. So we adopted the middle ground of identifying indicators for each capacity from workshops and interviews, empirical and theoretical literature, and our pooled expertise. Indicators were chosen to be as objective and precise as possible, as few as possible for each capacity, but enough of them to provide valid data. Community auditors assess the strength of a capacity according to each indicator using this statement: *'Assess your community's capacity in the ----- [e.g. Social Organisation] Sector using the indicators provided'*. Three response options are provided: *'strong'*, *'weak'*, and *'irrelevant'*. A dichotomised scale was chosen to keep the instrument simple, clear, and direct. Auditors then use these assessments to complete the capacity strength likert scale.

Table 1: Sectors

Table 2: Capacities and sub-capacities

Capacity importance (CI) - The capacity importance scale indicates participants' assessment of how important a particular capacity is to total community capacity. The relevant template question is: 'How important is this capacity in auditing your community's total capacity?'. There are four response options: 'not important', 'minor importance', 'important', and 'extremely important'.

Capacity confidence (CO) - Participants are then asked to indicate their level of confidence in their assessment of the strength of the given capacity through this question: *'How confident are you in this assessment?'*. Four response options are provided – *'not confident'*, *'some confidence'*, *'confident'*, and *'extremely confident'*. This scale is included to assess the validity of capacity strength ratings – i.e. the

⁴ 'We' includes researchers and community participants.

extent to which the assessment of the strength of a particular capacity is based on sound information.

Capacity contribution (CC) - is an assessment of how much a particular capacity is contributing to total community capacity at the time of the audit. It is obtained by multiplying *capacity strength (CS)* and *capacity importance (CI)* (i.e. $CC = CS \times CI$).

Text comments - Auditors can also record brief comments relating to their assessment of each capacity. This provides contextual information that can be important for interpreting the quantitative ratings.

Template Layout

Only a brief description of the layout of the template is possible here⁵. It has a number of screens.

Screen 1 presents the purpose of the template, how it was developed and who developed it.

Screen 2 Community Contacts records auditors' details, their role in conducting the audit, and details of the particular audit (e.g. community, date). It also provides access to all outputs (see below) and every screen in the template.

Screen 3 Community Statistics provides essential statistical data about the community from other data bases. It includes demographic and economic data for both the local area and the postcode area; a measure of how remote the community is (*Australian Remote Index for Areas (ARIA)*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001a); a measure of its socio-economic status (*Socio-economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b); and statistical data for each sector⁶.

The rest of the template is made up of capacity audit screens grouped into sectors.

Sector description screens - At the beginning of each sector is a *Sector Description Screen*, which identifies, defines, and provides descriptive information about the sector. This is followed by the capacity (and sub-capacity) screens for the sector.

Capacity audit screens (see Figure 2) - Each screen presents the scales for measuring capacity strength (*CS*), importance (*CI*), and confidence (*CO*); indicator scales; and space for text comments about the particular capacity or sub-capacity. At the bottom left of each screen is a listing of the community, the sector, the capacity, and the capacity's number in the *Access* database. Clicking on any of these takes the user to the *capacity reports* for the capacity on the screen (see below). Several electronic buttons at the bottom right of the screen take the user to the quantitative and graphic outputs and reports (see below) and to other places in the template.

⁵ For a full description and an electronic copy see Cheers, Kruger and Trigg (2005).

⁶ We are considering incorporating data from other data bases.

Figure 2: Template capacity screen for the capacity *mass* in the *social organisation* sector

Reports

The template produces various outputs, each of which contains a set of quantitative and graphic reports that present a profile of a particular component of the community’s capacity (see Table 3). These form the basis of community capacity-building strategic planning. The most immediately useful reports are:

1. *Overall sector profile* – capacity strength, importance, and contribution scores for each sector (Figure 3).
2. *Overall capacity profile* – capacity strength, importance, and contribution scores for each capacity (Figure 4).
3. *Capacities for the sector* – capacity strength, importance, contribution, and confidence scores for each capacity in a particular sector (Figure 5).
4. *Sectors for the capacity* – capacity strength, importance, contribution, and confidence scores for a particular capacity in each sector (see Figure 6).

Table 3: Outputs and reports

Output	Reports
<i>Overall community summary report</i>	<i>Overall sector profile</i> <i>Overall capacity profile</i>
<i>Sector reports</i>	<i>Overall community profile</i> <i>Overall sector profile</i> <i>Capacities for the sector</i> <i>Capacity confidence If-then statements for the sector</i> <i>Capacity/sub-capacity comments for each capacity in the sector</i> <i>Capacity/sub-capacity raw data for each capacity in the sector</i>
<i>Capacity reports</i>	<i>Overall community profile</i> <i>Overall capacity profile</i> <i>Sectors for the capacity</i> <i>Capacity confidence If-then statements for the capacity</i> <i>Capacity/sub-capacity comments for the capacity</i> <i>Capacity/sub-capacity raw data for the capacity</i>

All quantitative reports are presented in terms of actual performance as a percentage of the total possible performance for the variable. So, for example, a score of 50% for the strength of the capacity *leadership* in the *education and training* sector means that it is only 50% of what it could be if it were fully strong.

Overall Sector Profile

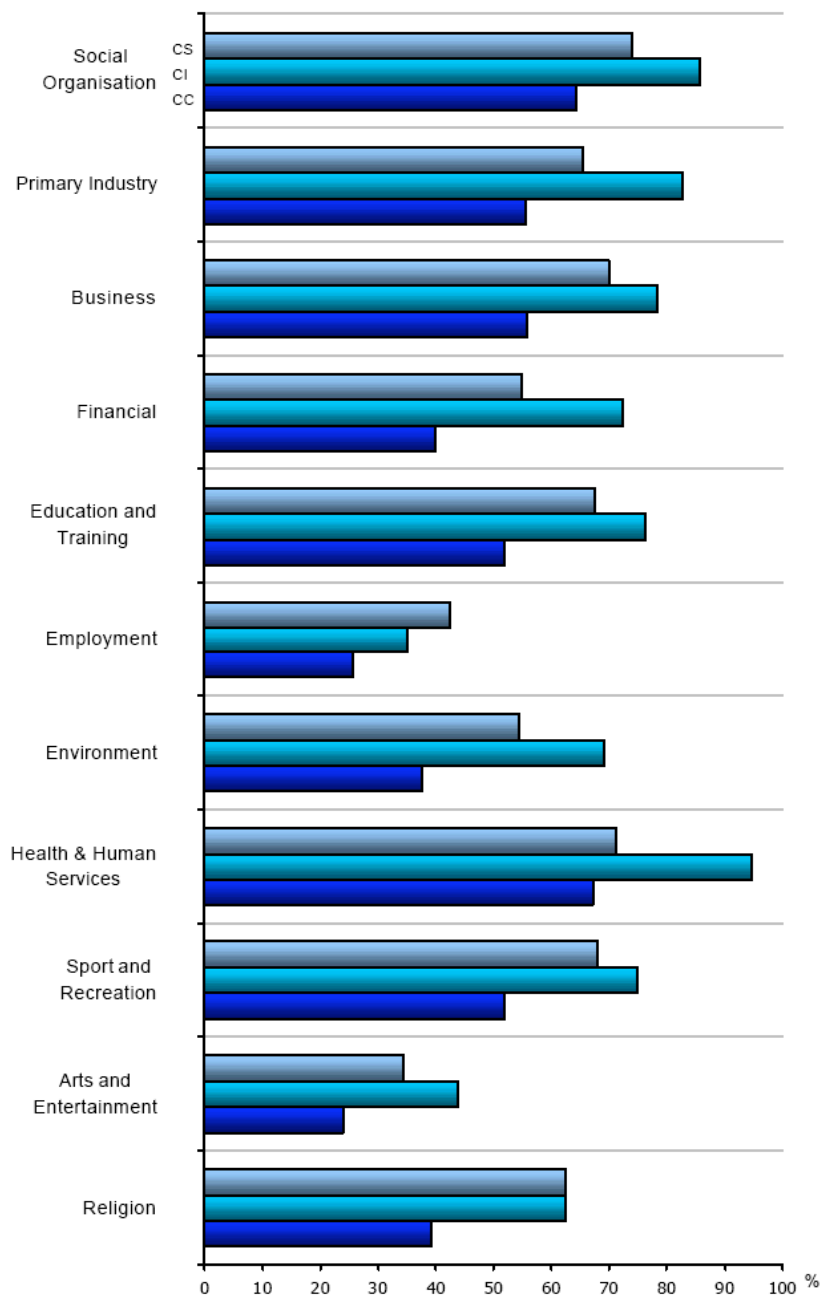


Figure 3: Overall sector profile for Farmland

Overall Capacity Profile

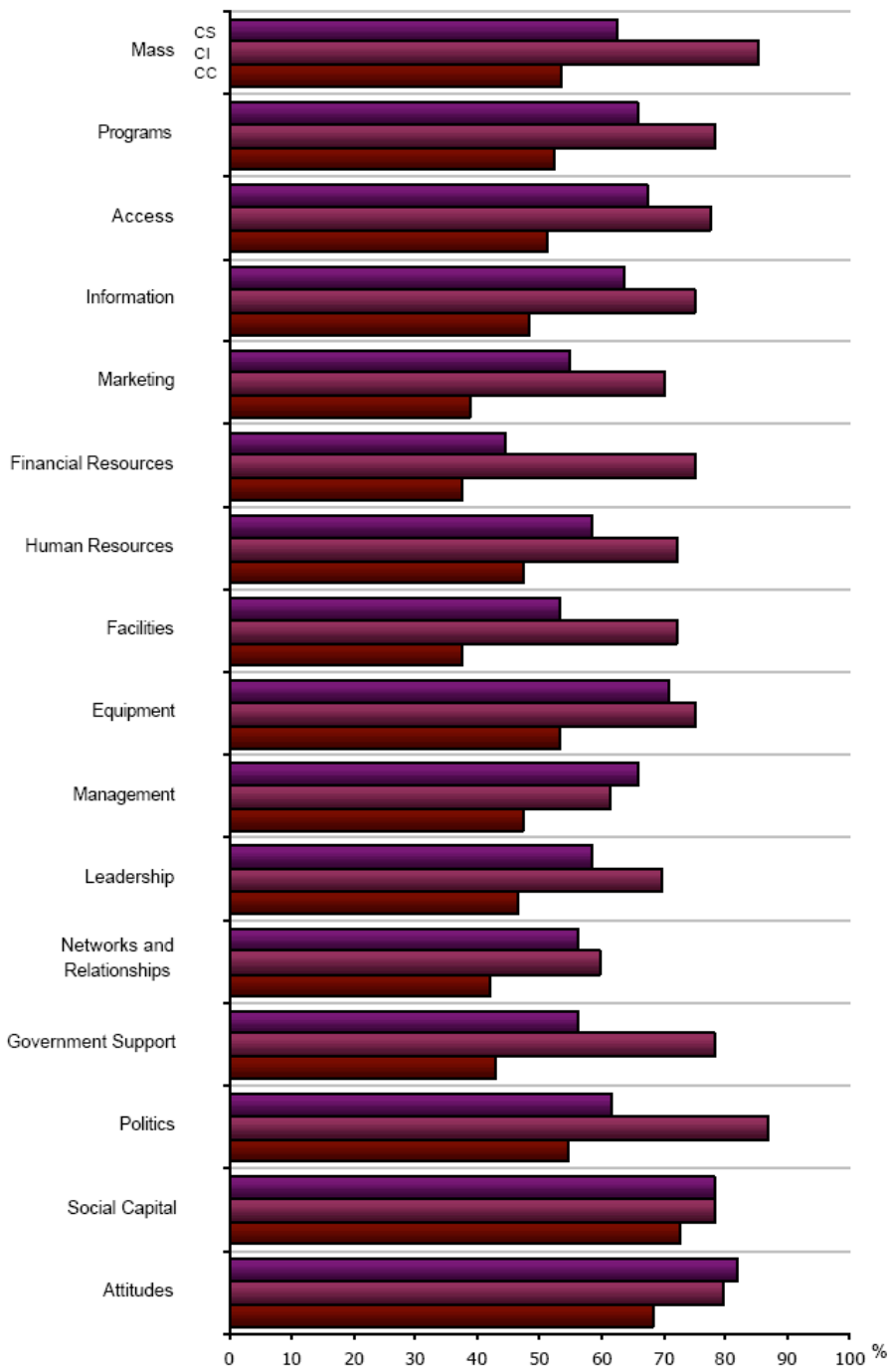


Figure 4: Overall capacity profile for Farmland

Figure 5: Capacities for the sector - Farmland *primary industry* sector⁷

Figure 6: Sectors for the capacity – Farmland *mass* capacity

Example: Sector report – Primary industry sector (refer to Figure 5)

Figure 5 presents the report for Farmland's Primary Industry sector⁸. Total community capacity strength for Farmland is a moderate 50%, which means that the community is performing at half of its maximum possible strength. As a sector, *Primary Industry* is performing better than this at around 65%. The auditors considered that this sector is highly important to total community capacity (over 80%), which, of course, makes sense given that the purpose of this audit was to measure the community's capacity to support the development of local primary industries. Given that the sector is so important but its capacity strength is only moderate, this sector was contributing only around 55% of its full potential to total community capacity when the audit was done. Clearly, then, increasing the capacity of this sector would be a high priority for this town.

But which particular capacities should be prioritised in strategic planning to increase community capacity? From Figure 2, the poor performers in relation to capacity strength are *information*, *financial resources*, *human resources*, *facilities*, and *government support*. In other words, this sector (not individual enterprises) lacks the information (about services and resources available from primary industry support organisations), financial resources (within the sector locally and industry support organisations), human resources and facilities (within local primary industries) it needs to prosper, and requires more government support (from Commonwealth, State, and local government policy and administration). However, judging from the *Capacity Importance (CI)* scores, while all capacities are of some importance to the community's total capacity to support local primary industries, the sector can get by without improved access to information and additional facilities. On the other hand, given their high importance, the sector urgently requires increased financial resources, human resources, and government support. These, it seems, would be the highest priority for the people of Farmland. They would also prioritise developing and implementing strategies to increase their success at lobbying governments for resources because community auditors rate it as highly important to the growth of local primary industries yet rate its strength as only moderate.

On the positive side of the ledger, local primary industries in Farmland tend to have sufficient industry support services and local enterprises (*mass*); there is strong local *leadership* in the industry; the sector uses strong *networks and relationships* within

⁷ 12, rather than the full 16, capacities are profiled because results of actual audits are currently available only for an earlier version of the template, which did not have all capacities in all sectors.

⁸ The profile is of an actual community although the name is fictitious.

local primary industry, between the industry and other sectors in the community, and between the industry and the world outside the community; there is very high *social capital* in the industry; and the community has a positive attitude towards the growth of local primary industries (*attitudes*).

In view of *Capacity Confidence (CO)* scores on the right-hand side this community can develop and implement capacity strengthening strategies with reasonable confidence that their database is sound. The exception is the capacity *information*. While strategies to increase this capacity can be developed and implemented the community should continue to seek further data relating to its indicators.

Further Development

This is the first version of the template. We are currently conducting a follow-up project focusing especially on several issues. Firstly, the template has been developed thus far with self-selected participants in each community. Consequently, some groups (such as youth and low-income residents) and some sectors (such as *arts and entertainment*) were not represented amongst participants in each community. People from all groups and sectors are included in the current trial.

Secondly, audits were done by these groups in workshops. It is possible that participants lacked sufficient information to ensure validity of audit responses. In the current project, we are using a different method in which participants from each sector complete a draft audit for their sector then come together in workshops to complete the audit as a group. Comparing results from both methods provides another test for the template.

Thirdly, we have assembled a panel of experts from government, communities, non-government organisations, and social sciences to do a number of tasks. The panel is reviewing concepts, the conceptual framework, and the template. It is also weighting each capacity with respect to conceptual categories mentioned earlier such as 'infrastructure' and 'capability' so that these can be profiled. For example, the capacity *human resources* in the *education and training* sector might be weighted 0.6 for infrastructure and 0.4 for capability. Using these, we can then derive separate scores for infrastructure and capability for the total community, each sector, and each capacity. Other conceptual distinctions can be profiled in the same way, including 'individual', 'organisational', 'infrastructural', and 'community' levels, and 'hard' and 'soft' indicators.

Fourthly, an important aim of the overall project is for governments to use the template to target funding programs according to community capacity. This might mean resourcing communities to develop particular capacities or to conduct projects that assume the existence of identified capacities. Clearly, measuring community capacity is necessary. However, it is equally important to be able to profile capacities targeted by particular programs so that these can be matched with capacity profiles of communities. So the panel is using the template framework to audit government funding programs. In this way, programs and resources can be matched to community capacity profiles.

Fifthly, the template was developed to assist communities to profile their capacity with respect to a particular purpose. An important aim is for communities to use profiles to develop strategies designed to increase capacity, implement them, and monitor outcomes over time. This will be done as communities use the template at regular intervals.

Finally, in the current project we are also reviewing the meanings and wording contained in the template with a wider range of community participants and the expert panel, correcting minor spelling, grammatical, and technical glitches, constructing more sophisticated reports and graphics, and developing an electronic manual to accompany the template.

Conclusion

The template has a number of uses. It provides a precise, quantitative, electronic tool to support government policies and community activities aimed at increasing community capacity, productive cohesiveness, and social entrepreneurship, all of which we know contribute to economic growth, social development, and personal wellbeing in rural communities. Communities can undertake community capacity building initiatives, monitor their success using valid, precise, empirical data, and modify their strategies accordingly. And governments, together with communities, can match programs to the particular needs of any given community, confident that they are likely to have the intended effects and that these can be monitored over time.

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