Capacity Building the Capacity Builders: Learning from the Pilot

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Outline of the Report

This report on the Capacity Building the Capacity Builders (CBCB) Pilot is structured as follows:

- Part One provides an overview of the key features of the CBCB programme and presents the key management, design and delivery challenges posed by the programme
- Part Two contains a summary of the key learning that emerged from the evaluation of the programme
- Finally, in Part Three, we suggest a range of potential modifications to the design, delivery and management of future programmes.

Authorship and Acknowledgements

This report has been written by (in alphabetical order) Ben Cairns and Patricia Young, with contributions from the IVAR programme delivery team - Dr Sam Brier and Pradip Gajjar - and the programme’s external evaluation consultant, Professor John Hailey.

Our thanks to all the programme participants for giving us their time and views so freely. Thanks also to staff at bassac and BTEG for their support and contributions throughout the pilot.
PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE PILOT ‘CAPACITY BUILDING THE CAPACITY BUILDERS’ PROGRAMME

1. Introduction

1.1 ‘Capacity Building the Capacity Builders’ (CBCB) was a pilot programme funded by The City Bridge Trust and delivered by a partnership of the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR, main delivery agent), bassac (accountable body) and the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG).

1.2 As specified in the original funding proposal (November 2004), the objectives of the CBCB programme were to “deliver a new empowerment model of capacity building in order to improve:

i. The quality of capacity building support and activities offered by the project partnership

ii. The ability of project beneficiaries (local infrastructure and neighbourhood anchor organisations) to manage current and future practical challenges of organisation and management

iii. The knowledge and contextual awareness of beneficiaries, thereby enhancing the strategic capacity of their organisations, enabling them to become more effective, adaptable and sustainable

iv. The quality of capacity building support provided by beneficiary organisations so that frontline organisations become more effective, adaptable and sustainable.”

1.3 Target beneficiaries for the CBCB programme were identified as “two cohort groups comprising:

i. Partner organisations’ (ie. bassac and BTEG) development workers involved in organisational support / capacity building

ii. Project Officers and Chief Officers from London-based infrastructure and neighbourhood anchor members / constituents of bassac and BTEG, which themselves deliver capacity building.”

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2. Recruitment to the programme

2.1 Following the award of funding in April 2005, the CBCB programme was launched at an event in June 2005. Recruitment began shortly after this and was undertaken collaboratively by the programme partners.

2.2 bassac assisted with the recruitment of six participants for Group One; all participants were Chief Executive officers of bassac member organisations.2

2.3 BTEG assisted with the recruitment of fourteen participants for the second group3; a third of these participants were either from BME backgrounds or were working for BME-led organisations.

2.4 Once recruitment had been completed, the IVAR team contacted participants in order to carry out an individual needs analysis and to identify individual learning objectives4 for the programme. The needs analyses were conducted both face to face and by telephone. This period of outreach was also used to build rapport with participants and learn more about their organisations and the practical problems which they were facing.

3. Delivery of the programme

3.1 The Group One programme ran from September 2005 to March 2006; the Group Two programme ran from February 2006 to July 2006.

3.2 The programme was delivered to each group over seven sessions, using a variety of approaches, including:

- Workshops
- Case study5
- Homework
- Buddying6.

Participants were also encouraged to complete a learning log7.

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2 See Appendix One for a list of participants.
3 See Appendix One for a list of participants.
4 Learning objectives were monitored throughout the programme to support participants in improving their knowledge, understanding and competencies.
5 The case study was developed using the actual experiences of participating organisations, as well as earlier findings from IVAR’s practical action research projects with voluntary and community organisations.
6 Participants were paired into ‘buddies’ at the beginning of the programme and were encouraged to meet between sessions and to complete set assignments. The purpose of the buddying system was to facilitate action learning by encouraging programme participants to reflect upon, and apply the learning from the programme to their own specific organisational situations.
7 The learning log was used by participants to record key issues of particular relevance to them and their organisations that emerged during the course of the programme.
3.3 The use of this range of interactive and participatory approaches was designed to:

- Promote collaboration and trust (and meaningful peer support / learning) to maximise opportunities for action learning
- Ensure that each session built upon previous learning, to achieve the key programme aim of reiterating and embedding learning
- Keep the programme content practical without sacrificing intellectual integrity
- Facilitate the transfer of individual knowledge to the organisational level.

3.4 The first session focused on team building and introducing the case study. The remaining sessions focused on the five core thematic issues at the heart of the programme:

- Capacity building
- Strategic Review
- Governance
- Collaborative Working
- Quality.

The final session was used to review the programme in collaboration with the participants.

3.5 The programme was evaluated by the IVAR team co-ordinator with support from an external evaluation consultant. Key findings from the evaluation are presented in Part Two.

4. Operational challenges

4.1 Two key operational challenges emerged in the early stages of the programme:

- The partnership
- Recruitment.

4.2 The partnership

In the first instance the partnership was led by IVAR and bassac, possibly on account of previous, successful, collaborations between the organisations. Staff shortages within BTEG impeded their involvement during the early stages of the pilot; however, these difficulties were eventually overcome following concerted efforts by the three partner organisations and, over time, this led to more productive relations.

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8 Professor John Hailey
4.3 Recruitment

Initially, take up of the programme was low. A number of reasons were identified for this:

- A poorly focused marketing strategy which meant that too broad a range of organisations were targeted, many of which turned out to be not suited to the programme
- A launch designed and delivered by IVAR personnel without sufficient input from the other programme partners which meant that the marketing of the programme was not appropriately attuned to the needs of the target audiences
- Assumptions within the original funding proposal that programme participants would comprise an organisation’s chief officer and development worker with responsibility for capacity building; in practice this proved both inappropriate and impractical.

The challenge of recruitment was only partially overcome with the first group: six people were recruited rather than the anticipated 10 – 14 participants. Findings from the evaluation identified that Group One participants were especially critical of the recruitment process, believing that the objectives and potential benefits of the programme were unclear.

In response to these criticisms, a more targeted marketing strategy was devised to facilitate recruitment to the second group. Marketing materials were developed that were appropriate for the target audience, clearly outlining the requirements of the programme, and presenting a fuller overview of its structure and anticipated benefits.
Part Two: Key Findings from the Evaluation of the CBCB Pilot

5. Introduction to the evaluation

5.1 In Part Two we present an overview of the evaluation process and a summary of key findings and issues.

5.2 The purpose of the evaluation was:

- To assess the quality of the programme
- To assess whether the outcomes of the programme were achieved
- To determine the potential for longer-term impact
- To identify learning to inform the possible development of future projects.

5.3 The design of the evaluation was based upon the 'Ripple Model'. This model provides a framework through which it is possible to understand how capacity building interventions in one area can impact on the broader environment of which programme participants - and their organisations - are a part. In this instance, the evaluation was designed to capture information demonstrating:

- Improved understanding of capacity building
- Increased understanding of key challenges facing voluntary and community sector organisations
- Increased ability to apply this learning to promote organisational development.

5.4 The evaluation was carried out in two stages. Stage One took place immediately upon completion of the CBCB programme. Stage Two was carried out six months later to enable indicators of longer term change and impact to be captured.

6. Overview of approaches used in the two stages of the evaluation

6.1 Methods used in Stage One of the evaluation included face to face interviews and focus groups for all Group One and Two participants.

6.2 In addition, the external evaluation consultant attended the final session of Group Two as an independent observer.

6.3 Methods used in Stage Two of the evaluation included one to one telephone interviews and a questionnaire. All members of Group One and eight

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10 A more detailed overview of the evaluation, including areas of focus and materials used, is presented in Appendix Two.
members of Group Two participated in one to one telephone interviews. 60% of all participants (12 out of 20) completed a questionnaire.

7. **Key findings from the evaluation**

7.1 The key findings from both stages of the evaluation are set out under seven headings:

- Programme approach
- Programme content
- Programme delivery
- Key learning
- Impact on behaviour
- Impact on capacity building activities
- Progress against outcomes.

7.2 Participants in the evaluation are referred to as 'evaluation participants' or 'participants'. Where appropriate, distinctions are made between Group One members (CEOs) and Group Two members (Development Officers).

7.3 Distinctions are also made between findings generated during the first and second stages of the evaluation process. Findings from the questionnaire are presented using percentages (rounded up or down in the text to the nearest 5%).

8. **Programme approach**

Participants from both groups welcomed the pre-delivery needs analysis which had enabled the programme to be customised to their needs. They also appreciated the ‘empowerment model’ used by the programme (see 1.2 above), recognising that it marked a departure from traditional 'one size fits all toolkit' approaches:

“In the past capacity building has been condescending and focused on deficits within VCOs\(^{11}\) rather than strengths. There was an assumption that people had limited capacity and that they needed to be brought up to speed. But people have different types of capacity and the issue is how you focus them to meet challenges.”

A number of other benefits to the approach taken by the programme were identified. For example, the fact that the programme was ongoing - rather than a one-off event - was felt to be of value, as was the peer learning approach.

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\(^{11}\) Voluntary and community organisations
Finally, the majority of participants indicated that the programme approach had promoted collaboration and trust amongst programme participants and had enabled them to build on their own work experience (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The approach taken in the CBCB programme…</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoted collaboration and trust amongst the programme participants</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built upon my own work experiences</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The Value of the CBCB Programme Approach

8.2.1 Programme Content

65% of evaluation participants felt that the programme had been taught at a suitable level (see Table 2 below):

| Strongly agree that the capacity building programme was taught at a suitable level | 50% |
| Agree that the capacity building programme was taught at a suitable level | 17% |
| Neither agree nor disagree that the capacity building programme was taught at a suitable level | 17% |
| Disagree that the capacity building programme was taught at a suitable level | 8% |
| Strongly disagree that the capacity building programme was taught at a suitable level | 8% |

Table 2: The Level of Teaching and Learning on the Programme

The theoretical content of the programme was felt to be particularly beneficial with requests made by many for additional background reading. Some participants suggested that the programme could have built in more opportunities to implement the various tools / approaches introduced by the programme and that additional time might have been given to examining them in greater depth. Several Development Officers also felt that the programme should have incorporated opportunities to develop group work skills.

8.3 Programme Delivery

Four different teaching and learning methods were utilised by the IVAR trainers facilitating the programme: workshop activities; assignments; case-study activities; and the 'buddying' system.

8.3.1 Workshops

At Stage One of the evaluation, participants differed in their opinions of the workshops. CEOs were generally more positive, stating that the approach
taken by the trainers had been “participatory and structured” and “instructive [with] space for reflection”. In contrast, some Development Officers felt that the programme offered too few opportunities to reflect on their own practice. They stated that the programme facilitators had not taken sufficient time to understand the divergent experiences and skills of the group which led to a uniform ‘teaching’ style, not suitable for all. There was also some criticism of the dynamics within this group and the impact that this had had on the small group work undertaken during workshops.

In spite of these concerns, feedback from the questionnaire identifies that workshop activities were perceived to be of the highest quality, with 90% of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the quality of these activities was of a satisfactory level (see Table 3 below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop activities were of a satisfactory quality</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case-study activities were of a satisfactory quality</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment were of a satisfactory quality</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddying system were of a satisfactory quality</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Perceptions on the Quality of Teaching on the Programme

The external consultant also confirmed the quality of the workshops:

“It was striking how few of the issues [highlighted above] surfaced during the course of this session. Compared with many courses I have observed, the dynamics and climate of the group appeared positive. On the whole the final evaluation (held in plenary) was very positive, with only one participant voicing an alternative perspective. The group seemed relatively cohesive and positive. They claimed to have benefited from the programme and gained an insight into their own practices. In general dialogue was cheerful, and at times insightful. Participants appeared engaged, and drew on their own experience and were prepared to ask challenging and pertinent questions. They engaged positively in the case study, even though few had done any real preparation for this exercise. Presentations were clear, concise and appropriate, and the rest of the group listened attentively and asked relevant questions.”
8.3.2 Assignments

60% of evaluation participants felt that the quality of the assignments was satisfactory (see Table 3 above) although some did suggest that they could have been more structured with a greater practical focus.

8.3.3 Case study

65% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of the case-study activities was satisfactory (see table 3 above). Many enjoyed it, describing it as “a valuable learning aid” although several participants commented that better or more use could have been made of it.

8.3.4 Buddying system

The ‘buddying’ system was scored highly by questionnaire respondents, with 75% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the quality of this teaching method was satisfactory. This was confirmed by the interview findings in which participants from both groups described the benefit of the opportunity to share their experiences with others from similar backgrounds, suggesting that it helped to reduce tendencies towards a silo mentality: “you work in a little square that just gets smaller and smaller”. Group One CEO members in particular benefited from this approach, largely because of their similar backgrounds:

“Getting peer support from people that really understand the issues around competing priorities is invaluable…I have become part of a professional support network and this will have a beneficial impact on and increase the capacity of the sector as a whole.”

Stage Two of the evaluation demonstrated that, for a number of participants from each of the two groups, the buddying process was the most important element and had been of lasting value, leading one to comment: “I cannot describe the immense benefits of the peer support”.

Practical (and unanticipated) benefits of the buddying system included:

- The emergence of longer term professional support networks, leading in one case to the development of a formal partnership between three agencies which resulted in the submission of a £100k project proposal to the London Development Agency
- Access to ongoing practical support as a result of the networks that had emerged: “I am part of a new network of practitioners working in this area. I can call them and ask for advice if I am facing any problems or issues”
8.4 Participants' learning on the programme

Findings from the evaluation identify that the CBCB programme enabled the majority of participants to increase their working knowledge of the issues covered. For example:

- 90% reported an increased understanding of capacity building issues: “the programme gave me the opportunity to understand what the nature of capacity building issues are so that I can engage BME infrastructure in dialogue about building their own capacity; I have a deeper understanding of capacity building and the different models”
- 85% stated that the programme had led to an increased understanding of organisational governance, particularly “the issues around involving users in the governance process”
- 75% reported an increased understanding of organisational values and organisational development skills.

In addition, at least half the participants also reported an increased understanding of the following issues:

- Performance improvement (65%)
- Quality issues (60%)
- Strategic development skills (50%): “the most important learning was the process of strategic review and about how you involve staff”
- Organisational mission (50%).

However, a small number of Development Officers suggested that the learning had not been sufficiently in-depth and that a deeper, more theoretical understanding could have been offered by the programme.

8.5 Impact on behaviour

Participants generally - and Development Officers in particular - reported increased levels of confidence, especially valuable for support workers that provide capacity building support to other organisations. Many participants also gave examples of behaviour changes which had come about as a direct result of participation in the programme, particularly in the areas of collaboration, governance and strategic development:

8.5.1 Collaboration

- One CEO reported realising that meaningful partnership was more than having a shared agenda and should be underpinned by shared values which will enable difficult times to be overcome. This CEO became involved in a formal partnership with two other members of the group, which ultimately resulted in the development of a funding proposal
- Two other CEOs reported collaborating in a greater number of external networks and partnerships
• One Development Officer reported that he had encouraged some of the groups he was supporting to work more collaboratively, resulting in the development of a partnership project and joint funding proposal.

8.5.2 Governance

• One CEO felt able to tackle conflict with her chair which had been ongoing for a considerable amount of time
• Another Development Office reported that she had been able to help two newly constituted management committees consider whether they were focused on all aspects of their constitution by helping them to revisit their original aims and objectives
• One Development Officer reported using the “Total Activities Analysis” governance tool as a way of addressing conflict between trustees and staff within an organisation she supports.

8.5.3 Strategic development

• Following participation on the programme, one CEO completely restructured her management team, freeing herself up for greater engagement at a strategic level. She stated that the programme had had a major “impact on processes and structures”
• Another CEO had re-assessed her organisation’s involvement with mainstream service delivery to determine whether it actually benefited her organisation.

Furthermore, there was also encouraging evidence that the programme was also of significant benefit to the development workers within bassac and BTEG. Staff reported feeling more confident and skilled in relation to the challenge of meeting the support needs of their members and constituents.

8.6 Impact on capacity building activities

The positive impact of the programme on participants' subsequent capacity building activities was confirmed by the responses to the questionnaire. Participants overwhelmingly indicated that the programme had provided them with knowledge and tools that they had used to improve the quality of capacity building support which they are able to offer other organisations:

• 85% stated that they had been able to use the knowledge they had gained about collaborative working and strategic review in subsequent capacity building activities
• 75% stated that the capacity building strategies and techniques offered by the programme had been useful to them in subsequent capacity building activities
• 60% stated that the governance and performance improvement aspect of the programme had been useful in subsequent capacity building activities.
8.7 **Progress against outcomes**

The evaluation sought to identify whether participants had made any progress against a series of outcomes which were agreed with the funder. An overview of their responses is presented below:

8.7.1 **Outcome: A better understanding of their internal environments (in particular, mission, values and purpose)**

Half of the CEOs and the majority of the Development Officers reported that the programme had led to an increase in their understanding about their organisation's internal environment, with one CEO reporting that this was the biggest outcome:

>“Before, I felt cloudy about my organisation’s identity. The programme has helped me to develop a better understanding of where it’s at. It is helping me to develop the organisation more strategically and I have written a framework to capture this.”

Overall, participants stated that they now had a greater awareness of the way in which organisations work and the range of barriers and challenges that they face.

8.7.2 **Outcome: A better understanding of their external environments**

The majority of CEOs did not report that their awareness of the external environment had been increased by the programme, perhaps reflecting their more outward-facing roles. One CEO did state:

>“The programme has helped me become aware of shifts in the bigger picture and how these might influence and affect my organisation. It has highlighted the fact that there are so many changes that I need to be selective about what I get involved in as not everything is going to fit with the organisation. This has proved to be very useful regarding strategic planning and positioning our organisation politically.”

In contrast, the majority of Development Officers reported that involvement in the programme had increased their understanding of the broader context within which the sector operates and the way in which this affects capacity building:

>“It was good to understand the whole policy context, the Cross-Cutting Review, the reform agenda, public sector delivery. Fabulous! I didn’t know a lot of that.”

>“Definitely, it helped me to understand basic things like ChangeUp and how things work in the government and the relationship between the government and the third sector generally.”
This area of the programme was so highly valued by Group Two participants that several suggested that it would have been helpful to have spent even more time exploring the impact of the environment and the implications of changing public policy for the sector.

8.7.3 **Outcome: Increased confidence and ability in managing their environments**

The majority of participants reported that the programme had given them increased confidence and ability to manage their environments:

“I know what I know and this has given me more confidence and helped me to forgive myself for my inadequacies. The programme has also given me the space to sit back and think more about internal mechanisms and conflicts between the internal and external worlds. I now feel more confident in pushing through the planning process and managing organisational change.”

Some of the Development Officers stated that their confidence had increased as a result of their enhanced understanding about issues affecting VCOs and the fact that they could use the knowledge and materials from the programme as a reference in their own work. In contrast, the increased levels of confidence and ability amongst the CEOs was attributed to the buddying system, which helped to reduce isolation, and enabled participants to realise that other people are grappling with the same issues.

One CEO even reported that there had been a “domino effect” of increased confidence within her organisation:

“The project managers are now more confident as well. Before, they were good at frontline delivery but not overall conceptual management. Now they understand the difference...so there is an edge to the organisation which will make a difference now that the local authority is moving from grant aid to commissioning”.

8.7.4 **Outcome: New skills and approaches for organisational problem-solving and improvisation**

Several evaluation participants identified changed approaches to problem solving and increased levels of improvisation. One Development Officer reported using the “Total Activities Analysis” governance tool with a number of the groups that she supports which “was extremely helpful”. Another commented on the approach to strategic review introduced by the programme: “it was very key for me. It demonstrated how important it is to use tools to work with groups”.

One CEO commented that the programme:

“Helped me to recognise problems that I didn’t even realise the organisation was experiencing; I’m now looking for deeper causes rather than sticking a plaster on a bursting dam. Since participating in the programme, work is no longer sporadic and hit and miss. I’m now trying to develop systems and structures and delegate more appropriately. And it’s contributing to actual organisational changes, for example I’ve written a strategic plan which includes meaningful performance indicators for the first time.”

8.7.5 Outcome: The ability to develop innovative and sustainable responses to the challenges they face

A number of participants identified innovations they had adopted as a result of participating in the programme. One CEO reported that she was now marketing her organisation in new ways (for example, hiring it out to film companies) that were enabling her to generate additional - unrestricted - income streams.

There was also evidence of more sustainable responses. For example, one CEO commented that the programme helped her to:

“Learn the value of solid systems - right across the board in terms of governance, strategy, staff support and appraisals. The organisation had developed ad hoc like a carbuncle, taking on projects without being clear about the impact on the organisation as a whole. We need to look now at what’s necessary for us instead of being dictated to by funders.”

A number of Development Officers stated that they had been able to offer more meaningful - and sustainable - support to organisations as a result of their increased understanding. One Development Officer was able to overcome resistance to strategic planning by some of the groups she supported.

“They just weren't interested and were resistant to what could be done. Remembering the programme helped me to step back and ask about their concerns. Some of the worries they brought up had actually been raised during the programme and I was able to relate to that and explain what was going on.”

Another Development Officer reported that she had been able to cascade the learning on strategic review to her colleagues. This had led to an improved understanding of this process and resulted in more effective support to frontline organisations:

“If we can sustain that learning and embed it, it will be cascaded to the groups that we work with. It should enable a more innovative response to current challenges, commissioning for example.”
8.7.6 **Outcome: The potential to make an increased organisational contribution to the broader development of voluntary action and civil society.**

One CEO commented that the programme had led her to create fundamental change in her organisation designed to enable her to engage more effectively with some of the key strategic issues facing the sector:

“The programme has helped me to prioritise strategic issues, carry out internal restructuring and to remove myself from the day to day operations, ensuring that I get out or bring someone in at least once a week. In doing this, I’ve been able to realise the importance of LAAs\(^{12}\) and to recognise that I need to get more involved in the process.”

Several participants indicated that since taking part in the programme they had become involved in the governance of a range of other organisations, including local and regional infrastructure bodies and public bodies, such as schools. Some participants also attributed the subsequent development of various funding applications to their participation on the programme. They also stated that they felt more able to support the groups with whom they work on issues such as more effective governance and volunteer management.

9. **Summary of the evaluation**

9.1 The findings from the evaluation were generally very positive and the pilot CBCB programme can be seen to have benefited the 20 individual participants, their organisations and, in turn, their various beneficiaries and stakeholders.

9.2 Overall, participants indicated that the programme had enabled them to improve their knowledge of relevant issues, build on their work experience and improve the quality of their capacity building work. The majority of participants identified a range of benefits and would recommend the programme to colleagues.

One CEO stated that:

“The benefits are helping you to understand your environment; helping you to see beyond your immediate role within the organisation; helping you to look at the external environment and how you operate within that as an organisation; helping you to look at interactions with partners and users (something highlighted particularly by the case study).”

And a Development Officer commented:

“The programme gives time for reflection and opens your mind to the overarching theoretical issues and policy drivers affecting the sector. We cannot deliver change without understanding these issues.”

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\(^{12}\) Local Area Agreements
9.3 Examples of some of the positive outcomes arising from the programme include:

- Enhanced strategic development and management of participants' organisations, which - in one case - resulted in a total restructuring intended to enable the CEO to operate more strategically
- Development Officers providing more effective capacity building support to frontline organisations across a range of issues, including governance, strategic review and collaborative working
- The development of ongoing professional support networks arising from the buddying system
- Evidence that the CEOs had increased the number and quality of strategic collaborations with which they were engaged
- Development Officers substantially improving their understanding of the public policy context within which voluntary and community sector organisations are operating, enabling them to provide a more strategic service to the organisations they support
- Evidence that the learning from the programme had been cascaded within participants' organisations, thus increasing the potential long-term impact of the programme.

9.4 Alongside this, the evaluation suggests that future capacity building programmes could be improved by attention to the following:

- Ensuring that the assignments and buddying system are better structured so that participants have a better understanding of what activities and outcomes are required.
- Providing opportunities for participants to test out and use the capacity building approaches and tools introduced by the programme
- Creating opportunities for Development Officers, in particular, to develop the competencies and skills required for them to deliver more effective capacity building support.

9.5 The final part of the report now goes on to consider the implications of these issues for future capacity building programmes.
Part Three: Implications for the Future

10.1 In this final part of the report, we draw on the challenges and key learning to have emerged from the pilot CBCB programme to consider issues related to the future of this model of capacity building.

10.2 The core principles, values and approach adopted by the CBCB programme have been largely affirmed by the pilot and should continue to inform any future developments.

10.3 There is also support for retaining four of the key themes currently addressed by the programme: capacity building, governance, strategic review and collaboration. Following discussion between the CBCB partners group and the external evaluation consultant, it is suggested that ‘quality and performance’ are integrated as an overarching theme for the programme. It should be noted that the emphasis on these themes is designed to enable participants to tackle key organisational stress points and equip them with problem solving tools to address them. It is intended that the development of skills and competencies in these key areas can be used by participants in a range of organisational situations.

As new organisational challenges emerge and new findings become available from IVAR’s ongoing programme of action research (for example, forthcoming work on ‘advocacy’), the programme themes may need to be further modified.

10.4 A number of changes have been proposed to address some of the challenges identified during the development and delivery of the pilot programme and respond to the evaluation feedback received from participants:

- Partnership management
- Recruitment
- Programme content and delivery.

10.5 Partnership management

Partnership agreements need to be established between partners so that all agencies are clear about roles, expectations and decision-making procedures.
10.6 Recruitment

Face to face recruitment should continue but needs to be better targeted so that there is greater complementarity among the participants. Feedback from the CBCB pilot confirms that a group made up of participants at a similar stage in their careers or doing similar jobs (for example small groups support workers) are likely to generate more insight into their own practice and be more conducive to “deep” learning. Recruitment processes therefore need to be based on more explicit criteria in order that candidates can be differentiated; such criteria might include:

- Role and tasks performed
- Types of organisations supported
- Degree of understanding about capacity building
- Understanding about the programme
- Individual and organisational expectations.

The process of pre-delivery needs analysis has proved to be very useful, providing insights which enhance the subsequent design and delivery of the programme, as well as a baseline by which the impact of the programme can be evaluated.

10.7 Programme content and delivery

10.7.1 Elements of the programme

Key elements of the programme - such as the buddying system, case study approach and homework - should be retained. However, to improve their effectiveness, the requirements of the programme should be more clearly defined. For example, specific tasks should be identified for buddies to complete and participants need to be subject to increased accountability for the completion of key tasks such as homework, reading etc.

10.7.2 Balancing the Theoretical and the Practical

In response to participants’ desire for increased theoretical content as well as practical opportunities for implementation of the tools presented on the programme, it is suggested that the programme might be extended so that each theme is covered over two days, rather than one as was the case in the pilot. The first day could be used to focus on key theoretical issues, supported by appropriate background reading. The second day might then be used to explore the underlying rationale and implementation of the practical tools and models developed by IVAR in order that participants can start the process of developing the skills and competencies required to apply them.
10.7.3 Process Issues

In recognition that the programme may have been overly-weighted to delivering substantive content and knowledge at the expense of more personal process issues, it is proposed that future programmes should also focus on the development of skills required for the actual delivery of capacity building. As the external evaluation consultant noted during his observation session:

“Possibly more could have been done early in the course to highlight the role of the individual in capacity building. Time could have been spent on increasing greater personal self-awareness and highlighting the competencies that capacity builders need to be effective when working with communities and individuals (everything from mentoring to conflict resolution to networking to emotional intelligence). In practice most capacity builders are struggling to cope with their workload, and want to learn “tricks or the trade” to make their lives easier or become more “streetwise” so that they deliver something of use to the communities they work with. Some of these tricks may not always be “best practice” but they get the job done.”

10.7.4 Follow Up

Finally, further to suggestions by a number of participants, it is also suggested that future programmes be augmented with two forms of follow up support. In the first instance, participation on the programme could be accompanied by an entitlement to a finite amount of one-to-one organisational development support from IVAR personnel. This support could be used by participants in a variety of ways. For example, helping them to implement new tools and approaches to capacity building, either within their own organisations or those organisations that they support.

Second, participation on the programme could entitle ‘alumni’ to attend specifically targeted bi-annual – possibly themed – seminars / workshops / conferences. These would be intended to impart the latest knowledge on capacity building theory and practice and also the latest developments in public policy and its impact on the sector. Such events would also enable alumni to continue the networking that is so clearly a major (and unanticipated) benefit arising from the programme.