

DEEP POVERTY INITIATIVE

Capacity Building Action Guide



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

The lack of money creates challenges for individuals and families and may be a source of conflict and tension that can have adverse effects on their ability to receive services.¹ The Deep Poverty Initiative sees the opportunity to make services more accessible to those experiencing income insecurity through bolstering organizations' capacities. This document offers a step-by-step guide to improving the accessibility of organizations and their capacities to serve individuals experiencing income insecurity.

Capacity Building

Organizational capacity refers to an organization's "ability to make a difference over time and across different issues."² **Capacity building** refers to a "process to increase the skills, infrastructure, and resources of individuals, organizations."³ In other words, capacity building is a process that promotes the development of capacity and enables change to occur so that the organization can better serve the community. Not all capacity building will look the same. The initial capacity of organizations, their support for change, and the amount of resources available to them to enable change will vary.⁴ It is also possible for an organization to have capacity in one area, but not in another. To enable change, capacity building should be a *collaborative process* between the psychologist and the organization.

Organizational Culture and Climate

Every setting (e.g., organizations, schools, and hospitals) has its own culture and climate that can impact how individuals feel and interact within that space.⁵ An organization's culture and climate can benefit employees, the outcomes of individuals they work with,⁶ and even help build the social capital of the organization.⁷ The attitudes of and interactions between workers, individuals receiving services, and other stakeholders within an organization shape that organization's culture and climate⁸ – this means that culture and climate can be impacted by unconscious biases⁹ about those living in deep poverty. Yet, psychologists can work with organizations to reduce biases and promote a positive, trusting culture and climate.

Lending Your Expertise

Because of their knowledge and skills, psychologists are uniquely situated to helping organizations address biases and build their capacity to better serve individuals living in deep poverty. Listed below

are a few ways psychologists can support organizations, which can help to guide your collaborative efforts:

- **Cultural Competence¹⁰**

- Orient staff to consider their power and privilege, as well as the power dynamic between them and the individuals they serve.
- Offer to conduct a multicultural organizational consultation.¹¹
- Share the components of cultural competence¹² with staff and work with them to develop those competencies.

- **Problem Identification**

- Offer to conduct a needs assessment¹³ and assist with asset mapping. See the checklist at the end of this document for ideas on what to include in your needs assessment.
- Work with stakeholders to update or create theory of change or logic models for the organization.
- Create a community profile.¹⁴
- Identify organizational practices that could prevent individuals living in deep poverty from receiving services. For instance, whether an organization has stipulations¹ in place that must be met before services can be rendered.

- **Strategy Development and Implementation**

- Create a capacity building logic model.
- Update or create training manuals and other organizational documents to be more inclusive toward individuals living in deep poverty.
- Provide skill training sessions for staff and assess staffs' skills before and after the training occurs. Examples of training topics could include the use of simple, clear language when communicating with individuals who receive services,¹ how to check document readability,¹⁵ and the importance of using person-first language.^{16,17}
- Identify variables for data collection and suggest how deep poverty and related variables could be meaningfully used in analyses.
- Review and optimize data collection and storage methods.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Quality Assurance**

- Evaluate^{18, 19} the organization or one of their programs.
- Provide statistical support by analyzing data and interpreting results.
- Assist with grant proposals.
- Act as an ongoing consultant to help monitor and sustain the organization's capacity.

Needs Assessment Checklist

	Improve nt needed?	Policy exists?
Staff Training and Behavior		
Staff are discouraged from using deficit-based language when speaking with or about individuals receiving services	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals are treated as experts (e.g., organization makes decisions with clients rather than for them)	Y / N	Y / N
Intentional language is used to refer to individuals receiving services (e.g., clients, members, customers) and staff (e.g., family advocates)	Y / N	Y / N
Staff are educated about the unique and nuanced experiences of living without employment, experiencing homelessness, or lacking a living wage	Y / N	Y / N
Staff have received cultural competency training	Y / N	Y / N
Staff are aware of local programs/services that individuals would benefit from	Y / N	Y / N
Organizational Practices		
Data on individuals' income and employment are collected and used	Y / N	Y / N
Organization criteria (e.g., program eligibility) are objective	Y / N	Y / N
The application/onboarding process is streamlined to reduce the collection of duplicate and unnecessary information	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals are assisted when completing the entry application/onboarding process	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals are able to receive services without any stipulations placed on them (e.g., no forced bundling)	Y / N	Y / N
Appointments outside of the typical 9-5, Monday through Friday work week are offered to individuals	Y / N	Y / N
Walk-ins are accepted	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals have the option to meet with staff at a location most convenient for them	Y / N	Y / N
Penalties for late arrivals or missed deadlines are not harsh	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals are not charged for program services OR payment for services is based on financial need (e.g., sliding scale payment)	Y / N	Y / N
Individuals can choose how they will receive communication from staff (e.g., text, phone call, email)	Y / N	Y / N
A grace period for program supports is provided to individuals as they transition out of the program/organization	Y / N	Y / N
Collaboration		
Transportation is provided to individuals by the organization or through a partnership with another organization	Y / N	Y / N
Wrap-around services are provided to individuals through this organization OR through a partnership with other organizations	Y / N	Y / N
Staff are encouraged to let individuals know about local programs/services that individuals would benefit from	Y / N	Y / N

This document is a product of the American Psychological Association Deep Poverty Initiative Working Group.

- 1 Ideas42: http://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/I42_PovertyWhitePaper_Digital_FINAL-1.pdf
- 2 <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/model-for-community-change-and-improvement/building-capacity/main>
- 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/programs/capacitybuilding/index.html>
- 4 Millesen, J. L., Carman, J. G., & Bies, A. L. (2010). Why engage? Understanding the incentive to build nonprofit capacity. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 21, 5-20. doi: 10.1002/nml.2000
- 5 Silver Wolf, Dulmus, Maguin, & Cristalli (2014). Do organizational culture and climate matter for successful client outcomes? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 24(6), 670-675. doi: 10.1177/1049731513506616
- 6 Williams, N. J., & Glisson, C. (2013). Reducing turnover is not enough: The need for proficient organizational cultures to support positive youth outcomes in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 1871-1877. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.09.002>
- 7 Schneider, J. A. (2009). Organizational social capital and nonprofits. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(4), 643-662. doi: 10.1177/0899764009333956
- 8 Keyton, J. (2014). Communication, organizational culture, and organizational climate. In B. Schneider & K. M. Barbera (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational climate and culture* (pp. 118-135). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- 9 See issue brief on biases
- 10 Additional suggested reading: Botcheva, L., Shih, J., & Huffman, L. C. (2009). Emphasizing cultural competence in evaluation: A process-oriented approach. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 30(2), 176-188. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1098214009334363>
- 11 Sue, D. W. (2008). Multicultural organizational consultation: A social justice perspective. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60, 157-169. doi: 10.1037/0736-9735.60.2.157
- 12 Sue, D. W. (2001). Multidimensional facets of cultural competence. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 29, 790-821.
- 13 <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/develop-a-plan/main>
- 14 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTTOPPSISOU/Resources/1424002-1185304794278/4026035-1185375653056/4028835-1185375678936/2_Community_profile.pdf
- 15 <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2>
- 16 <https://apastyle.apa.org/manual/related/nonhandicapping-language>
- 17 Begun, A. L. (2016). Considering the language we use: Well worth the effort. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 16, 332-336. doi: 10.1080/1533256X.2016.1201372
- 18 Stevahn, L., King, J. A., Ghore, G., & Minnema, J. (2005). Establishing essential competencies for program evaluators. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26, 43-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214004273180>
- 19 Kelly, C. M., LaRose, J., & Scharff, D. P. (2014). A method for building evaluation competency among community-based organizations. *Health Promotion Practice*, 15, 431-437. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1524839913496427>