CHAPTER 3

ENHANCING BOARD AND STAFF PERFORMANCE

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have been likened to living organisms. They exhibit similar life cycles — birth, growth, maturity, and in many cases, death. Many organizations avoid the final cycle (death) and continue functioning and growing. To continue to function, survive, and achieve their purposes, successful organizations continually renew themselves.

CAAs have the same need to renew themselves as do business enterprises. CAAs are constantly having to face new or changing demands placed upon them by a variety of sources — their clientele, their funding sources, regulatory agents, and even their own internal structures. Through a continuous process of renewal, successful CAAs maintain their vitality and their relevancy to the clienteles they serve.

The form that renewal takes most often is that of improving and adding to the pool of knowledge, skills, and understandings that board members and staff use to successfully conduct the activities that are aimed at achieving the mission and goals of the CAA. Material renewal such as new funds, facilities, and computers may enhance the functioning of the CAA but they do not assure its continued livelihood and relevance. Even with these kinds of enhancements, a successful CAA is ultimately dependent upon the vitality of its board and staff.

Thus, staff and board competencies must reflect and be supportive of the mission and goals of the CAA. These in turn must reflect the needs and aspirations of the CAA's primary constituency—those striving to rise out of poverty. CAAs that engage in activities to alleviate the pain of poverty by distributing food and other material goods require one set of competencies. CAAs that engage in activities designed to help people better themselves in order to move out of poverty will require a different set of competencies. Thus, the training and developmental needs and activities of each CAA are, or should be, reflective of its mission and goals.

Similarly, within each CAA training and developmental needs will vary according to the activities individual staff and board members engage in, what the nature and level of their competencies are, and what their needs are when they function as individuals or in groups or sub-groups within the organization.

DEFINING THE CAA'S PURPOSE

Probably the single biggest challenge to improving the performance of CAA boards, executive directors, and staff is getting them to accept the notion that they must continually define their vision of what the organization should be doing and what it can be expected to accomplish. Boards and executive directors run the risk of freezing that definition despite changes occurring outside the CAA, such as changes in their clientele's needs; the nature of their clientele; and the sources, scale, and nature of resources. This does not mean constant changes in the CAA's mission, purpose, or understanding of its clientele or their needs. It means, instead, the CAA must periodically check its pulse on these matters to assure that it is a healthy organization rather than one that is moribund, stagnant, and ultimately irrelevant to the community in which it operates and to those it serves.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The healthy board focuses outward, upward, and forward. This board spends most of its time defining the goals the organization should achieve and the results and impacts it wants to bring about. It has both clarity of purpose and a strong sense of mission.

The healthy board spends time defining its role in developing and implementing strategies to achieve agency goals. It does not decide on ends and then delegate everything else to the CAA's staff; it maintains a strong oversight role, yet avoids micro-managing the CAA. The board has its own work plan. Generally, the healthy board:

- Mobilizes the media, the community, elected and appointed officials, and other elements on behalf of the CAA's mission;
- spends much of its time on external relationships;
- mobilizes new resources to assist low-income clientele;
- identifies policies and activities in other institutions that have a negative impact on low-income people and takes steps to change them;
- seeks to create new relationships with other organizations that will benefit low-income people; and
- tries to enhance its influence where it has little or no power.

This board knows that it needs to understand the basic concepts around money management and the politics of funding, while recognizing the responsibility of the professional management staff, the funders themselves, and the CAA's fiscal and other management systems. The board is concerned about the achievement of its major goals. It ensures that effective management systems are in place for personnel, fiscal, information, inventory, and other necessary controls, but does not constantly challenge the validity of these systems or the best judgment of the managers who operate them.

The board sets broad goals and then contracts with its executive director to reach them. The executive director organizes the work of the staff to achieve the goals. The healthy board recognizes that a good executive director will encourage staff to devise better methods and adopt them. By agreeing on the ends and giving the staff the responsibility for choosing the best methods to achieve them, the healthy board empowers the staff. Responsibility for performance and continuing improvement is where it belongs — with agency management and staff.

THE ROLE OF CAA EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

CAA executive directors are leading organizations at a time of profound changes. There is heightened interest in the nature of leadership. Research strongly indicates that effective leaders increase the well-being of their employees, their clientele, and the communities in which their organizations operate. These leaders are focused on increasing the effectiveness of the organizations under their stewardship.

The executive director should convey a clear sense of purpose and direction for the organization. Within that context, the new leadership approach requires that the executive director exhibit the following characteristics at all levels within the organization:

- The executive director collaborates with the employees to define the quantity and quality of the work to be done and the time needed to do it.
- He/she assures that employees know how to do the job and what management expects of them. Employees are encouraged to provide ideas for better methods.
- He/she asks employees to evaluate or inspect the quality of their own work based upon agreed standards, trusting in their expertise about quality work.
- He/she is a facilitator who creates a non-coercive, and non-adversarial, atmosphere and provides the best tools and other means to accomplish the work.

To put the new leadership approach into practice, executive directors have to lead in defining what the CAA considers is quality work. Following are five elements to quality work that executive directors can use to frame the issue:

- **Accountability**. Does the CAA have a clear mission, understood by all the staff, board members, and other stakeholders? Does the CAA have a written strategic plan created with the full participation of the board, staff, low-income and other clientele served, and other stakeholders? Does the CAA have an annual plan that reflects the strategic commitments? Is the plan alive, regularly referred to, and one that guides the leadership's thinking and efforts? Do evaluation systems tell staff and board what effects agency programs have on moving clientele out of poverty or alleviating their condition? On other community institutions? Does the organization provide a system of accountability for the work of each staff person, documenting what the leadership and each staff person have negotiated?
- **Staff Development**. To what extent has the CAA focused on the development of the staff?
- **Innovation**. To what extent is the CAA an innovator? To what extent is everyone in the CAA encouraged to innovate? To what extent are commitments to continuing improvement and innovation built into job descriptions, work plans, and compensation decisions?
- **Organizational Partnerships**. Do leaders of the CAA understand the agency's partnerships with other organizations and constantly work toward strengthening those partnerships? Does the CAA take the lead in creating strategic alliances? Are staff members at all levels well prepared to create and strengthen relationships with community members and with others affecting the CAA? To what extent is knowledge flowing into the CAA from organizational partnerships?
- **Public Policy**. To what extent is the CAA influencing public policy to benefit low-income families? To what extent does the CAA influence the local school board, city council, county government, and state government? To what extent does the CAA collaborate with other organizations to increase public policy response to the issues of poverty? Is the CAA providing data and information that contribute to public policy decisions?

There is nothing easy about increasing the productivity of an organization's work force. The key to executive director leadership development, however, is in addressing these issues.

BOARD AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff and board development requires a great amount of effort and years of commitment, but it is well worth the investment. Key to effective staff and board development is the quality of the planning process that lays out the steps for designing and implementing the development program.

BASIC CONCEPTS

The framework for preparing staff or board development plans is shown in Appendix A. The left-hand column —Task Performance and Capacity Building — represents the two basic categories of development. Within each, we seek to improve the skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes of individuals or groups. The methods used to bring about improvement are education, development, and training. Using this schematic, or any similar analytical instrument, information about an individual's or a group's skills, knowledge, and attitude needs would be arrayed, as well as the methods — education, training, development — to be used to meet those needs. (By no means should one attempt to include all the requisite information in the compartments; the table is intended only to illustrate one approach to displaying information.)

TASK PERFORMANCE

Task performance requires the completion of specific sets of activities and acquisition of a specific body of knowledge. At the task level, the purpose of the task and the activities required to carry it out or complete it can be described. Tasks are usually time-limited and have an identifiable result. Installation of an interior storm window, blowing in nine inches of attic insulation, or helping a parent complete a Head Start enrollment application are examples of tasks.

In most CAAs, tasks come from one of four sources:

1. **Program**: Program tasks usually result from an agreement with a funding source and are described in regulations, work programs, and contracts.
2. **Profession**: Tasks in some professions — accounting, law, teaching, nursing — are specified in licensing and credentialing standards. When these standards are met, they attest to the person's capacity to perform certain functions.
3. **Agency**: Tasks are described in policies, job descriptions, or discussions with supervisors.
4. **Clientele**: Tasks are performed as a result of requests from clientele. If it is an individual request, a judgment is made based on the clientele service standards. When clientele tend to request the same services repeatedly, a change in policy may be necessary to ensure that agency staff respond to the new demand for services in a systematic and consistent way. In this way, clientele demands can create a new set of tasks for staff.

CAPACITY BUILDING

This encompasses the abilities and functions that enable one to complete one or more tasks, including problem assessment, effective listening, communicating, and problem solving. These enable people to think on their own, plan, adapt to changing circumstances, and devise new solutions to unique problems as they arise. These abilities help people to recognize and seize opportunities.

We describe most of the tasks we need to do today, but we cannot always know what abilities will be necessary to complete new tasks that may be required in the future. Executive directors need to think about how to develop staff and board members' capacities as well as staff members' ability to perform tasks.

One place where the organization writes its expectations about staff tasks or functions is in the job description that typically includes a mix of both specific tasks and broader functions or the capacities needed to perform those functions. The entry level job description is heavily weighted toward task performance. At the higher managerial and supervisory levels, the job description is weighted toward broader functions or capacities with fewer specific tasks described.

The distinction between task performance and enhancing capacities to perform broader functions is significant for CAA staff and board development because of the shift in thinking about human resources management that is away from task-oriented training and toward capacity building. The implication is that there is likely to be less training in how to perform a specific task and more training in capacities, such as diagnosing work place problems and developing solutions to correct them.

EMPLOYEE CAPACITIES

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has identified seven personal capacities that employers seek in their employees:

1. Ability to learn: to absorb, process, and apply new information.
2. Listening and oral communication.
3. Competence in reading, writing, and computation ; sound basic academic skills.
4. Adaptability: creative thinking and problem solving; adapting to new situations without constant supervision.
5. Personal management: self esteem, goal setting, motivation, and personal responsibility for career development.
6. Effectiveness in working in groups, interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork.
7. Organizational effectiveness and leadership ability: ability to organize and motivate self and others.

CAAs also need these capabilities in their staffs. They are the same capacities that low-income people need to enter and succeed in the work force. For this reason, building these capacities among CAA staff and among the low-income people CAAs serve is essentially the same challenge.

Referring to "Framework for Individual and Group Development Plans" (Appendix A), consider what information goes into each category/element. This is where you describe the development objectives, the knowledge, skill, or attitude you are trying to improve, and the methods to be used to do so.

Skill is the capacity to apply concepts and facts in performing in the work place.
Knowledge consists of concepts or facts in performing in the work place.
Attitude is the value and motivation needed to perform the tasks.

There are three methods to enhance knowledge, skill, and attitude:

The first is *education*, which focuses on the highest or most theoretical level. Education is usually provided away from the work place, by academic institutions.

Second, is *development*, which creates or improves a person's capacity to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. The focus is on helping the employee identify general concepts and apply them to a variety of related situations. Development may include simulations or hands-on practice.

Training is the third and narrowest of the methods. Training enables an employee to accomplish a specific task or function in a way that can be measured. Training usually involves self-study, classroom or on-the-job instruction, or a combination of these. Training is an appropriate and effective method when the objective is to increase knowledge and skills, or to change attitudes.

In summary, education and development seek to improve an employee's capacities, while training seeks to improve performance of specific tasks.

PREPARING AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)

This section discusses the development of an IDP for a staff person, the executive director, and a board member.

FOR A STAFF PERSON

The most important thing about an IDP is that it is a written document developed between the employee and the CAA. It can be retained in the employee's file and updated periodically. It should be as specific as possible about what is to be accomplished, the schedule, the responsibilities of the supervisor and the employee, the source of development support, who pays, any limits on cost, etc.

Ideally, the preparation of an IDP begins with a comprehensive task analysis listing the tasks that the employee actually performs over a full cycle of his/her activities. The cycle may be a day, week, or month long, and it may include sub-cycles of varying lengths that are repeated over the full cycle.

Tasks are measured in terms of the amount of time devoted to each. The degree to which each task relates to or underlies others is reviewed; in other words, what else depends on this task? Other factors are devised to rate the significance of each type of task. For example, in a Head Start program, knowing how to recognize symptoms and provide emergency care for a disease or ailment may be of greater significance than showing a parent how to cleanse a minor cut.

After the task analysis and listing are completed, the knowledge, skill, and attitude (KSA) needed to accomplish each task are identified.

In the course of developing the IDP, capacities that underlie or that must be present to perform several different tasks also should be identified. By identifying the underlying capacities the employee enhances his/her ability to do these several tasks.

The next step is for the employer/supervisor and the employee to compare or assess the employee's current body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes against the task list and analysis. Where the employee is lacking in some element of KSA, the supervisor and employee should develop a plan to address it.

Methods and a timetable to carry out the IDP are developed by the supervisor and employee.

Agreement is reached about a combination of education or training that can be provided to remedy areas needing improvement. Education and training can be highly individualized activities in the work place — involving self-study or one-on-one coaching provided by the supervisor or they can be provided in a more formal setting on- or off-site in a classroom or training room.

Example

Staff Individual Development Plan

Employee Name: Jane Doe
Program/Unit: WX
Supervisor: J. Roe

*Date:*____________

For Period: May ____ to April ______

A. JOB or TASK PERFORMANCE TO BE IMPROVED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Blower door operation to state standards	State workshop	June ____
2.	Blower door maintenance done to mfg specs	Seminar at manufacturing co.	Sept.____
3.	Proper use of caulk	Supervisor OJT	Begin October

(CAA will pay training cost for #1 and #2.)

B. CAPACITIES TO BE ENHANCED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Learn to absorb and apply new knowledge.		
	Course on thermodynamics	Local college	Fall term, ____

(CAA pays 50% of employee's tuition costs, for passing grade, up to $150 annual maximum, for job-related training.)

	License being sought (home-remodeling contractors)	MNO Contractor	Jan ____

(Employee is bearing entire cost. Will receive $500 pay increase when license is obtained in two years. Will then work half time in our for-profit home remodeling subsidiary.)

2.	Teamwork & excellence	In-house seminar	To be scheduled
3.	Problem solving		
	Latest techniques	Annual state assn meeting	Dec ____

Employee wants to go to annual blower door conference. All our employees get three days paid release time for agency-approved personal development. CAA will pay her salary while she attends this two day meeting. CAA pays registration and travel only for supervisors. Employee is not a supervisor and, therefore, will pay her own registration and travel.

____
Supervisor approves plan (Date)

____
Employee agrees (Date)

A vital ingredient in developing an IDP is good will. The process, no matter how formal or informal, focuses on the areas where an employee needs to improve performance and he or she must be willing to acknowledge weaknesses, and even point out areas where they would like to improve. A supervisor must be sensitive to an employee's concerns and be willing to listen to what he/she has to say. Both the employee and the supervisor must be highly motivated because both work together to a common purpose.

FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The executive director, just as each employee, should have a personal IDP. There are five key relationships and seven management functions for which the CAA executive director is responsible.

Relationships with:

- Board of directors
- Low income people
- Other community leadership
- CAA staff
- Funding sources

Management functions:

- Planning
- Community participation, organization, and development
- Program implementation and management
- Personnel
- Fiscal
- Public relations
- Staff and board development

The executive director also needs to make explicit the detailed tasks and capacities needed to perform broader functions. He or she then can compare current knowledge with what is thought to be needed to carry out his/her responsibilities. Ways to obtain the needed knowledge, skills, or attitudes can then be identified.

FOR A BOARD MEMBER

Preparing an Individual Development Plan for a board member involves a different set of issues than those addressed in IDPs for CAA staff and executive directors. Board members usually are recruited because they have some specific skill (lawyer, housing developer, personnel manager, community organizer), are part of a certain constituency (low income person, private sector, public sector), or because they represent a specific institution. A board member is someone with a strong commitment to the mission of the CAA.

Some of the key internal functions of a CAA that can be used for development of a board member's IDP are:

- Leadership (officer, committee chair)
- Internal structure and operations
- Nominating, recruiting new members
- Planning
- Finance

- Personnel
- Public/community relations
- Program evaluation and monitoring
- Staff and board development
- Public policy

Board members may want to specialize in one or more of the strategies that their CAA uses to bring about changes in the community:

- Community organization and development
- Program coordination
- Program development/implementation/oversight
- Advocacy, influencing public policy
- Solving specific community problems
- Resource mobilization and coordination
- Outreach, information and referral, case management
- Direct social services

All of these are areas where individual performance can be improved through self-study, classroom training, mentoring by other board members, participating on other boards, etc. Finding out what the individual board member wants is critical. Board members are volunteers, and are usually highly self-motivated to develop their capacities. If the individual does not see the development objective as beneficial to him/herself and/or the CAA, that person is unlikely to engage in the activity, or stay with it for very long, or do it well.

There are numerous training resources for developing nonprofit boards, including workbooks that describe board members' responsibilities for planning, fund raising, fiscal oversight, accountability to stakeholders and constituencies, evaluating the executive director and the CAA's efforts towards fulfilling the organization's mission. Numerous colleges, management support centers, and professional associations offer courses on how to function as a board member, treasurer, or chairperson; on the rules of parliamentary procedure; and the conduct of meetings.

There are two basic ways to approach the task of developing an IDP for a CAA board member. The deductive approach compiles board tasks and capacities in a checklist and arrays applicable ones to individual board members. A list is made of areas for the individual to focus on, and a plan is documented outlining how help will be provided to improve the board member's functioning. The inductive approach starts with the individual interests of each board member.

An example of an IDP for a board member can be found on the following page.

Example

Board Member Individual Development Plan

Board Member Name:

Date: ________________

For Period: May ______ to April ______

A. JOB or TASK PERFORMANCE TO BE IMPROVED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Carry out five new member recruitment strategies.	Attend United Way workshop.	Aug. ______
2.	Identify and implement six new ways we can use to publicize our CAA success stories.	Attend NACAA Annual Conference.	Sept. ______

(CAA will pay registration cost and travel for #1 and 2.)

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
3.	Learn how different sectors in community and on tri-partite board can work together.	Attend workshop on diversity and partnerships at CAA State Association Meeting.	Fall, ______

B. CAPACITIES TO BE ENHANCED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Learn more about the history and mission of CAAs.	Attend workshop at NACAA Annual Conference.	Sept. ______
2.	Learn to apply community problem-solving methods to two problems in our community.	Read. Meet with staff. Report to planning committee. Select two problems. Get board approval. Initiate action.	June ______ June ______ June ______ July ______ Sept. ______

____
Board chair approves (Date)

____
Board member agrees (Date)

____
Executive Director (verification that funds are available) (Date)

PREPARING A GROUP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

While development of individual board members and staff members is vital, the board and staff members also must function effectively as groups or as sub-groups within the overall organization. Individuals need to develop skills that enable them to work cooperatively as a team. This means that IDPs for board members and staff need to address an individual's need for development within the context of team and group interactions. It also means that CAA boards and staff should consider developing a separate but complementary Group Development Plan for the board as a whole and possibly for sub-groups of the board. The same holds true for CAA staffs. To be effective, individuals must function well in their respective jobs and as members of groups or teams.

This issue is often overlooked, especially by smaller CAAs, whose staff and boards often do not receive training in effective teamwork. More often, longer term staff or board members pass on to new members the board's traditional modes of operation. Agencies with long-term vision and effective board operations usually encourage new members and staff to "join the team." However, new members often can help change the way a board operates, which is desirable if the board has become stuck in a status quo mode, tends to micro-manage day-to-day operations of the CAA, or is dominated by one or two members. However, a board cannot change the way it operates by sending only one or two board members off to training. The same holds true for CAA staff.

Having one or two members enthusiastic about the need for change is a necessary pre-condition, but it cannot produce change by itself. When change is the goal, a group process is necessary. This is particularly important for a board, because the board functions as a group.

IDENTIFY THE GROUP

It is important to identify all members of the staff or board who need to participate in the development effort. Make sure that they participate together as a group. If the composition of the group changes, it may be necessary to restart some parts of the development effort.

IDENTIFY THE NEED OR THE CAPACITY TO BE DEVELOPED

Diagnosis is the first step in organizational development. Where are you now and where do you want to be? Do you need to revamp a major program or simply improve the performance of a task? Is this a heart transplant or a Band-Aid issue? One way to look at this question is to go from the general to the specific. First, review community needs. Then determine the specific actions necessary to deal with each identified community need.

Next, identify the CAA's needs. One way is to review checklists of the issues that the CAA may need to deal with and identify areas of improvement.

EXAMPLES OF TASK PERFORMANCE TO BE IMPROVED AND THE METHODOLOGY

1. **Improve group decision-making process**

The board has problems making its decisions stick. Many decisions made in one meeting collapse and have to be discussed again later. This can happen when the decision-making methods do not require consensus, so there is little buy-in by individual members, and members do not feel invested in or committed to the decision. If decisions are based largely on votes for or against a proposal and no attempt has been made at building consensus among the board members before a vote is taken, the decision is vulnerable to being reopened at a later date.

Methodology:

a. Planner discusses problem with the executive director and board chairperson; prepares handout of materials.
b. Executive director distributes handout materials to members of the executive committee.
c. Fifteen minutes of discussion scheduled on this issue at the next committee meeting.

d. Executive director seeks/obtains permission to add one hour training session on decision-making methods to a future (next, if possible) board meeting agenda.
e. Planner will conduct the training. All board members urged to attend.

2. **Board development**

The CAA's board focuses entirely on internal program operations. The new officers of the board have expressed the need for the board to have a larger perspective and take a more active role in solving problems in the broader community.

Methodology:

a. Using a community problem-solving process, the executive director will assist the board to engage in five community problem-solving projects over the next __ months.
b. By (date), using the insight gathered from those experiences, the executive director will help the board move into a broad-based community needs assessment and planning process.

If the board agrees-

c. Begin the needs assessment for the comprehensive process by (date). Planner to gather background data.

3. **Building problem-solving capacity**

Top managers spend too much time fighting fires and dealing with problems that could and should be resolved at lower levels of the organization. Reliable information clearly indicates that the staff members have the authority to resolve most problems, but lack the skills necessary to do so.

Methodology:

The program director will obtain training materials to help employees identify problems, set problem-solving objectives, analyze facts, develop creative alternatives, make decisions, and take action.

4. **Attitudinal changes and skills building**

The CAA's LIHEAP staff has slipped into a "fill out the forms" mentality. Staff conversations with their clientele focus only on paperwork. Empathy with the clients about their other problems is low.

Methodology:

a. An internal staff development process will be designed to review and discuss how to apply desired principles of human service delivery. Ms. X will begin the process with a half-day overview. For the next six weeks staff will spend one hour in each staff meeting discussing how to apply those principles.
b. Upon conclusion of the six weeks, facilitators will be brought in from the local college to provide training and coaching for one-half day per week for a period of three weeks to sharpen individual skills in active listening, effective communication, and clientele service.

DEVELOP THE GROUP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In developing a GDP, use a standard format such as the one outlined on the following page and in Appendix A. Or, put the plan in the form of a memorandum. Whatever method you use, be sure to include the *WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHEN,* and *HOW* of the substance of the plan.

The following example is that of a CAA board whose goal, for this exercise, is to improve the ability of its members to advocate for the poor. Of course, CAAs each have other groups – made up of staff members, volunteers, etc. – for which a Group Development Plan may be appropriate.

Example

Group Development Plan

Group Name: CAA Board of Directors
Person Who Will Help Group:

Date:
For Period: May ____ to April ____

A. JOB or TASK PERFORMANCE TO BE IMPROVED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Enhance board's group decision-making ability.	Develop or purchase training.	July ____
2.	Expand board role in community problem-solving.	Obtain board representation on other community boards.	Oct. ____
3.	Recruit new board members.	• Board members review bylaws to determine pool of eligible organizations.	Nov.____
		• Staff survey community groups to identify potential private and low-income sector representatives.	Dec. ____
		• Board members review data gathered by staff.	Feb. ____
		• Board members assigned to undertake outreach to priority groups.	April ____

B. CAPACITIES TO BE ENHANCED:

	TASK	METHOD	DATE
1.	Improve teamwork.	• Obtain a self-assessment instrument and conduct assessment.	June ____
		• Develop and conduct team-strengthening exercises.	Sept.____

____

Plan Approved (Date)

HOW ADULTS LEARN

There are several basic principles of adult learning theory that apply to all adults:

- The training goals and content must be compatible with the participant's skills and experience levels. (Don't start too far above or below the individual's current level.)
- Participants must be actively involved in identifying their learning needs, in performing learning activities, and in determining whether learning goals have been met. (Don't do everything for them.)
- A variety of training methods must be used to connect with the different types of learning styles of individuals.
- Training content and activities should help participants learn to solve real, job-related, problems.
- Participants should be able to see the relationships between the new learning and their prior learning and experiences. If they don't see the connections, they will not retain what has been taught.

RELATIONSHIP TO TRAINING

The principles described above should be embodied in the design, content, and conduct of training (i.e., learning) programs if they are to be successful. The National Head Start Association's paper *Standards for Training Programs in Head Start* covers all kinds of training programs as well as offers guidance and standards for training programs.

Goal 1. Training should support high quality service delivery.
Goal 2. Training should support staff development.
Goal 3. Training should incorporate community members.

STANDARDS FOR TRAINING PROGRAMS

1. Training must support professional development.

High quality training should support the professional development of program staff in order to increase career options and advancement for staff, and enable programs and staff to work effectively with each other and with other organizations.

Training should be documented and, whenever possible, include provisions for college credit or continuing education units, and be applicable toward appropriate credentials or degrees. It also should be linked to an agency career development ladder and, where appropriate, result in increased compensation.

2. Training must be competency based.

Competency-based training is designed to increase knowledge and change or improve behavior, and should include both formal instruction and practice. Provision for assessing the effectiveness, i.e., competence, should be included in the training program. A variety of procedures should be employed to carry out this assessment. Examples of appropriate assessment procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Interviews
- Written questionnaires

- Observations
- Interviews/questionnaires from third parties

3. **Training programs must reflect local needs and values.**

   Effective training programs must be tailored to reflect the needs of local programs and communities. The selection and delivery of training must include consideration of target population language and education levels, local priorities and resources, and local culture and values.

4. **Training programs must respect individual experiences, accommodate individual differences, and be accessible.**

   Effective training programs incorporate principles of adult learning, including building upon past experiences utilizing an approach that accommodates a variety of learning styles.

5. **Training programs must reflect multi-cultural perspectives and values.**

   Training program content should avoid cultural bias, stereotypes, or misinformation about ethnic or cultural groups.

TRAINING METHODS

There are innumerable training methods that can be used. The particular method selected should accomplish the specific objectives of changing knowledge, skills, or attitudes, and appeal to a variety of learning styles. For example, imparting knowledge requires that participants retain the main points of the subject matter by having those points communicated both visually and verbally. The best way to do this is by giving the main points in writing.

If the training objective is skill development, the instructor should provide employees (students) with skills practice. Methods include desk exercises, but preferably a simulation or role-playing exercise that gets the participant(s) involved realistically. Ideally, participants also will have the opportunity to try their new skills on the job before returning for another session where they can discuss their experiences with the instructor and/or fellow participants.

Effective methods for changing attitudes provide participants with opportunities to talk about issues among themselves. The training activity gives them an opportunity to "try on" the new attitude and get feedback from others in the group. Absent this, it is likely the new attitude will not take hold in the mind and behavior of the participant.

LEARNING STYLES

Teaching methods also must relate to the learning style preferences of participants. Most individuals have a learning style preference, that is, a particular way they prefer to learn or by which they learn most easily. Oftentimes, they may not even be aware of the style by which they learn best or most readily.

Some people learn best by reading; some learn best by listening to the words spoken to them by others; and others learn by doing, i.e., hands-on practice. What works for the individual is the right way. Within the time allotted for a learning session, one or more methods may be used if the trainer is alert to the preferences of learning styles of the group.

Examples of learning styles and methods that persons with that style find most useful include:

Seeing. Written and visual materials, flip charts.
Hearing. Lecture, audio, video.
Talking. Exercises, simulations, hands-on practice, role play.

Because there are different learning styles, post-session comments from participants often will indicate that they learned the most when their preferred learning style was used by the trainer. Conversely, the comments also may indicate that the trainer may not have used a training method appropriate to the learning style of the participant(s). A trainer cannot be effective if he/she appeals only to a single learning style. The single biggest mistake made in designing training programs is in using the preferred learning style of the designer/trainer instead of designing the program around the style(s) of the participants. This usually entails using several styles during the course of a single training program. Of course, training materials, such as lecture notes, flip charts, exercises, and visual materials, should reinforce each other and the presentations of the trainers. Too often, this obvious point is overlooked.

If several training techniques are used, the learning styles tend to reinforce each other. Participants retain more of what they see and hear than of what they either see or hear.

TRAINING PROGRAM DESIGN PROCESS

The training design process consists of the following steps:

a. Assess needs and problems.
b. Design guidelines and learning group analysis.
c. Analyze the characteristics of the group.
d. Design the curriculum.
e. Draft the agenda.
f. Select and orient the trainers.
g. Develop or select materials.
h. Set up the training event.

ASSESS NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

The needs assessment phase of developing a training program consists of three related processes — organizational analysis, performance standard review, and performance assessment.

The needs assessment should be guided by two overriding principles : (1) Look for a performance problem or a learning need that can be solved by training; and (2) write out the description of the training problem and the training goal before the training is designed or selected. While this may seem obvious, too many training programs are created in hope they will solve some problems that, in fact, cannot be solved by training. These other problems may be ones of policy, power struggles, interagency rivalry, or funding. They are not susceptible of solution by training intended to increase the knowledge or skills of the training participants.

Some of the questions that need to be answered include:

1. **Organizational analysis**

- In what areas does the CAA need training to carry out its mission?
- What are the problems to be solved by training?

- What priority or urgency is there to solving these problems?

2. **Performance standards review**

- What are the standards of job and mission performance that exist for the organization? For groups of staff?
- What are the tasks for each group or position, and the minimum and maximum competencies in the area of need?
- What standards need to be set for the level of knowledge and the level and types of skills that should be established among trainers?
- What standards need to be set for attitudes or motivating factors that must be established for the new knowledge and skills to be used?

3. **Performance assessment**

- What is the gap in the existing levels of performance compared with what is required by the standard?
- What is lacking or what is needed in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes?

The result of the needs assessment is the statement of a problem that can be solved by training.

Example 1. Clerical staff do not know how to correctly fill out forms for FEMA.

Example 2. Head Start Policy Council does not understand the role of the CAA governing board.

Example 3. CAA board members have not been able to raise any money, although they unanimously passed a motion to raise $10,000 by the end of the program year.

Example 4. Outreach workers have not begun distributing AIDS prevention information because they do not understand why the CAA is involved or they do not agree with the CAA being involved in AIDS prevention.

DESIGN GUIDELINES AND LEARNING GROUP ANALYSES

1. **The training should be related to the immediate interests of the participants.**

The training that will be most effective for participants has several characteristics:

- It helps them do their jobs better.
- Participants can use the training immediately.
- The training enhances career development and future job prospects.
- The training does not repeat what participants already know.
- The training starts from the point of current knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Participants can see how it relates to what they already know.
- It focuses on practical how-tos, and not on broad generalities or hypothetical situations.
- The training encourages participation in the training.
- The training is viewed as being interesting and enjoyable.

2. **The training should be focused on the specific needs the CAA has identified for the participants.**

Some trainers deliver the same product over and over, no matter the audience. Some trainers will customize the training to the CAA's specific needs, but only if the CAA can describe those needs to the trainer. In order to do this, the trainer needs to know what the CAA wants the participants to take aw with them from the training, and what participants bring into the training.

The training can have as its purpose changes in one or more of the knowledge, skills, and attitu factors.

ANALYZE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEARNING GROUP

The next step in the design process is to review the characteristics of the prospective participants.

- What learning devices are shared by enough people to warrant investing in a training program
- Can the deficiencies be grouped together and handled in a single training event? Approximatel how much time would it take to address each deficiency? Are they related to one another?
- Are there deficiencies in common among an identifiable group of people, i.e., board members planners, fiscal staff?
- What is the level of knowledge? Novice to expert? All expert? (What is wanted is maximum homogeneity in the training group.)
- Do participants who share common characteristics think of themselves as a group, such as executive directors or weatherization program supervisors?
- Do the prospective participants perceive that they need training? Do they perceive a deficiency?
- Are potential participants interested in and motivated to receive training, and to learn? Are there any other events coming up that will assemble people who might also then be given a specific training program?
- Is the supervisor requiring or encouraging cooperation?
- Are there logical sub-groups or participants who are similar in their need to know, have common interests, or readiness to learn?
- Are there attitudinal issues among an identifiable group of people?
- Can the participants be sent elsewhere to be trained?

DESIGN THE CURRICULUM

1. Introduction

Once needs assessments have been completed and the learning group analyzed, the curriculum can be developed. A well-designed curriculum pays close attention to the *capacity of the participants to absorb information*. There is an old saying among trainers, teachers, and students that the mind can absorb only what the seat can tolerate. It has been estimated that the average adult has an attention span in a lecture of anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes. Beyond that, the speaker risks losing significant numbers of participants with each additional minute. Information overload can cause the audience to forget even the initial information presented.

People need to receive new information in digestible modules. A training agenda should tell how much time is going to be spent on a particular topic. It also should indicate whether or not the training is going to provide material that can be absorbed within that time period. Each training module should include:

a. the main idea,
b. the three or four major components of the main idea,
c. practical examples of each component, and
d. a summary that relates the examples back to the components, and relates the components back to the main idea.

Trainees need examples that show how an idea works or does not work in real life situations. Giving two good examples of how to apply a concept in a real situation can be very effective. (Research indicates that nearly 85 percent of an audience will understand and be able to use the idea presented to them.) It also is a good idea to provide suggestions about how to practice the concept.

It often has been said, usually by trainers, that "a good trainer can train on almost any topic." While this has a large element of truth, it is true only if the trainer has good knowledge of the subject matter he/she is presenting, if there are clear training objectives, and if there are good lesson plans that relate content to purpose. When considering a training proposal, evaluate the trainer's guide. Does it describe the overall purposes of the training? Does it tell how the overall training will accomplish its goals? Does it specify objectives, structure each module, and include examples of what the trainer will use to illustrate the points being made? The best examples are usually taken from participants' own experiences, so it is a plus to have a trainer who has detailed knowledge of the CAA and its programs.

2. Curriculum design steps

Generally, there are twelve steps to curriculum design:

(1) Define the goals of the proposed training program in relation to the needs or problems statement formulated in the needs assessment process. The result should be a goal statement that specifies what will be accomplished to deal with the identified needs.
Example: <u>Problem statement:</u> Workers cannot fill out the FEMA reporting form. <u>Goal:</u> Workers will be able to correctly fill out the FEMA reporting form.

(2) For each goal statement, include an explicit measure of how and when the desired goal will be accomplished.
Example: "By the end of the workshop...." "By September 15th...."

(3) List the topics or subjects that must be covered to achieve the goal.

(4) Sequence the topics logically and in a way that relates to the interests of participants.

(5) Determine the general shape of the event, e.g., number of days, location, general types of instructional methods, in ways that are most appropriate and acceptable to the participants.

(6) Select evaluation and feedback methods, which can include a questionnaire, follow-up interviews, or performance measures.

(7) For each topic, prepare instructional objectives in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

(8) Identify the specific training methodology for each topic, e.g., lecture, workshop, desk exercise, video tape, or role-playing.

(9) Make sure that each activity in the learning process is addressed to a specific adult learning style. Each activity should be problem-centered, experience-based, applicable immediately, and at least partially self-directed.

(10) Make sure that small group dis-cussions and other process tasks have explicitly stated objectives, instructions, and products.

(11) Build in time to relax and to process information.

(12) Build in ice breaker techniques.

Use the chart, Format for a Training Module, at the end of this section, to summarize your curriculum. You can fill in one chart for each module.

DRAFT THE AGENDA

Prepare a chronology showing the starting time and time allotted for each topic. You also can list the speaker for each topic. The agenda is the first handout given to participants to show them the topics and schedule, and to provide a framework for the training event.

SELECT AND ORIENT THE TRAINERS

This may be an in-house person or a contracted trainer.

As a general proposition, it is both cheaper and better to have existing staff members carry out most of the work related to helping people with their individual development and training as they have the knowledge and skills to do so. There are several advantages to this:

- From an organizational perspective, a CAA should want to develop into a learning organization where people are charged—and charged up—about learning. A CAA should want its staff members to develop their coaching and mentoring skills.
- Carrying out these activities within the CAA will prompt staff to stay current on the latest knowledge and skills and it helps them to improve their own. Secondly, some topics—like the general orientation for new staff or board members—can only be addressed by people who know a lot about the CAA, i.e., by people who are already there. Thirdly, the CAA staff may develop something that the agency can sell to another CAA.
- It is cheaper to do this in-house. A CAA cannot afford to buy all that is needed from outside personnel.

The next section, "Delivering Training —Making It Happen," describes how to design a formal training course. This information also is useful in that it serves as a guide on what to look for in a training design if a CAA wants to purchase training from an outside source.

DEVELOP OR SELECT MATERIALS

Well-designed training starts from a broad topic area, and usually includes several handouts related to the main topic. In theory, materials for a training session are developed last. The reality is different, however. In practice, most training incorporates existing materials that have been designed by somebody else. Often good training materials can be adapted.

SET UP THE TRAINING EVENT

Setting up the training event includes scheduling, site selection, marketing, and room setup.

Now that you have the curriculum developed and the event planned, the next section presents some important factors in making the actual event a success.

Format For A Training Module

Title or Subject				
Purposes of Instructional Objectives Knowledge Skills Attitudes				
Characteristics of Learning Group		High	Medium	Low
	K			
	S			
	A			
Specific Module Topics			Time Requirements	
1. 2. 3. 4. etc.				
Sequence of Education Activities				
List of Materials/Audio/Visual Needs				

DELIVERING TRAINING — MAKING IT HAPPEN

Logistics, careful planning, and meticulous execution are the major elements that will determine success or failure in delivering training programs. Sometimes even good or outstanding quality training programs cannot overcome bad logistics, planning, and execution, e.g., meeting rooms too dark, too hot, too cold; inadequate desk space for participants; and failure to have the right supplies on hand or delivered on time. Good logistics, et. al., can help assure success. Logistics are the lubricant that assure that all parts of the training activity run smoothly.

Generally, four components make up the delivery phase. These components consist of carrying out administrative responsibilities, structuring the presentation, conducting small group activities, and evaluating the results.

Obviously, how each CAA actually organizes training delivery will vary. Some of what is described below can be combined or further expanded, depending on the complexity and scope of the training program.

CARRYING OUT ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The conduct of a multi-day, multi-trainer training event, or a short-term event, requires an administrative structure. The number of persons involved in carrying out the administrative responsibilities may vary, even though the core responsibilities remain essentially the same.

Official in Charge: Answers policy questions and speaks for the CAA or sponsor of the training.

Training Director: Is in charge of the agenda and decides, based on feedback from participants and trainers, when adjustments in the original agenda and timing are necessary. All trainers, discussion leaders, and logistics staff report to the training director. May also serve as master/mistress of ceremonies introducing each module, and covers items a trainer may have omitted. In this latter capacity, provides continuity and fills in the holes.

Logistics Coordinator: Makes arrangements and handles all details dealing with the training facility. Responsible for assuring that handouts and training materials are reproduced and are on site as needed, and that charts, paper, pencils, name tags, equipment, and electrical connections are available. Supervises any registration and fee collection processes.

Trainer: Presents the content of each training module to training participants. May also serve as discussion leader.

Discussion Leader: Serves as a facilitator who helps continue discussions in small group workshops outside the training presentation.

Discussion Coordinator: Oversees the linkage between trainers and discussion leaders. (Use in large scale training operations.)

STRUCTURING THE PRESENTATION

The following is a typical outline for use by the trainer in structuring training presentations.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. State the purposes of the presentation and the specific learning objectives.
3. List the topics to be covered to accomplish the learning objectives and outline the agenda for the presentation.
   - Emphasize the most important points.
   - State exactly what participants are expected to know/feel/be able to do after they have heard the presentation.
   - Ask participants for any comments about the foregoing points before presenting the actual training material.
4. Make sure the level of the presentation is appropriate to the participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Start at the point where their current knowledge stops, and then take them to the next step. Ask participants questions during the presentation, e.g., "Do you know about...?" "Should we discuss...?" Make sure participants can absorb the amount of material being provided. Do not overwhelm them with too many ideas, slides, and flip charts within the limited time available.
5. To ensure that participants absorb and understand information, and provide time for them to process the information and apply it to their existing knowledge and experience.
6. Leave time for questions and answers.
7. Conclude the session by summarizing the main points or restating what has been presented.
8. Thank the participants for listening, and turn the floor over to the training director or other person in charge.

CONDUCTING SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Why small group discussions?

Small group discussions give participants a chance to relate the subject matter to what they know or have learned. Discussions are an important aspect of the training experience, but many inexperienced trainers have trouble using small group discussions effectively. Small group discussions give participants a chance to discuss training material with their peers. It gives them a chance to fine tune and expand or enrich their understanding by getting examples from peers. Small group discussions allow participants to develop a consensus on some points and provide an opportunity to talk about the ideas presented.

The purpose of small group discussions must be clearly stated if they are to be successful in meeting training objectives. For example: "The purpose of the small group discussions is for each person to take these three principles and to resolve how to apply at least one of those principles when he/she gets back home."

Write down the specific tasks and amounts of time for each group to achieve the purpose. What is to be accomplished in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes? How are we supposed to do this? What specific products would we produce?

2. Instructions to participants in small group discussions.

- Take a few minutes to read the handout summarizing the purpose and the three main concepts of this training presentation. Think about how each of these concepts will be of use to you on your job.
- During the next 15 minutes, each of you will be asked to give an example about how he/she would apply at least one of the concepts to his/her job.
- Then we'll discuss these ideas for another 15 minutes.
- The group will select at least two examples that illustrate each of the three concepts. We'll write these examples on the flip chart.
- Toward the end of the session, write down how you will use at least one of the concepts back on the job following this training event.
- Be prepared to return to the plenary session to report what you have learned from this group.

3. Put it in writing.

If the purposes and tasks are clearly stated in writing and each group has written instructions, most small group discussions will be productive. Without clear guidance in writing, the process can produce more chaos than enlightenment.

4. Roles to be performed in small group discussions.

It also is important to identify the roles to be performed in small group discussions. These may include: discussion leader, resource person (expert on content), recorder, and reporter (to report to the plenary session). Recruit people in each group to fulfill necessary roles before beginning the discussion itself, or specify that each group should identify persons to fulfill each role as their first order of business. A few organizations hire professional discussion leaders for their small groups. Most human services organizations use their own staff or some of the training participants themselves to facilitate small group discussions. At a minimum, the group should have a discussion leader and a reporter.

EVALUATING THE RESULTS

Trainers should make use of a well designed evaluation form. This form should do more than tell you whether most people liked the workshop. It may tell you how wonderful you are. It may also tell you what people did not like about the presentations. It may tell you that you have developed a habit of fiddling with your glasses that is very distracting. It may let you know how to adjust the training so that you can deliver an even higher quality product to satisfy your future customers. Four useful evaluation activities are described below.

1. Determine if learning objectives were actually met.

If you have specified the objectives in advance, you can measure the result by asking the audience specific questions related to them. The questions can be multiple choice or open-ended. Avoid the appearance of a test by using a small number of questions – even humorous questions will elicit whether or not they heard and understood you and remember what you said.

Always ask separate questions about the logistics, such as content of the training, personality/mannerisms of the trainers, training methods, and materials.

If you do not ask about each training method separately, the person's learning style preference gets reported instead of how effective that particular technique really was. All you discover is that people whose learning preference is reading liked the handouts, those whose style is listening liked the lecture, and those whose style is talking liked the small groups. You really want to know, for example, if the group accomplished the objectives you set for it and if the lecture content was too advanced or too elementary.

2. Determine short-term (event) versus long-term (actual) use of training.

The real evaluation is whether the participants use what they learned from the workshop back on the job. You can enhance this transfer process by assigning the participants at the end of the workshop to "Spend five minutes talking with your seat mate about how you will use this back on the job. Write down the two or three most useful ideas. Anybody want to share thoughts with the group?" Then mail out an evaluation two months later and compare those results with the results obtained at the end of the training event itself. Or, call ten of the participants and ask them "How are you using or not using the results of your training?"

3. Gather evaluation information at most appropriate points in time.

If you really want a written evaluation, then include it as a component of the agenda itself. A few people include an evaluation form in the meeting packet. Others hand out the evaluation form at the start of the last day, or just before the scheduled adjournment time. For multi-day training events, do a mini-evaluation to gather feedback at the end of each day. Use the information to make mid-course corrections and changes to approach or agenda for the next day's activities.

4. Analyze responses.

It is impossible to meet the needs of every participant. Use responses to the evaluation to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the training. Did you correctly understand the knowledge, skills, and attitude needs of your participant group? Did you use a variety of methods to reach participants with different learning styles? Did you do what you said you were going to do? Did you cover all the items participants said they expected during the opening?

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APPENDIX A. FRAMEWORK FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT PLANS

		Individual Development Plan (IDP)	Group Development Plan (GDP)
Task Performance	Skill		
	Knowledge		
	Attitude		
Capacity Building	Skill		
	Knowledge		
	Attitude		