Investing in People: Building the Capacity of Community Development, Training and Social Enterprise Practitioners

By Winton Pitcoff

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Foreword

The past 20 years have given rise to one of the most massive accumulations of knowledge and information in human history. Digital information and communications technologies have revolutionized the ways in which knowledge and technical knowhow move around the world. Genetics and biotechnology are ushering in a new epoch of innovation in the fields of agriculture and human health. And the emergence of new finance and investment models, like social enterprise and venture capital, has helped turn knowledge into unprecedented wealth.

Yet this proliferation of knowledge and expertise threatens to widen the gap between rich and poor throughout the world. In 2004, the 10th anniversary of the Internet becoming widely available to the public, 75 percent of Americans had regular access to the Internet; in Africa, Internet market penetration was below 1.2 percent. Further, one wonders about the content of what is being transmitted. Without the ability to access, produce, transfer and disseminate information, universities, research centers, service organizations and small start-up private enterprises in the developing world are at a distinct disadvantage in a knowledge economy.

If we are to take full advantage of the soaring knowledge economy, with its proliferation of different types of information providers, we must change how we think about training, organizational functioning and organizational interaction. Economies are lifted by investments in the best individual minds, the best-functioning institutions and the latest smartly utilized information technology. Not only are poor countries and weak organizations ill-equipped to compete in international markets; worse, they are unable to respond successfully to demands by local clientele and communities.

Recognizing that capacity building is central to achieving economic growth, reducing poverty and equalizing opportunity, foundations and bilateral and multilateral funding agencies have taken a newfound interest in this fundamental area. The timing seems right. Not only is the information

revolution upon us, but trends towards democratization, government decentralization and economic liberalization have profoundly reshaped how universities, nongovernmental organizations and other public-interest organizations do their work, presenting them with new challenges and opportunities. National governments, for example, play a much smaller role in developing policy and delivering services than they once did. With less public funding, public-interest organizations must have a strong concept of a relevant knowledge-based economy, and they must have a greater market orientation—not necessarily as commercial entities per se, but rather as organizations attuned to issues once considered the purview of business: management, finance, innovation, customer service, marketing, and the capacity to help clientele themselves acquire and communicate knowledge.

There is now an opportunity for funding agencies and others to play a more active role in stimulating strategic thinking and bold innovation in the field of capacity building. Traditionally, the type of capacity building supported by many funding agencies has focused more on professional skills rather then on building institutional competence. It has emphasized technical and analytical tools over problem solving and policy relevance. It has looked more to the pipeline production of professionals than to their career tracks and skill utilization. And it has promoted the strengthening of individual institutions over the sort of coordination among multiple, differentiated institutions that can propel and sustain entire professional fields.

By contrast, capacity building in the new millennium will have to contend not only with the challenges presented by new national, regional and global contexts, but also with the increased scale of knowledge accumulation. Developing human and institutional competencies will require a systems-oriented approach to change. Skilled persons do not operate in a vacuum: their ability to accomplish tasks is strongly influenced by the larger environment in which they work. Individual performance is affected at the very least by opportunities for meaningful work, shared professional norms, mentoring, opportunities for joint action, incentives to expand skills and a sense of mission. Indeed, many analysts of human capacity building now argue that effective priority setting, sharing information and strengthening organizational culture have a greater influence over individual performance than additional training does.

While institutions or organizations are the docking units for individual professionals, many development tasks require coordination across different types of entities. Examples include the coordination of those who set policy with those who implement it, harmonization between training agencies and organizations that need to hone the specialized skills of staff, and the synchronization in the case of service delivery or extension between the center and the field. By building skills systematically across local organizations, and among organizations in different countries, funders help facilitate an environment of inquiry, entrepreneurship and experimentation. That environment, in turn, makes individuals and organizations more effective—and improves conditions in their countries.

Like many other foundations and bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, the Rockefeller Foundation recognizes that if we are going to contribute to the building of more just and equitable societies, we need to start thinking differently about the task at hand. Success now depends on our ability to marry knowledge and execution. This means supporting new types of training configurations. It means linking training to the broader goal of building organizations and institutions that are well-managed, strategic and stable. It means strengthening organizations that are flexible and nimble enough to adapt to new technologies, changing political conditions and market opportunities. And it means connecting the dots across institutions for mutual reinforcement.

Between 1995 and 2003, the Rockefeller Foundation devoted $384 million, an average of 32 percent of its grant portfolio, to capacity-building activities. Given the scale of this investment, we felt last year that the time had come to reassess our recent human and institutional capacity-building initiatives. Our definition of human and institutional capacity building was evolving, becoming at once more fluid than in the past, and yet potentially more robust. As we looked at the external environment, we saw that in addition to understanding new global and national contexts, we needed to get a better handle on several other salient trends and questions. What fresh approaches to program development are essential to the demands of the new millennium; especially ways of quickly sharing know-how that enables nations and communities within them to benefit from the most learning gained elsewhere and adapt it to local conditions? Which are the most effective pathways to skill development, lifelong learning and connectivity across a diversity of institutional arenas that are already eclipsing standard capacity-building processes? What creative approaches are needed that expand capacity building beyond formal training and the operations of individual institutions and trigger systemic change through various professional channels? How might public-interest organizations best coordinate with one another to become problem-solving networks that reinforce one another's strengths? We also saw a proliferation of more and different players in the capacity-building field. These included national governments, bilateral agencies, multilateral development banks, private philanthropies and new actors from the public, commercial and nonprofit sectors.

In short, we wanted to find a new yardstick for assessing our work. In addition to our internal assessment, we asked a pair of researchers to analyze the external landscape. We wanted them to identify not just trends, policies and practices, but to give us a sense of what other foundations and multilateral and bilateral funding agencies were doing in this space. One paper, focused on the United States, would cover the fields of community development, workforce development and social enterprise. The other would analyze trends in international development. By examining what others were doing, we sought to better design and evaluate our own programs and to position ourselves more thoughtfully in the international funding community. We also hoped the review would uncover areas for potential partnerships with other funders.

The landscape analyses were simultaneously heartening and disconcerting. On one hand, our researchers found widespread agreement among funders about the need for and importance of capacity building. Funders at both the national and international level clearly recognize the scale of the challenges at hand. They understand, too, that if we are serious about meeting the world's challenges, solutions must be devised and executed by those most directly affected by the problems. In both the national and international arenas, funders have a growing taste for experimentation and boldness. On the other hand, capacity-building concepts, language and frameworks are fragmented and unclear.

The Foundation recognizes that the field's possibilities will not be realized nor tensions resolved by study alone, but rather by risking and experimenting. To that end, the Foundation hopes to further advance the field in coming years by investing in a publication series that will feature case studies of creative solutions to challenges and productive responses to new opportunities. For now, we offer the following report, "Investing in People: Building the Capacity of Community Development, Training and Social Enterprise Practitioners," by Winton Pitcoff, as a prologue to what we hope will be an ongoing conversation among funders, grantees and other interested parties on the future of human and institutional capacity building.

Joyce Lewinger Moock
Associate Vice President
The Rockefeller Foundation

Introduction

I n any endeavor to promote change, early consideration is given to the entry points to the system in question. To improve a community, for example, is it more effective to provide direct assistance to residents, support the development of organizations and institutions that provide services to the community, or develop the capacity of individuals in leadership roles in the community?

For many, the logical entry point is at the level of those who lead the organizations that work for change. Build their skills, the theory goes, and the organization's ability to affect change will grow, and the change will happen. The development of such human capital can be encouraged in many traditional ways—university programs, trainings and seminars—as well as through some more innovative methods, such as mentoring, peer-to-peer networking and coaching.

In examining the range of support for human capital development in the fields of community development, workforce development and social enterprise, one is immediately struck by a few themes. First, virtually all players in the fields—from funders to practitioners—have something to say on the matter. Second, the majority of them agree that skill building among practitioners in these fields is important in moving the issues they address. Third, few, if any, agree on what model works best to deliver those skills. Finally, the infrastructure to deliver the trainings and development needed is weak, at best, the funding is scarce, and formal forums to discuss how to improve these circumstances don't seem to exist.

In the course of this research interviews were conducted with funders, practitioners, trainers and technical-assistance providers in the fields in question. Questions were designed to uncover what models of human capital development exist, where their support comes from, and what the goals are of those models. An effort was also made to uncover what makes a human capital-development endeavor succeed, and what are the obstacles to such success.

Research challenges

It is worth noting a few challenges that arose in the course of this research, not as justification for any shortcomings of this document, but because they say a great deal about the issues being examined.

While the terms of reference for the project were clear, it was more difficult than initially expected to explain those terms to interview subjects. The scope seemed at times overly broad, and sometimes exceedingly narrow. Perhaps the most telling part of this research was the tendency of interviewees to drift off-topic even after clarifying the terms of the research. The fact that discussions meant to be explicitly about human capital and individual skill building so often moved into the realm of organizational development and general support is an indication of the dearth of attention being paid to these issues, and the lack of understanding of them. Further, this is an indication of the integral relationship between individual and organizational capacity building, and perhaps a lesson that neither of the two can truly be studied in isolation.

It is also striking to note that few practitioners in the field share the same definitions for many of the terms employed in this research: human capital, capacity building, leadership development, skill building, training. In some ways this has made for a richer process because it has forced the research into areas not originally considered, but at the same time it has made it challenging to draw conclusions or even parallels.

The pairing of the community development and workforce development fields was a natural coupling and provides interesting opportunities for comparison, but adding social enterprise to the mix was an awkward fit. Where the first two are discrete fields, the third is more a methodology for supporting nearly any nonprofit endeavor, and so any cross-sectoral analysis became challenging. At the same time, however, many of the interviews with professionals in each of the three fields resulted in discussions about strategies or skills that could be applicable in any nonprofit setting.

Finally, the assumption that this research would uncover a great deal of thought and action on human capital development in the community-development field (due to the maturity of the field) and little in the field of social enterprise (due to the fact that it is a relatively new concept) turned out to not be true. Those working in social enterprise were thoughtful and often insightful about the need to promote human capital development in the field, while those in community development were often vague and noncommittal about their own work or the needs of the field. This suggests that the challenges of developing human capital in the field are such that the issue is being avoided altogether, and at the same time that this work has become so integrated into the day-to-day operations of the community-development field that it is no longer considered a separable topic.

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A Sense of the Field and the Questions

There are no major surprises to be found in examining the human capital needs of these three fields. The fields of workforce development and community development have matured from their roots in social movements, and professionals in these fields need help in becoming adept at strategic planning, competitive analysis, financial planning, and developing management and leadership teams. Those in the social enterprise field need communications skills in order to project the message of their work better, and significant assistance in financial planning and management in order to ensure that their work is sustainable.

If the goal of this research was limited to simply surveying the landscape of funding support for human capital development in these three fields, the conclusion can be brief: such support is extremely limited. This seems to be for a variety of reasons, among them:

■ **Funders are unclear on how to "do it right" and are hesitant to provide support until they are;**

■ **Many of the models that are available are very expensive;**

■ **Human capital development is a difficult practice to evaluate or measure; and**

■ **The culture of these fields is such that the need to fund the immediate crises overshadows most conversations about building long-term sustainability in the sector.**

Interviews and conversations that began with questions about what works or what is being supported, turned quickly to discussions about the fact that human capital development is not a distinct funding priority for funders, nor a programmatic priority for practitioners. But these discussions also yielded a great deal of insight into the challenges of effective human capital development and some of the possible ways to overcome those challenges. A number of themes emerged.

Challenges

There is no clear understanding of or explanation for the lack of human capital work in these fields. While the scope of this research included looking at both the supply and demand sides of this issue, it is important to note that the universe of sources included only those on the supply or funding side—an analysis of the consumer side, those staff to whom such resources might be directed, would be quite a different undertaking. At the same time, however, one question that arose in many interviews and which is important to keep in mind in any discussion of this issue is: are the resources that are available

underutilized because of flaws within them (high costs, poor quality, accessibility issues), or simply because practitioners do not have the time to take advantage of these resources, or do not recognize the value in such resources? This question could only be answered through a survey of practitioners.

Human capital is not a fixed asset. The most basic concern about funding individual skill-building efforts is that the investment is portable—send an up-and-coming workforce development practitioner to a university program to hone their skills, and they may well end up finding a job at a different organization, or even deciding to take those skills and work for the private sector. To be sure, that risk is real. The reality, though, is that most practitioners who chose these fields of employment and indicate an interest in formal training have a long-term commitment to the field. While they may well make lateral moves to other organizations, those skills still remain within the field, and if the purpose of the funding was truly about moving an issue, the investment has not been lost.

Human capital is sometimes not a broad enough tool to effect change. Also a concern among funders that support these fields is that human capacity development is too narrow a focus, and that building the skills of individuals is not the way to move a field, or even an organization. One issue is the limited ability of individuals to change the culture or practices of an organization, even if they are that organization's executive director. Many nonprofits are so entrenched in their existing culture and have leadership that is threatened by the process and is not open to critique and new ideas. For these organizations, human capital development may well be the wrong place to invest resources.

Human capital development can drain resources. Another concern is the existing workload of the individuals, and the added burden that formal training places on them. Taking an individual out of their workplace for any length of time puts a degree of strain on that person's workload and on the organization, and there is always the risk that the learnings of the classes may get lost upon the individual's return to their workplace and inundation with the workload they fell behind on during their class.

There is often no obvious entry point for human capital development. A significant challenge is simply knowing where to start. As with any field, for training to succeed trainers have to be able to have honest conversations that get to a real diagnosis of what skill development is needed, because practitioners often don't know what they don't know. That honesty is not always easy to come by, often for fear of showing weaknesses—especially to funder-provided trainers.

No single delivery model works in all situations. There are also differing thoughts on how to best provide for the delivery of human capital development. Some place a premium on formal trainings, such as university programs or workshops, and others value more highly the effectiveness of more informal skill building, whether it be through peer-to-peer networking, coaches or other models. Because of this lack of a single model, human capital-development work is very time and resource intensive.

Skills learned out of context can be difficult to apply. Basic "hard skills"—accounting, human resource management, etc.—are often taught as stand-alone modules, but once removed from the classroom, staff struggle to apply what they have learned to the real world of their workplace.

It often seems easier to hire the skills than to develop them internally. When an organization needs staff with business-management skills, the temptation to simply hire an individual with such skills is natural. Such a move does not relieve the burden of skill development among existing personnel, however, as the new hire needs to be managed and their work needs to be understood and overseen by management. Only existing staff can be counted on to look at business plans and accounting work in the context of the history and mission of the organization—a new hire may be technically proficient, but still unable to grasp critical elements of an organization's finances. Similarly, while outsourcing facets of an organization's work may seem like an easier solution to filling skill gaps, an organization can't outsource the skills needed to manage those contractors or to use the products produced by them. In the case of evaluation, for example, results measurement can be outsourced, but how to use the information gathered and what to do with it can't be.

Associations and networks have limited value. The value of networks—whether it be in the form of professional associations or informal networking among peers—is ambiguous. Some feel that the peer-to-peer learning fostered by these groups is highly effective, while others say that the time and costs associated with participating in such networks is simply not worth it. Conferences, for example, are seen by some as a good opportunity to meet like-minded peers and attend valuable workshops, and by others as a waste of time.

Fellowships have not proven to be a good delivery mechanism. While a number of foundations have launched and operated fellowship programs, designed to provide immersion-level training for leaders, these programs have proven limited in their value to the fields they try to serve. In particular, such programs have been found to be extremely expensive, time-consuming for participants, and difficult to evaluate without building long-term assessment tools into the programs themselves. Most importantly, none have lasted long enough to have the impact intended, because such programs are often cut or eliminated in the face of budget cuts at foundations, or when the original champion of the initiative is no longer present. Finally, fellowships have often given short shrift to the need to select participants carefully so that the program focus can be about deepening the work of successful practitioners rather than skill building.

Evaluation is challenging. The difficulty of evaluating the effectiveness of human capital development in order to determine the appropriateness of a model or the appropriateness of an investment is an obstacle to the growth of the field.

Potential keys to success

Not enough is understood about the barriers to human capital development. An assessment of the fields, aimed at determining why practitioners are reluctant to use the resources available to them, and what would make them more likely to do so, would be appropriate. Such a survey would be invaluable to intermediaries and trainers as they develop their programs, and to funders as they assess how to best help the fields. At the same time, a study of the correlations between capacities and program effectiveness would help practitioners grasp what skills are critical to their success.

Some preliminary lessons can be drawn, however, from the research at hand:

Flexibility is key. If any single thread can be found through all of this research it is that any support of human capital development in any sector must be flexible. No single model has been proven to be the most effective at moving an issue, no strategy will work for every individual or organization, and in many cases a combination of tools is needed to attain the desired result. What is clearly needed is attention: attention to what works where, how the most successful tools are delivered efficiently, and how those models can best be supported and promoted in the field.

Communicate the value of skill building. Any effort to strengthen human capital development in any field must be accompanied by support for communication efforts that stress the value of the trainings or other resources, and incentives that make such resources appealing enough to encourage professionals to avail themselves of them.

Context is as important as content. Training models that take place in the context of the individual's real-world circumstances allow lessons to be made more relevant and have greater impact on the success of the organization. Trainings need to be sector- and program-specific and, when driven by funders, must be integrated into the programming strategies of the funders.

At the same time, though, leadership trainings that are exclusively grounded in an individual's work can prevent them from being able see their organization in a larger context. Learnings that remove blinders and broaden and deepen a professional's perspective can be beneficial.

Investment increases commitment. Requiring that organizations contribute at least part of the costs of any skill-building work heightens the perceived value of a training or workshop for the participants.

Consider different delivery models for different situations. Since no single model works for every organization or individual, a premium must be placed on flexible styles of training. Formal trainings, peer-to-peer networking, coaches and other models must all be available at all times and applied on a case-

by-case basis. Similarly, trainings and workshops need to be offered at times and places that are convenient for participants, not based on a fixed schedule.

Cohort selection for group trainings is critical. Scattershot methods of attracting participants to programs can be detrimental to their success. Careful crafting of curricula and communication about the goals and objectives of programs helps attendees self-select, and avoids circumstances that might make the sessions less useful, such as overly broad ranges of participants in terms of skill levels or interests.

Integrate human capacity and organizational capacity. It is critical to keep in mind that the end goal is to move an issue, and organizations lead that movement, and individuals lead the organizations. As such, individual skill building is of limited value if the organization they work in isn't functioning well, and the theory that simply building human capacity will improve organizations hasn't proven true. Human capacity-building efforts must be done in parallel with organizational capacity-building efforts.

Because human capital development carries with it the risk of an individual's departure from an organization, any strong model should include strategies to develop ways for organizations to capture individuals' skills and learnings so that a memory and capacity is housed within the organization as well, should the individual move on. (It is also worth noting that organizational development that includes or leads to the strengthening of an organization's fiscal situation, in turn allowing the organization to pay decent wages to staff, can go a long way to retaining good employees.)

Similarly, if the expectation of human capital development is truly to improve the work of an organization, efforts must be made to ensure that the trainee has the power to make necessary changes. One simple way to do so, for example, is to promote the idea of sending more than one individual to a workshop, so that a culture of change develops among allies, rather than an individual going it alone.

Human capital development is needed at all levels of all organizations. In some cases the leadership of an organization may not be the most appropriate place to focus human capital-development efforts. While most trainings do focus on the executive directors of organizations, it may be more appropriate to build skills among second-tier management or even entry-level employees, if the desired goal is to move an issue over the long term.

Build evaluation in from the start. To accommodate measurement, human capital development has to be conducted in the context of a particular program or initiative, and should be tied to larger programmatic goals. Evaluating a generic leadership-development initiative is difficult. Evaluating the impact of a leadership-development component of a larger initiative designed around moving a particular issue within a community is easier and more likely to yield quantifiable results.

Build upon existing infrastructure. Whatever gaps there may be in core competencies within these fields, none of them are lacking for organizations and infrastructure. Any effort to address these issues should be channeled through existing, respected institutions. Funder-sponsored efforts to launch new initiatives or organizations would, in all likelihood, be unwelcome by the fields.

Support "indirect" capacity building. As much as training, coaching, networking and other capacity-building tools are needed, practitioners also need time to reflect, manage, lead, think and even simply rest in order to remain effective. Without additional staffing resources, sabbatical programs or simply ample general-operating funds, few leaders get such opportunities. Some funders have taken this to heart, and call their general-support funding a form of capacity building.

The dynamic of how the assistance comes to be is very important. Very few grantees will ask for leadership-development assistance, whether out of a fear of showing a weakness, a feeling that they don't have time, or simply that they have just never experienced this kind of training and so don't know that it could be helpful. As such, foundations often have to initiate such discussions. However…

Engage the field in the design of programs. Funder-forced trainings or collaborations are typically recipes for disaster. Capacity-building initiatives should be developed based upon the needs of the population, and collaborations meant to provide interorganizational support need to arise organically.

While these lessons cut across each of the three

sectors examined in the course of this research, they are manifest in different ways in each. An examination of the critical elements of each field's current

human development strategies and infrastructure, and what steps might be taken to strengthen these approaches, follows.

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Workforce Development

The workforce development field is made up of community-based organizations, public agencies, community colleges, unions and industry groups that provide training to individuals seeking employment. Services offered range from industry-specific training, to soft skills and literacy, to intensive job-placement strategies. Because there is such a wide range of players it is difficult to quantify the field, but some recent state-level analyses indicate that the public investment in the field is significant:

■ **Massachusetts' workforce development system receives $270,000,000 in public support annually. Community-based organizations provide 53 percent of the services provided by that funding, followed by public and regional vocational and technical schools (8 percent) and community colleges (6 percent). More than 75,000 Massachusetts residents receive training from these programs each year.**

■ **In New York, the state and federal government together spend $1.3 billion annually on workforce development.**

■ **In Illinois the public support for workforce development amounts to more than $3.6 billion, 62 percent of which goes to skills and vocational training.**

■ **In Texas, nearly $2.6 billion is spent through a complex network of 38 programs spread among 12 state agencies.**

Yet with tens of billions of dollars spent nationally, as the field has matured and grown there has been only a moderate amount of thinking about and development of structures to support individual skill building for professionals in the field. Public dollars spent on workforce development are not targeted at all toward building the capacity of professionals in the field. Capacity building in the workforce development field has tended to focus on disseminating best practices, rather than investing in human capital or developing strong institutions capable of implementing and improving programs with good results. Available trainings for required individual capacities—such as how to make contacts, understand economic sectors, work with employers and understand the needs of a range of players—are uneven, at best, but are needed in order to build the skills of those already in the field, and to raise up the image of the field itself and attract new people.

There is no consensus as to the value of in-depth trainings for front-line workforce development personnel, in part because some see the skills needed as fairly limited. Many of the staff who work directly with job-seekers had themselves been on the other side of that relationship only a short time before. At the same time, the high turnover rate of these staff suggests that an investment in such training may not be worthwhile. Staff who work directly with clients and in doing so have regular contact with employers

often end up moving quickly into positions with those employers themselves, doing human resource or other work and earning more than they did as a job developer. Lack of decent pay or opportunities for advancement within the workforce development field are primary factors in this trend, and the development of a career ladder with industry-specific pathways for advancement within the field could help moderate this trend. Within such a context, trainings for front-line staff could then expand beyond their current, limited scope.

Efforts to professionalize the field, through the development of industry-wide standards and practices, and also to increase base wages for front-line staff, would also likely help with retention issues. As part of this professionalization, the development of standard curricula for job developers would be a benefit to the field. Intermediary organizations that can provide bridges between industry and job developers could also be strengthened, providing job developers with resources they need to better link their clients with industries and employers.

As for upper-level staff in these organizations, the skills and resources they need vary only slightly from those of other nonprofit service providers. A strong working knowledge of the human resource field is important, as is a good understanding of particular industries, depending upon the focus of their work. Also critical are significant organizational and management skills in order to navigate the tangle of funding sources and the ensuing regulations and requirements.

Supporting organizations

While many foundations have turned their attention to workforce issues recently, that focus has not translated into support for human capital development in the field. The Jobs Initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for example, gave short shrift to capacity building, and was instead an outcome-driven process that sought outcomes through organizations and systems that were already adopting best practices. Efforts were made to expose groups to best practices or encourage peer-to-peer learning, but that ended up not being as useful as had been hoped, since the groups were so diverse and worked in such different ways. The initiative did include funding for job searches, coaching and conferences of grantees, but primarily sought to engage entrepreneurial learners who would take the initiative themselves when there were specific skills they needed.

Broad capacity-building initiatives necessarily assume that all grantees want to improve, said one Casey officer, but not all groups can be turned into high-performing workforce developers, in part due to lack of interest on the part of the grantees, and in part due to limited available funding.

Similarly, when the Ford Foundation examined the entry points for human capital development in the workforce development field, a decision was made not to pursue the issue because of the scope of the need. One officer at Ford suggested that not many organizations have the ability to take advantage of capacity-building resources, and that often a great deal of time is spent on capacity-building efforts for groups that simply will not rise to the level expected of them, despite the available resources. The deterrent for Ford to launching such an initiative, then, was that identifying practitioners who would make effective use of resources and then making those resources available would be expensive and have limited impact unless it was part of a broader initiative designed to improve the workforce development system across whole communities.

This sentiment was echoed by other foundation officers, most of whom agree that broad systems that undertake human capital work as well as organizational development efforts are the only way to ensure that change occurs and can be sustained. Large-scale initiatives like the New York Employment and Training Coalition—a trade association in the process of launching a training institute targeted to nonprofits in New York City that provide employment services—are cited as having the best chance of making a difference, but still need to target their efforts to reach the organizations that can do the most with the trainings. "There are so many practitioners out there who are well-intentioned but who will always serve 20 to 30 people a year," said one foundation officer. "We shouldn't be putting too much resources into these people."

In some ways, targeting successful organizations and individuals for capacity-building support runs counter to common foundation practice. Of particular concern is the tendency of foundations to offer capacity-building grants to organizations deemed undeserving of an operating or programmatic grant. Instead, technical assistance or training should not be seen as a consolation prize, but rather as incentive for successful and strong organizations to grow and further develop their skills.

The power dynamics around foundations engaging

in capacity building are difficult to navigate, in that such a relationship is a third-party payer system, so the level of engagement of the direct beneficiary can be weak or negative, and there often aren't good feedback or evaluation mechanisms to inform the foundation of successes or shortcomings. One way of dealing with this challenge lies in funders not paying for the full cost of trainings, but rather requiring that organizations set aside some of their budget to cover part of the costs as well. Such an arrangement encourages attendees to value the program more highly and demonstrate more interest in its success.

One area where foundations can help and have begun to do so, is in helping build bridges between organizations with existing capacities. Rather than investing in developing capacities, foundations are instead tending to work with grantees on outsourcing opportunities. Instead of building the capacity of a community-based organization (CBO) to deliver a whole series of workforce development services, for example, a foundation might help the organization build a relationship with a community college in the area that has a huge capacity to do this. In this way, CBOs can look at how to leverage competencies in other organizations and become very effective packagers, and then not have to go through extensive training or expansion of their mission.

Formal training

While formal training programs for workforce development professionals are few and far between, some do exist, though in very early stages of development. The Annie E. Casey Foundation supported an effort by the New School to train high-level workforce development managers through the Internet. A course worth six graduate credits toward a management degree attracted 50 participants, but by the end of the course only 15 to 20 remained actively engaged. A poll of initial participants found that the amount of homework and amount of time required for the course were the main contributing factors to the level of attrition.

As a result, the program was reformulated into a series of one-credit modules, each requiring only two or three sessions. This allows participants to pick and choose only the topics they are most interested in. Also being developed by the New School is an online database of articles and papers related to the modules, and what the program calls "communities of practice"—an effort to provide a structure for networking among practitioners in the workforce development field. Past efforts to structure networks for conference participants, for example, have failed because they were seen as too forced. Ongoing efforts rely more on individuals with common interests having more control over who they network with.

While ample training opportunities are available for entry-level workforce development workers, the New School's programs are among the few targeted more toward teaching management skills to individuals already working in the field. Participants in the program can use their credits toward a graduate-level degree. This is part of an effort on the part of the program to make a connection between academia and practitioners and create a continuum of available resources. The credentials are important for attracting those who may want to continue their education in a more formal sense eventually, while for others they may not be a factor in their decision to participate.

At the core of the program's mission is the need to increase management capacity in the field. Building human resource capacity for workforce development organizations is seen as one way to improve performance and have an impact on the field, and the program seeks to fill what is seen as a major gap in efforts to develop such capacities.

One investment for funders to consider is the development of competency models—skill sets that practitioners should have. Particular attention needs to be paid to ensure that such efforts are forward-thinking, because while the immediate concerns and weaknesses of the field are real, practitioners agree that the field will face challenges in the future that have yet to be considered.

Universities have been slow to develop programs for the workforce development field in part because of the uncertainty that there will be enough demand. At the same time there is a concern that economic forces pulling professionals away from the field will result in a net loss if such programs don't act as an attractant to the profession. Some point out that while universities have tremendous resources and are logical institutions to turn to for professional development trainings, they also often suffer from disincentives to do multidisciplinary training, many use only adjunct faculty for programs not considered core to their curriculum, and most are not connected with community-based organizations, all factors that would weaken the value of such a program.

The workforce development field doesn't have the kinds of intermediaries that the community

development field has grown—The Enterprise Foundation, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) (both Rockefeller Foundation grantees), and others. As a result there is no infrastructure or movement being built yet. A project like the National Community Development Institute (NCDI)'s human capital initiative in the community-development field is sorely needed in the workforce development field, because at present there is no forum for discussing where the boundaries of the system are, where people in the field go to or come from, or even simply building awareness of what the workforce development industry does.

A successful initiative would have to bridge between the academic and practitioner sides of the industry, but since players from each side would likely make efforts to pull the initiative entirely to one side or the other a foundation would need to play the role of broker, and ensure that the funding provided encourages the two to work together. At present, for example, the academic programs don't solicit input from professionals in the field when designing trainings or programs. A foundation could play the role of facilitating bridge building between the academic and professional sectors in an effort to improve the available educational resources.

Developing the field

In an effort to build a better, more effective workforce development system, The New York Community Trust has supported the development of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition. At present there is no systemic workforce development program in New York City. Practitioners and funders have determined that what is missing most of all is a trained and competent work force to provide the services, and a network of intermediary services to support their work. Proponents believe that if enough job developers go through the institute, there could be a dramatic effect on the whole field in New York City, with a substantial portion of the practitioners working at a higher level.

But these efforts in New York—which are also supported by the national intermediary Public/ Private Ventures (a Rockefeller Foundation grantee)—aren't representative of the national picture when it comes to professional development in the workforce development field. Most national funders seem more interested in substantive strategies and as a result pay little attention to developing leaders. While funders have been interested in supporting

sectoral employment, for example, they have paid little attention to capacity in their funding in this area.

The current policy environment is also extremely challenging for workforce development organizations. There is a focus on having ambitious outcomes, but little available resources toward achieving them. The public sector in particular provides little or no investment in nonprofits, relying instead on the one-stop model developed under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998.

Practitioners in this field are seen as walking between the worlds of people who have had a really difficult time, and employers who expect that their relationship will add value to their productivity. No other social field has that tension or duality in the same way, where it has to bridge two worlds, and so creating a successful workforce development organization has unique challenges. Yet to date there is no educational or professional development infrastructure for workforce development leaders. Practitioners need to understand labor markets, economic and employment trends, and need to be able to understand and design programs that can meet employers' needs. These skills and organizations need to be developed in a very difficult funding environment, and are often staffed by front-line people who are only a few weeks from having been participants in these same programs themselves.

Public/Private Ventures is also working on developing a National Sectoral Employment Leaders Academy for executive directors of workforce development nonprofits. This program is being designed as a forum for ongoing peer training and strategy development that will consist of gatherings of professionals for the development of approaches and models, followed by application of the ideas back at their organizations, and then re-convenings to discuss outcomes and refine the ideas.

The lack of a comprehensive knowledge of leading practices in the field is another significant shortcoming. Some Internet resources for such documentation are promising, but have yet to be fully developed. Public/Private Ventures runs Working Ventures, a network of workforce development practitioners that provides workshops and produces handbooks and other publications in an effort to improve the performance of the workforce development field. This initiative arose out of an expressed desire from professionals in the field to have access to learning materials based on effective practices from successful practitioners. The reports are designed "to be at the

right hand of job developers as they do their work," as opposed to much of the literature on the field which is meant for researchers, academics or policy advocates. Workshop topics include how to think about outcomes, employment retention and advancement, and how to get staff buy-in for organizational changes. The main presenters at the workshops are seasoned practitioners from organizations with good performance, because they have been found to have more credibility with attendees.

The trainings offered are designed for individuals, but attendees are encouraged to participate with others from their organization, because experience has shown that when more than one person from an organization attends, their ability to affect change within their workplace increases significantly. Public/ Private Ventures conducts surveys of workshop participants four to six months after the class, and has found that organizational change occurs more than twice as frequently when more than one staff member from an organization attends and when the workshop includes time for organizational planning.

The simple fact, however, is that professionals in the workforce development field are barely able to keep up with the immediate needs of their clients, and far too few practitioners are even at the point of trying to keep people employed or helping to move them into better jobs. Workforce development professionals tend to focus on the immediate crises and needs and socialize clients into only interacting with them about their problems. While dealing with these problems is important, they also need to have the time and space to discuss broader employment goals if they are to have a long-term impact on their clients. Providing case studies and opportunities for role-playing have proven to be successful training models for helping move practitioners to this stage.

Networks

Most foundation officers feel that they can have only limited impact on a field by investing in networks. While networks can move the whole field incrementally forward, such efforts do little toward breaking out organizations and getting them to move faster. Conferences, which tend to be the mainstay of networks and associations, are more about influencing thought leadership and helping fields reach out to different constituencies, rather than building individuals' competencies.

Also hindering networks' effectiveness is the fact that practitioners often have a hard time finding time for such externalities when the workload is already so heavy. MDRC developed an intranet for its groups to communicate with each other, but it was underused. None of the participants wanted to be part of an e-mail listserv, citing their already overflowing in-boxes. Once-a-year conferences for executive directors ended up being the limit to the networking that the groups in the demonstration project were ready to take on.

What is needed is a broad menu of opportunities for capacity building to work—short trainings, in-depth classes, conferences, in-person and online connections. No single type of resource works best for everyone. A significant amount of the learning that needs to happen should come in the form of leaders training their staff and other potential leaders, so that all of the historical knowledge and information isn't in one person. Sharing that knowledge and opportunities for leadership also helps staff feel valued and motivated.

While workforce development has developed into a sizable field, it has also become an interesting paradox: a field devoted to the education and training of workers has little or no system in place offering such opportunities to its own practitioners. Fueled in no small part by employment crises, all attention has been on finding jobs for clients, and little thought has been put into how to best train the field to do this well. Support instead has gone to the organizational infrastructure of the field, and success measures have been tied to the number of clients finding jobs.

To be sure, these organizations have done good work and play a critical role in the economy as a whole. Developing further the skills of workforce development practitioners, however, so that their work can go deeper than merely job searches and referrals and can also become more efficient, would no doubt allow the field to grow further and play even more of a role. While university-based programs may prove too time-consuming, in-depth workshops and seminars that engage practitioners in contextual thinking about their work and how to do it better have been well received and deserve more support. In addition, measures need to be taken to elevate careers in the field in ways that make them attractive to smart young people entering the work force.

3

Community Development

With its roots in the War on Poverty in the late 1960s, the community-development field has become a major force for economic and social change. A census of the field taken in the late 1990s found 3,600 community-development corporations (CDCs) employing nearly 40,000 people. In the industry's first 30 years CDCs constructed 550,000 units of affordable housing and 71 million square feet of commercial/industrial space, and were responsible for creating 247,000 private-sector jobs. These organizations also serve a significant role as lenders, reporting $1.9 billion in outstanding loans to 59,000 businesses in 1997. The field remains true to its ideological roots, but at the same time has developed into a sophisticated industry that requires a wide range of skills from practitioners.

The community-development field is remarkable in that many of the pioneers of the industry are still working at CDCs and other organizations that they helped found 30 years ago. Drawn to the work by their commitment to social and economic justice, many of these individuals today find themselves CEOs of multimillion-dollar organizations with large staffs and significant real-estate portfolios. Many of the middle- and entry-level staff who have come to the field more recently have tended to come by their positions due to their skills in areas applicable to the organization's needs, but not necessarily with the same commitment to the ideals of the field as their predecessors.

A twofold shift happening in the field presents significant leadership-capacity challenges for these organizations. First, many of the long-time leaders are finding themselves forced to deal with intricacies of managing staff, resources and properties, and need skill development in order to do so. Second, many of them are reaching retirement age and leaving the organizations they have run for so long, in many cases leaving a void where their historical knowledge, political acumen and commitment to the principles of community development have no natural successor within the organization.

Though of the three fields being examined here the community-development field has the most extensive network of capacity-building organizations and models, much more emphasis is placed on organizational capacity rather than individual, and human capital development tends to get short shrift. The Enterprise Foundation and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) are the largest and best-known providers of assistance to these groups, and while these organizations have provided and leveraged tremendous resources for the field, their focus

has tended to be on loans, technical assistance and organizational development. Another national intermediary, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (NRC), a congressionally-funded intermediary, also provides significant assistance to CDCs, including extensive training institutes, but solely within its network of 225 organizations.

Smaller institutions such as the Development Training Institute (DTI) and Southern New Hampshire University's School of Community Economic Development do offer trainings meant to build the skills of individuals in the field, and many funders that support community-development organizations steer grantees toward these resources. But while the field has grown roughly fourfold since the early 1980s when these two institutions were first launched, the two are virtually the same size as they were then, with the same number of participants in their programs.

So while evidence points to a need for human capital development in the field, and those who have used the limited trainings that are available suggest that such resources are valuable, the offerings are still extremely limited. Skill building among practitioners in the community-development field is particularly important as organizations take on larger, more challenging projects. To build upon its long history of successes and remain sustainable, the field has to consider how to attract and train individuals who can handle such projects, and move away from the trend of using consultants to fill gaps in capacity.

Training

While the field of community development has grown exponentially since the early 1980s, independent organizations that provide training to practitioners have not grown at the same rate. "It's a funding issue," said one veteran training professional. "It isn't that they don't think training is important, it's that they think it's so important that it's basic, and they don't fund basics."

Graduates of DTI's two lead programs from the past 20 years attribute much of their success to what they learned in the programs. In that time those individuals' organizations have produced more than $44 billion in development, and many of the participants attribute their successes to the skills they learned in the program. While such intensive long-term programs can be shown to be effective, even public-sector resources that support the field are being redirected

away from building the skills of practitioners.

"Workshops or two-day trainings don't work," said one training professional: "Practitioners need to be a part of something bigger, like peer learning, peer exchange, coaching and other models that build on each other. You need to take individuals away from their organizations so they can't be distracted and they need to have the time and space to roll up their sleeves and have a product they can act on when they go back to their organization. That makes workshops worthwhile."

In addition, lessons from trainings need to be: "Specific enough so they can be applied right away, but broad enough so they can be used later as well. The best training is about frameworks that can be used in many different situations, rather than the nitty-gritty details about everything."

Workshops need to be based on an adult learning model, rather than a lecture format. That means participants are valued for their experience and it is assumed that each person attends as a learner and as a teacher. In many cases, this means raising the bar for who can attend—some executive directors may not be ready for this kind of learning experience.

To ensure that a curriculum doesn't homogenize a group of attendees program leaders must be strategic about who is invited to participate. Successful workshop design begins with how the goals and expectations of a workshop are developed and communicated, and requires more than blanket announcements of the availability of a class.

Also critical is that the learnings in the workshops are supported by the staff and leaders of the organization who aren't attending. Internal education has to happen within an organization for the lessons of a workshop to make a difference. An organization sending more than one person to a workshop exponentially increases the chances of change occurring, but only if those attending are real change agents within the organization.

Beyond developing individual capacities, organizational capacity and programs must be supported. Funder's decisions around their support for capacity building would benefit from an evaluation of models that gauge impacts on clients and an examination of interventions considered critical to the organization's success.

Ultimately, though, there simply hasn't been enough research and isn't enough understanding of the links between organizational effectiveness and

program effectiveness. Much attention is paid to board development, for example, but there is little clarity on how much a board of directors affects the quality of programs and services. A study of organizations around the country, looking at core capacities and program evaluations, in an effort to determine what capacities are most highly correlated to the highest-quality programs would go a long way toward helping foundations determine how to allocate their resources.

Universities and intermediaries

As for more intensive training, most of the university-level curricula for community development involve just a faculty member or two or an institute that doesn't connect with the rest of the university. This usually results in students getting a very narrow perspective of the field—usually through the lens of a planning, social work or public-policy program—though a few do take a more cross-sectional approach to the field.

One notable exception is the School of Community Economic Development at Southern New Hampshire University, the nation's first accredited academic program conferring M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in community economic development. The program emphasizes experiential learning, and has established relationships with prominent national intermediaries and trade organizations. With more than 1,000 graduates the school's main program, the National Master's in Community Economic Development (CED), is geared toward working professionals. Participants attend school one long weekend per month over four semesters and study CED theory, planning, nonprofit management, finance, project development and technologies designed to enhance CED practice. Along with support from the University, the school relies on funding from the Ford Foundation to sustain its programs.

Another important program is the Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence at the University of Pennsylvania, designed to develop the skills of urban redevelopment entrepreneurs. This fellowship program for young professionals in the redevelopment field offers technical training, leadership development and exposure to a wide range of markets, organization structures, and cases addressing both physical and nonphysical redevelopment issues. Fellows undergo six weeks of intensive training on campus, followed by two-year project-management job placements at

for-profit and nonprofit development firms, during which participants also attend quarterly, one-week trainings in the field. The training curriculum ranges from courses on technical skills related to real-estate development, to sessions on collaboration, social service delivery and success measurement. Fellows receive salaries and benefits during their placement. The program is funded by a five-year grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

And then there are the intermediaries themselves that provide technical training, usually with little or no place-based perspective. As the field has demanded productivity from organizations in order for them to survive, training organizations have done a good job of developing courses to teach the needed skills—although in many cases this has resulted in duplication of services from these organizations. There's no clear evidence that the aggregation of those skills has moved the industry forward in any meaningful way, however, and there are constant concerns about professionals who complete a technical workshop and then return to their organization viewing their work in very narrow, technical terms, instead of the multidisciplinary reality of the field.

Intermediaries play important roles in building the capacity of community-development organizations and professionals, but they can also add a layer of involvement that has unintended consequences. For example, many program officers at foundations are not as directly involved in community development as they once were because they have chosen to exclusively or primarily fund intermediaries. As a result, foundations need to work on developing their human capital internally to understand better what's going on in the field.

Similarly, in some cities intermediaries have taken on leadership roles, where in the past CDCs had to work together more to promote policies, attract funding and develop front-line coalitions. With intermediaries taking on some of these roles, many CDCs have forgotten how to do some of the basic advocacy work they were founded on.

Some feel that because of these trainings practitioners have gotten too specialized, and as a result some dichotomies have developed that have been a disservice to the field. One example is a tendency for place-based and people-based programs to be unable to work together—different sets of skills are needed for each, and few professionals are well versed in both.

The skills that community-development leaders

have are the same skills that are valued in the best CEOs: the ability to understand and use data, to deal well with people, to be flexible, to listen and to build a team. Some of these things can be taught to some people, but no amount of funding can make all leaders experts in all of these areas.

Other models

Some foundations host initiatives that offer intensive retreat-type sessions for leaders. The Jessie Ball duPont Fund, for example, runs an executive institute for its grantees, offering an opportunity for leaders of the organizations to come together in a residential program for intensive learning on leadership, management and policy issues. The CEO, board chair and a second staff member from each organization attend a weeklong program run by the Public Policy Institute of Georgetown University, to focus on specific projects related to their organization's work.

For some, on-site one-on-one assistance has proven to be a worthwhile model. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Rebuilding Communities Initiative was one of the first initiatives to implement the concept of "local coaches," where a consultant was paid to act as an adviser and technical-assistance provider to the local organization. The coaches allow for long-term relationships to be built, and for support to be regularly available when the organization needed it. That relationship works only if the coach is chosen carefully. The coach needs to be independent enough so that they can ask hard questions, but not so independent that they become judgmental of the groups they work with. Also critical is that it remains clear who is doing the work, who is building the relationships, and who is the face and voice of the organization, because a coach plays only a temporary role.

For a coaching relationship to succeed the grantee has to be able to admit their problems and weaknesses, and there has to be a relationship of confidentiality and safety, and a willingness to hear advice. Coaches' most important role is keeping practitioners on task, rather than saying whether a decision is right or wrong. Their presence allows for time for reflection, something most executive directors don't have or make time for.

When a foundation funds a coach the foundation has to be very flexible about what the goals or objectives really are. While there should be some standards of accountability or focus set by the funder,

the leader should be allowed to self-define the goals and objectives and how they plan to achieve them. Proposing that a coach be used also should not be framed in the context of "you have a leadership deficit," but rather as "we want to support your leadership, we recognize that you're swamped and we don't want you to burn out. We want to provide services that will give you the time you need to think about vision, manage and motivate your staff, and build your organization."

For that matter, hiring any sort of consultant who frees up an executive director to reflect on their work is a form of capacity building. Hiring additional management-level staff can have the same effect. While providing general operating support could help build capacity in much the same way, most executive directors would likely put any additional money toward programs rather than toward their own development, and so foundations should insist when grants are meant to strengthen an individual's skills.

The best model of capacity building from a foundation standpoint, suggested one evaluation professional, could be found in the Bronx's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program (CCRP), and in the person of Anita Miller, who worked for the Surdna Foundation and led the initiative. "Over a decade she delivered tough love, enthusiastic support and practical knowledge. Sometimes she was infuriating, but she was ultimately deeply respected and she made the organizations and their leaders better than they had been." Such a model can only succeed on a small scale and needs to be geographically focused, he added.

And the worst model? "Check writing. There are many overly inexperienced people at the intermediary level," and organizations left to their own devices are at risk of spending resources earmarked for capacity building on worthless trainings.

Networks

Strong networks of organizations and individuals are a hallmark of the community-development field. National trade organizations such as the National Congress for Community Economic Development, advocacy groups like the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and statewide networks connect organizations through newsletters, conferences and trainings. These networks foster a great deal of informal learning among their members.

Informal networks that occur naturally within

communities are also critical to community development. Funders need to be aware of these networks, but recognize that they are inherently fragile and could be vulnerable if attempts are made to formalize them via external forces such as foundations. These learning networks are particularly valuable when they cross issue boundaries, since practitioners in any field can learn a great deal from those who face similar challenges in others.

While Regional Affinity Groups (RAGs) have proven useful in many cases, they run the same risk as any foundation-established initiative. The groups may enjoy getting together, but may simply be doing so because the funder has asked them to, even though they're not necessarily benefiting from the process.

Leadership transitions

A critical issue facing the community development field right now is that of succession—many founders and long-time leaders of organizations are close to retirement, and the organizations they run face challenges in filling the leadership vacuums they leave behind. Where the retiring leaders came to their careers through a passion for the issues and gradually learned the technical skills along the way, people with the potential to fill these leadership roles were hired because of their technical skills and came to the field out of a combination of social motivation and career orientation. They tend to see business approaches to social problems, rather than public policy and government change. As a result, many CDCs have drifted away from their change-focused missions and become development agencies. To reverse this trend, training needs to be developed that focuses on rediscovering the vision of advocacy and organizing that launched the CDC field through coalition building, leadership development and policy analysis.

To facilitate this change, much of the professional training offered to the field needs to shift from technical skills to leadership development. New professionals in the field have limited experience in community organizing, public policy or mobilization, and need leadership experiences that will help them overcome not having been immersed in the mission or rhetoric that launched the field. This process begins with an intellectual grounding in literature that can provide an advocacy understanding of the field, as a way to challenge the boundaries and thinking of the new leaders. The aging of leaders in

the community-development sector is of particular concern in smaller communities, where the pool of potential replacements is small, and less of an issue (though still important) in larger markets such as New York City.

While this challenge is on everyone's mind, foundations seem to be having a hard time thinking about how to address the issue. Most organizations in the community-development field aren't big enough to manage succession from within, so one point of entry for funders could be to support intermediaries to do work sector-wide in a city or geographic region.

A subset of this issue is that of how ethnic populations are going to deal with transitions in organizations that serve their specific communities, particularly where there is no native leadership coming forward. Specialized attention for such communities means much more than just translating materials—there are cultural issues, such as how authority is carried and how dissent is managed, that aren't addressed by existing training and leadership-development opportunities. Where women, minorities, or immigrants are not represented at the highest levels of the organizations that serve these communities, foundations could play a role in growing community-based leaders, while being careful to not go so far as to "social engineer" the field.

While many community-development leaders are soon to be aging out of their leadership positions, there is also a cohort of professionals who have been in the field for three to five years and who have already made it clear that they could make a significant contribution to the field. At least one foundation is in the early stages of developing a mentorship program for the field, which will pair those close to retirement with younger professionals. Many foundation officers and training professionals recognize that there is a large arena of potentially very effective leaders already within the field who don't get adequate resources to lift up themselves or their organizations, but a strategy for reaching that population remains elusive.

One way foundations could support human capital development within organizations is by helping them develop larger management teams. In doing so, the executive director or other top leaders would be freed up to spend time thinking creatively and truly leading their field. Instead, most organizations have an executive director and program staff, and the organi-

zations are often so fragile that they can't withstand the loss of leadership should the executive director take the time necessary to do such broad thinking.

Executive directors need the space to be able to be more innovative, engage in reflective practice, test ideas and interact with others in ways that might help inform some thinking about the field as a whole. It comes as no surprise that leaders and other staff in the community-development field rarely have the time to enjoy such activities, but some foundations encourage grantees to take periods away from the office and reflect on their work, often with a mentor or grantmaker.

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has taken that concept one step farther, and offers a sabbatical program to nonprofit leaders in North Carolina, allowing them to take three to six months off from their job and use that time to do anything at all, as long as it is non-work related. According to a survey of 53 people who participated in the program from 1990 to 2001, 97 percent reported that it had a positive effect on their professional lives, 53 percent said the sabbatical allowed them to experience professional renewal and heightened energy around their work, and 75 percent said it had a positive effect on their organization and staff.

Evaluation

A significant difficulty or challenge in funding human capital development comes from the difficulty in articulating a framework for evaluation. Evaluating growth in individual capacity is done through examining how people act and think after going through a project: Do they come at new ideas from a different perspective, or from the same place they did before the intervention took place? Did they develop new ways of thinking, new points of entry? When they go out and try to share what they're doing with non-cohorts, do the recipients of that message understand what's being articulated, or is the individual just mouthing what they've heard in the process? It's a qualitative type of measurement, one that values conviction, honesty and understanding.

Institution building requires human capital building, though, and a good capacity-building program should impact both. Since leaders tend to be embedded in their community, their development naturally impacts the organization and the community. But building human capital does not lend itself to scientific methods, it's about human dynamics, and trying

to take a measure of such relationships is much more difficult than simply looking at organizations to determine what's working and what's not.

One foundation officer reflected on her experience working in the private sector, and expressed frustration with the emphasis on evaluation in the nonprofit sector. "In the business world they don't worry about any of this. They just know they have to invest in their people and keep training them. They don't worry about saying that sales went up or we were able to cut costs because of a training program."

Supporting individuals indirectly

There are still many foundations for which human capital development isn't a real consideration, or that think of capacity building of individuals in entirely different terms. For the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for example, capacity building in community development means building the capacity of residents by providing necessary opportunities and supports for people to learn and practice in their communities. This is in contrast to traditional funding streams, which tend to be more directive of training and support, and intermediaries that respond more to the funders than to community needs.

But even with the emphasis on resident capacity, Casey still hasn't developed a consistently successful formula for building the capacity of residents to articulate a collective agenda or create a framework for corralling all of a community's resources. Skills like how to run a meeting, how to chair a board, how to function as a group are more easily taught, but what's clearly needed is a way to help leaders develop the capacity to process a great deal of information so that they can fully understand all of the dynamics of their community as they fashion their agenda.

A foundation on the West Coast also focuses its capacity-building work on organizations rather than individuals, but is in the process of developing a leadership program. While the form that program may take is still unclear, the focus will be on investing in individuals whose leadership will translate into organizational change. One model being considered is an accompaniment strategy employed extensively in the for-profit sector, where executives work with a team of people who help in the real-world situations in their day-to-day work.

Another foundation that invests heavily in community development relies on informal networking for fostering capacity building and fostering peer-

to-peer learning opportunities, either through referrals or gatherings of grantees, or by providing small grants to existing grantees so they can attend conferences and national meetings.

While a management-assistance program run by another small foundation provides funding for organizations to hire consultants to help with specific tasks, training or human capital development is not explicitly encouraged but it is often a by-product of the relationship. In the course of their contract, the consultant may well train a staff member, or recommend training, or play the role of a coach. Most of the consultants that are brought in focus on financial management systems and board development.

A foundation in the South sponsors two initiatives focused on ensuring that the people most affected by policy issues should be at the table where solutions are being developed. These individuals participated in the programs, with the goal of developing the skills and abilities they would need to participate with mainstream organizations. Key to these programs' success has been recognizing that each individual comes into them with different skills, and tailoring the program so that it does not become a single class that homogenizes all of the participants.

Also strengthening the argument that human capital development needs to go hand in hand with organizational capacity building is the generally held belief that support for local leaders needs to come from local organizations, rather than from a large foundation based elsewhere. It has become commonplace for foundations to fall into the trap of believing that they know what works in communities, said a number of professionals, rather than asking leaders what they need. That model is a sure step toward failure, most agree.

Finally, some foundations that don't support human capital development explicitly feel that the work they do is an indirect form of individual skill building. Human capacity development is sometimes seen as a "byproduct" of building organizational capacity, in that the skills and competencies grown within an organization are naturally housed within individuals.

The community-development field enjoys a rich array of organizations, individuals, networks and training institutes from which to draw learnings in an effort to develop the skills of those who work in the field. Many of these resources are sorely underutilized, however, as attention is instead paid more to the capacity of organizations and to program delivery. While some practitioners do avail themselves of training opportunities in hard skills—such as fund raising, accounting and management—leadership-development programs have failed to emerge as more and more community-development corporations focus increasingly on bricks-and-mortar development and less on organizing, advocacy and policy work.

Because of its history and existing institutions designed for such work, the community-development field offers many opportunities for investment in human capital development. Institutions like DTI, intermediaries such as LISC and The Enterprise Foundation, and a handful of university programs have all proven themselves able trainers. The work of these organizations, however, has not been brought up to scale to meet the demands of the growing field, in large part due to a lack of funding. Were such funding to be made available, and appropriate opportunities presented to practitioners, such efforts could have extensive impact on the field.

4

Social Enterprise

The social enterprise field has developed quickly in recent years, as mission-based nonprofit organizations have turned to developing revenue-generating enterprises to support themselves and "social entrepreneurs" have sought to combine their social values with their business skills. While the size of the field is difficult to quantify, because of its cross-sectoral nature, research has found a 600 percent increase in fee income in the social service sector over the past 20 years. What is known for sure is that fees for services constitute a growing proportion of the operating budgets of nonprofits. Whether or not nonprofit organizations call themselves social enterprises, they are more and more focused on earning income to solidify their financial bases.

In a 2000 survey of nonprofits conducted by The Yale School of Management/The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures, 65 percent of the 519 respondents were operating an earned income venture or expressed interest in doing so. A total of 4,106 nonprofit organizations joined the Partnership's Web site between May 2002 and December 2003—1,780 indicated that they operated earned income ventures at the time, 82 had in the

past but no longer did, and 1,927 did not at the time but indicated that they intended to.

The social enterprise field immediately distinguishes itself from the workforce development or community-development fields in that it is highly dependent upon the leadership of individuals with a specific skill set and a deep commitment to their work, rather than upon a set of specific policy or social issues that require organizing, mobilization and advocacy to address. As such, human capital development is a natural entry point for funders seeking to support the social enterprise field. Trainings in communications skills, management skills and leadership skills would all serve the field well.

The Partnership's survey also revealed that only 55 percent of the organizations operating income ventures had written a business plan, and that those who had done so were more likely to indicate that their venture had an impact on the success and mission of their organization. When asked what resources would be most valuable to assist their organizations' ventures, 56 percent ranked business planning assistance as their top choice.

Such findings represent one side of the social enterprise field, the nonprofit organizations broadening their work to include fee-for-service or other income generating models. That these organizations and individuals have little or no experience in profit-

generation should come as no surprise, nor should the survey's discovery that a lack of financial resources and trained personnel are the primary roadblocks to nonprofits initiating social ventures. "Business planning assistance, in the form of targeted business analysis, market research and strategic planning, could be a valuable resource and critical ingredient to help ensure success," according to the survey's findings. "Such assistance would certainly increase the capacity of those that are currently operating ventures and encourage those that are not to begin exploring opportunities to do so."

The other side of the field encompasses organizations launched as social enterprises at the outset, some of which are nonprofits and some of which are mission-driven for profit enterprises. The leaders and staff of these organizations tend to be more business savvy, often with private-sector background, and their needs are somewhat different. Operating in a mission-driven environment requires communicating differently and being conscious of possible conflicts that may arise between a commercial venture and social goals, skills that traditional business-training programs don't provide. This doesn't necessarily require an entirely new curriculum, but merely support for existing training providers to add elements to their work that would support social enterprise professionals. A number of networking organizations in the field already would be well suited to such work, with support from funders.

One of the leaders in the social enterprise field is the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). REDF supports 20 organizations in the San Francisco area that provide employment opportunities for more than 600 homeless and very low-income individuals each year. The Fund provides capital investments, capacity-building investments and a host of networking opportunities, all of which support ventures that ultimately provide a stream of capital for the nonprofits.

The Fund's goal is to apply good business principles to nonprofits, particularly around hiring and retaining executives and networking with the business community. The Foundation's strategy is very deliberately about building the capacity of the organizations, rather than being a consultant to them, in an effort to promote sustainability beyond existing funding.

Where some foundations have shied away from the significant investments social ventures need in order to succeed, REDF has committed itself to provide

just that kind of initial capital. In the philanthropic sphere high overhead is seen as bad, but such costs are essential for building capacity, hiring skilled and qualified people, having accounting systems that work, and implementing systems to track social outcomes. Funders have to be prepared to be responsive in ways that the nonprofit world usually doesn't demand—if an enterprise needs money for something that breaks which is critical to their work, they can't wait for the next grant cycle. Revolving loan funds and access to lines of credit are part of REDF's commitment to its grantees.

That investment is paying off for REDF in the form of significant, quantifiable results from the groups they support. An extensive tracking system has allowed the Fund to collect data showing that workforce development within a social enterprise framework can be successful.

All of the executive directors of REDF's grantee organizations have attended Stanford Business School's Executive Education Program, a four-week intensive residency program. More significant is the informal support provided by REDF staff, such as monthly meetings with executive management teams at each organization, and regular one-on-one lunches with executive directors. That kind of regular contact often ends up as a kind of professional coaching relationship, and many participants have reported that their longevity in their positions was a direct result of their participation in the program.

As successful as the REDF model has been, there has been little or no replication. A six-month planning process in six cities in 1998 tried to establish similar organizations elsewhere, but failed due to limited portfolios and a lack of local investment in the projects. Now that the field is more mature and established, and there is an infrastructure that supports the field, such an effort could likely fare better today.

Supporting innovations and innovators

Another program, the Schwab Social Entrepreneur program, identifies social entrepreneurs who have already demonstrated success—individuals who can prove that their work has had an impact beyond their community in that it has been replicated by others and scaled beyond their initial efforts. Being part of the program helps take these individuals to the next level. Most of them have done their work in isolation, and the program brings them together with a community of accomplished entrepreneurs who

have enough in common to be able to support each other. The program's close ties with the World Economic Forum also provides participants with an opportunity to meet world leaders and grants their work a legitimacy they would have a hard time achieving on their own.

While many academic institutions have picked up on the social enterprise model and have begun offering courses designed to prepare students for such work, the most important trait of a social entrepreneur—the passion for social change—can't be taught. Courses available for social entrepreneurs at Harvard, Stanford, Columbia and other universities are appropriate for individuals who have already begun work in social enterprises, and who want specific skills—business, management, financial, etc.—to enable them to work more efficiently.

Their passion for their work means that many social entrepreneurs have difficulty telling their stories clearly and succinctly, and could use help in learning how to communicate what it is they do. Foundations could help the field by supporting efforts to teach communication skills to leaders, so that they could develop the ability to get their messages across in a clear, concise manner. Being able to do so can significantly increase an entrepreneur's ability to attract financing or attention to their work.

Where a professional development curriculum in workforce development or community development may have many elements that are industry-specific, trainings for social entrepreneurs need to be more broad and flexible. Many social entrepreneurs start out in a given area—health, for example, or education—but then move on to something else because they're really looking at the whole of development and never fit into any one category. As a result, the skills needed for social enterprise work are about an approach to social problems, rather than how to further a specific sector.

And while the passion that is so critical to the success of social entrepreneurs can't be taught, it is important to expose students to the field of social enterprise early—as early as high school—and to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking through programs that offer awards or grants to students with ideas.

Such competitions are already in place for more advanced social enterprises, and receive a great deal of support from The Goldman Sachs Foundation. The National Social Venture Competition judges social enterprises and gives cash awards to the best

of the bunch. The Yale School of Management/The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures educates nonprofits about nonprofit enterprise, serves as a mechanism for capitalizing promising profit-making ventures with financial support, and provides intellectual capital to build the practice of social entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector. As its signature event, the Partnership runs the National Business Plan Competition for Nonprofit Organizations. Participants in these competitions are offered access to extensive technical assistance and training opportunities.

The Goldman Sachs Foundation has chosen to execute its theory of change through business plan competitions, with the goal of not just to impacting organizations that participate and win, but to have a broader impact on the field. Participation in the competitions is a form of due diligence for many of the groups, and often success is followed by significant investments. The Foundation also supports the field through the publication of case studies and books, though the relatively new field needs to focus more on consolidating lessons learned into publications.

Some in the field are wary of such competitions, however, and express concern that such programs encourage nonprofits to go into businesses that could prove detrimental to their organizations if they don't have the capacity to handle such a burden. The award money that comes from the competitions is rarely enough to launch an enterprise, and additional funding is never guaranteed. To truly serve the field, a competition—or any type of support, for that matter—needs to view as part of its mission a goal of also convincing organizations and individuals not to pursue ideas that aren't sustainable or that would do harm to their organizations.

Goldman Sachs also promotes professional development in the field by supporting the Social Enterprise Alliance, which gives professionals an opportunity to network with peers and attend conferences that offer skill-building sessions on a range of topics. The Foundation also has started a program that places Goldman Sachs managing directors on boards of groups the Foundation supports, and brings executive directors of grantee organizations together for a session on the responsibilities of board members. This program has also brought together executive directors of grantees and allowed them an opportunity to network with each other.

The Foundation's work focuses more on organiza-

tional development than on individual development because officers have found that while one individual is likely to be leading the charge, the successful ones have a team working with them. While there is a need for leadership and a clear owner in a social enterprise, leaders in the sector agree that a team and good teamwork skills are critical to the success of a venture.

Models of delivery

Professional development in the social venture field currently consists of degree programs, one-week seminars, occasional gatherings of networks, coaching, peer-to-peer learning and other skill-building opportunities, but with no formal programs this collection of opportunities is haphazard at best. While many master's of business administration programs now include some courses on social enterprise and more students are taking the courses, many of the faculty teaching the courses don't have a grounding in nonprofits and teach very introductory methods that can sometimes be misleading.

For nonprofits interested in taking on a social venture, capacity building means bringing in business skills. That means some hard skills—accounting, marketing and other technical skills—but also skills like how to respond to customers, how to take advantage of opportunities, and how to "be opportunistic" in a different way than nonprofit professionals may be used to. Trainings in organizational management, succession issues and communications would also be welcome. While measurement and evaluation is important, professionals in the sector are concerned that foundations overemphasize such elements, and say that the ventures that are most successful tend to have their own metrics for self-evaluation.

To some extent, incorporating these capacities into an organization means training existing staff, but in many cases it means hiring or contracting with an individual with more business skills. The hazard is that people with business skills often don't naturally have the empathy that needs to exist in order to work with a social bottom line such as that of a nonprofit. That empathy can't be taught, agree many in the field, but people moving to social ventures from a traditional business background need to understand what the driving motivation of the work is.

And when it comes to skill building, many social entrepreneurs have adopted another business model—the "just in time" model, where the individual hires a consultant to provide an immediate infusion of training for a specific task, rather than committing to a longer-term learning process. While there are certainly situations where outside expertise is needed, there is the potential for this trend to affect the health of the sector if it ultimately means that executive directors don't have certain key skills.

There are some opportunities in a formal educational setting to do some training that would be difficult to do elsewhere, though, because of the existing structures already in place at a college or university. Programs such as the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance inform and enrich the educational process, and connect the more formal curricula with skills like leadership development and other soft skills that are difficult to teach except in practice.

Business schools wanting to offer courses in social enterprise have to raise funds to do so, since the issue isn't mainstream enough for most schools to support, and foundations could help fill some of those gaps. Funders could also help in developing processes that would evaluate and track participants in the programs as a way of helping to further the field by measuring the impact of the coursework on the students' professional work. There's also a need for ancillary products, such as teaching materials, casebooks and handbooks for practitioners.

Foundations that support social enterprises well provide more than just funding. They also lend expertise and training, access to consultants, and assistance with targeting additional resources. But foundations need to craft their funding strategies with input from the social enterprise field, rather than in isolation.

Much of the nonprofit sector knows little about how to do core market research, how to price services, or how to do business planning. Nonprofits, particularly those launching social ventures, also should begin to adopt business-style screening and assessment tools for hiring staff. Recruitment and hiring is costly, and implementing this model could help significantly reduce those costs.

The stability of an organization is a big factor in whether or not human capital development is appropriate or will even be utilized. In an organization that is struggling to survive, an executive director doesn't have time to think about professional development. With that in mind, most foundations supporting social enterprise fund organizations that are more stable and secure.

The needs of nonprofit leaders vary from organization to organization. Executive directors who have held their positions for many years may be good leaders but could be lacking in certain skills, while young leaders may have the technical skills they need but not the leadership abilities or the connections they need in order to succeed.

The best way for adults to learn is when they need to learn, and in a hands-on way. One example cited by a number of professionals in the field is the Denali Initiative—an intensive, three-year fellowship program for young social entrepreneurs, wherein participants had periodic training sessions in between which they were expected to do planning, analysis, presentations, peer reviews and other work related to the development of their venture. Supported by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation, the Initiative no longer operates, in large part because of the high cost of running it. Still, the Initiative's hallmarks—small group, stellar faculty and honest, hardnosed business feedback—seem to be held up as an ideal for a model program.

An added benefit of fellowships and other residential programs for leaders is that it gives other staff in their organizations an opportunity to develop skills, build relationships with partners and participate in the organization's work in new ways while the leader is absent. Such experience can help ease the difficulty of an executive transition, when a long-time leader leaves an organization.

Networks

The value of networks and associations is critical in the social enterprise field, because success often depends upon connections to successful individuals and resources. Having effective feedback and mentoring is also very important, and networks facilitate such communications among diverse sets of mentors with multiple perspectives. These learning communities are important, yet in order for them to work they cannot be forced upon grantees by funders but need to develop organically.

The Social Enterprise Alliance (SEA) and Social Venture Partners International (SVPI) are the two main networks in the field. SEA focuses on education and networking, offering teleconferences, listservs and an annual gathering of social enterprise professionals. While still a relatively young organization, SEA is consistently referred to as an excellent collaborative that is contributing greatly to the field. SVPI's focus is on the philanthropic side of social enterprise, working to connect resources with organizations. The Skoll Foundation has also launched Social Edge, an online forum designed to serve as a network and resource for the field.

An affinity group of foundations that support social enterprise work does not yet exist, and could be useful in helping professionals and funders of the field come together to conduct a systems analysis, map out where the sector has been and where it could potentially go, and determine what factors have made some enterprises successful and what funding needs are most critical to the field.

The social enterprise field's rapid growth in recent years is surely attributable to the leaders who have championed their organizations' efforts to develop revenue-generating businesses to support their missions. While the passion driving those individuals may be key, there are also clearly some management, leadership and business skills that are critical to their success. The continued success of this model may well depend upon the development of an infrastructure providing contextual training in these areas. Thus far, university programs explicitly about this field have been slow in developing, though many business schools offer courses that apply to the needs of a social entrepreneur.

The relative size and newness of the field also makes the strength of the professional networks within it critical to the success of the field as a whole, as well as the individual enterprises within it. Such organizations provide critical opportunities for peer-to-peer networking, as well as thoughtful discussions and policy planning for the future of the field.

Conclusion

Human capital development in the fields of community development, workforce development and social enterprise is extremely challenging, costly, and difficult to measure and evaluate its effect on the issues it seeks to address. As a result, it has been largely unsupported, with attention instead being focused on organizational development and program and service-delivery models.

But developing the skills of the leaders of these fields cannot be neglected, should not be an afterthought and is eminently possible. Such work has a great deal of potential in moving the issues of concern, and in ensuring the long-term sustainability and productivity of the fields themselves.

By supporting formal training opportunities, both those based at larger institutions of learning and those run by smaller, field- or discipline-focused organizations, funders can ensure that practitioners have the basic skills they need to carry out their day-to-day tasks. By promoting models such as mentoring, fellowships and coaching, funders can deepen those trainings by providing practitioners with contextual opportunities to apply what they know and learn along the way. By encouraging the development of professional networks and associations foundations can give practitioners further opportunity to learn from each other, and forums to develop and articulate goals and policies that will further their fields.

Such support cannot be generic, however. Successful human capital investment must encourage the development of models that allow for flexibility, so that delivery of lessons and skills can be tailored to meet the needs of those who seek them. As such, the investment in this work needs to be broad and deep in order to best ensure that the opportunities offered are appropriate, effective and accessible. Only conscious, deliberate crafting of human capital-development systems can offer up the promise of providing what is needed to move these fields forward in their missions.

Interviews

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Annex II
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