

Building NGOs - Building Communities

Gary Moore

1. Why having effective non-government organisations is a key ingredient of stronger communities, and better community well-being?
2. What are the capacities of non government organisations, which are most under pressure, and/or most need development and support?
3. What are some of the responses, already being taken by non-government organisations themselves?
4. What are the actions, which the NSW Government is taking, or could examine?

NGO Capacities

What to Focus On

Capacity is "the total of all the resources of Canadian society engaged in by the voluntary sector." – Canadian Working Together report, August 1999.

Joint *Canadian Government/NGO sector Round Table* proposes four dimensions of capacity:

- financial
- human resources
- knowledge
- structural

US Community Development Corporations (CDCs) identify 5 categories of capacity (1998):

- resource
- organisational
- networking
- programmatic
- political

Some Key Concerns

From *Success Works mid-2000 consultations* with State Government human services departments and NGOs, the following were identified as key capacity issues for NGOs:

- information technology infrastructure, skills development and maintenance;
- coping with new contracting, tendering and performance management requirements of government funders;
- lack of outcomes in private sector and community revenue raising;
- changing and increasing governance responsibilities and management roles;

- structural changes to organisations, to achieve greater scale and efficiencies;
- demands for higher quality and more complex human resources management.
- rising and unavoidable fixed costs
- ability to adapt to rapid government policy and program changes

Why are effective NGOs essential for strong communities?

- Provide opportunities for citizen participation
- Reflect a level of social capital
- Deliver critical services
- Take risks and innovate
- Help improve living standards, particularly of disadvantaged groups
- Help to elevate social development objectives next to economic and environmental ones
- Create, and engage in public policy debates
- Skill and support community leaders
- Provide an interface for Government, business and other interests

Current NGO capacity building activities initiated by NGOs

Information Technology

- Websites (organisational and specific topic) and website development courses
- Databases on sector services and broader human services
- Regionally based intranets and interactive facilities between NGOs
- Networked e-commerce facilities
- Computer use skills training programs
- Computer hardware and software donation schemes

Fundraising and financial management

- Specific fundraising strategies, units and programs (generally large NGOs)
- Local pro bono accounting and auditing services
- Community enterprise/social entrepreneurial projects
- Community sector bank proposal
- Specific business/community partnerships
- Employee Give as you earn schemes

Management support and organisational development

- Peak agencies and other specialist training and publications
- Regional management training and support units
- Management support online
- Personal coaching
- Local pro bono consultancy
- Contracting and tendering guides, training and support services

Managing industry change

- Network/consortium building projects among small to medium sized NGOs
- Subcontracting/franchising services
- Co locations, and "back office" integration of functions;
- Third party contracting of administrative support
- Amalgamations
- "Partnership" training

New Governance skills

- Peak agencies and other providers advice and short courses/publications
- Locally based action research learning clusters
- Local pro bono services
- Internet based packages and self directed training

What is the NSW Government doing?

- Funding peak and regional NGO bodies to provide governance, management and funding advice, information and training
- Funding specific projects to tackle NGO capacity needs, especially community management issues
- Developing a clearer, and more beneficial policy on Government accommodation for community purposes
- Implementing a major Capacity Building for NGOs Project
- Implementing the Better Service Delivery Program, which includes a major component for NGO IT infrastructure, training and support
- Providing more flexible and expanded community management accredited courses through TAFE
- Assisting the establishment of Management Support On Line

What other initiatives might be examined?

- A statewide coverage of relevant private sector pro-bono specialist services
- Promotion of greater contributions by business to small to medium sized NGOs in the communities in which they operate
- Facilitation assistance of proposals such as the community sector bank and personal coaching schemes for NGO managers
- Research into changes to the fixed costs of NGOs
- Consultation about, and implementation of, reforms to NGO funding practices, through the review of grants administration process
- Conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the State Government and the NGO sector, covering roles, responsibilities and relationships.

Gary Moore

Gary is currently the Project Director for the Strengthening Local Communities Strategy in the NSW Premier's Department.

From September 1995 until March 2001, Gary was Director of NCOSS. Prior to joining NCOSS Gary worked as a principal policy officer in the Social Policy Branch of the NSW Cabinet Office and from 1992 to early 1995, as Project Manager in the former NSW Social Policy Directorate.

During the 1980s, Gary worked extensively in developing and managing employment, training and enterprise development programs for the State Government. He started his working life in the community sector, as a CYSS Project Officer.

One of Gary's current responsibilities is to oversee the Premier's Department Capacity Building for NGOs Project.