Root Change's Organizational Capacity Assessment

Facilitator's Handbook

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1. THE ORIGINS OF OCA

For more than a decade, members of the Root Change team have been pioneering and refining organizational capacity assessment processes to better engage staff and stakeholders in customizing and using tools that can help to measure the unique capacities of their organization and guide future development.

The OCA methodology developed out of the team's field experience in South Africa and Ethiopia as well as collaborative work with the Education Development Center (EDC) in the 1990s. Together, Root Change's Evan Bloom and Beryl Levinger of EDC, with funding from USAID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation developed the pre-cursor to OCA, the Discussion-Oriented Organizational Self-Assessment (DOSA). The breakthrough of this approach was its ability to help NGOs identify perceived organizational strengths and weaknesses, explore differences of opinion regarding these perceptions, and create consensus around future organizational capacity development activities. The methodology also enabled NGOs to assess change over time, thereby tracking the degree to which such capacity building activities contribute to significant changes and increased capacity; and to benchmark their individual organizational results against a peer group or "cohort" of organizations. The OCA methodology takes the premise of DOSA and adds participatory, tailored tool design to ensure the tool's relevance to participating organizations, and action planning to guide implementation of priority capacity building efforts.

The Root Change team and Root Change peer-partners have implemented the OCA methodology with local and international NGOs, CBOs and municipal governments in over 30 countries around the world. Through these programs, over 150 master facilitators have been trained in the OCA methodology.

2. BASIC OCA CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS OCA?

Root Change's organizational capacity assessment (OCA) methodology is a comprehensive and highly participatory approach to achieving organizational change, learning and development. OCA supports organizations to measure their performance, prioritize organizational challenges, and implement improvement strategies. Key activities that comprise OCA are:

- *Participatory tool design* that empowers organizations to define the critical success factors that influence their performance, and to identify relevant indicators for evaluating their competency.
- *Guided self-assessment* that leads employees, board members, and constituents through structured discussions followed by individual scoring on a series of rigorous performance indicators.
- *Data-guided action planning* that provides organizations with an opportunity to interpret the self-assessment data and set change strategies most appropriate to their environment.
- *Reassessment for continual learning* that allows organizations to monitor change, track the effectiveness of their capacity-building efforts, and integrate new learning as their needs change and capabilities increase.

At the core of OCA is a participant-designed assessment tool that is broken into key organizational capacity areas (such as Human Resource Management or Public Relations). Each capacity area contains a number of indicators, or "statements of excellence" that describe high-performance in that area. As an organizational development process, NGOs use OCA to build capacity by bringing staff together for open exchange to foster learning and growth. Through extensive dialogue, OCA participants both identify divergent viewpoints that may exist and create consensus around future organizational capacity development activities. With agreed-upon plans in place, organizations have an opportunity to systematically implement and track organizational change.

Why Assess?

- To promote organizational learning or accountability
- To maximize the effectiveness and impact of programs or services
- To complement strategic planning processes
- To increase organizational efficiency

The OCA methodology can be used by individual organizations, or even teams within an organization, but is particularly suited to be used with groups or *cohorts* of peer NGOs from the same geographic or sectoral "community." In this approach, the organizations within the cohort work together to define the common standards against which each will be assessed. Each organization then assesses its own organizational capacity independently. Following the

assessment, aggregated results can be shared anonymously at a workshop of cohort leaders, or electronically such as via a website. Each organization's results can be "benchmarked" against the cohort results, indicating where there are potential resources and experience-sharing opportunities within the group, as well as where there are common areas of need. The cohort becomes a support and learning community – exchanging experiences, challenges, successes and resources.

OCA PRINCIPLES

The OCA methodology was developed around and models five core principles. The values both implicit and explicit to the OCA methodology and techniques include participation, customization, user ownership, communication, and continuous learning.

Participation

Participation is key to the success of all stages of OCA. During OCA tool design, stakeholders themselves determine the core capabilities to be investigated and assessed. During tool administration, a representative team of staff (if not all staff) discusses issues related to, and score their performance in, each of the areas of capability identified. During results analysis and action planning sessions, the staff takes responsibility for interpreting and giving meaning to the assessment data, developing improvement plans, and monitoring organizational change.

Customization

An OCA tool is custom designed for and by each organization or group of organizations, reflecting their specific reality. This ensures that areas measured are those that are most relevant to the environment and experience of the NGO sector and, therefore, most likely to leverage enhanced performance. Additionally, the data generated, both quantitative and qualitative, is varied and flexible and can be reported in ways that suit the specific needs of the users.

User ownership

The high degree of participation of organizations' staff and customization of the tool contributes to an increased sense of ownership and empowerment within organizations using this methodology. This typically leads to greater application of learning gleaned from the assessment process and results.

Communication

OCA is an excellent means of building bridges of communication and understanding both within and between organizations. Collaborative design of OCA tools by groups of similar organizations and sharing of organizational assessment results among peer organizations forms a foundation for networking and partnership and adds perspective to comparative analyses. Internally, the structured discussion facilitated among staff members representing all managerial levels and functional areas of the organization helps to bring out relevant issues and build consensus.

Continuous Learning

The OCA methodology reflects the cyclical nature of organizational development and the need to continuously revisit assessment results and action plans to make them a living part of the organization's change strategy. The simple process of self-examination often provides a significant catalyst for change, allowing organizations to identify solutions for immediate and positive results. Because OCA can be re-administered periodically, organizations are able to track their progress in achieving goals, judge the value of capacity strengthening inputs and results, and adjust their action plans accordingly.

HOW OCA IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TOOLS

Organizational assessments come in many forms, from standardized checklists that help organizations gauge success with certain tasks and functions, to highly customized approaches. Root Change's OCA is customized, incorporating a range of techniques and concepts that make it unique in the world of organizational assessment:

1. Tool *users* and tool *designers* are one and the same. Because participants define the tool structure and develop indicators themselves, the language and content is relevant and easily understood, thus bolstering both the reliability and validity of the tool. This level of participation also ensures organizational ownership of the tool and assessment outcomes, and greater commitment to the process overall.

2. Structured *discussion activities* led by a trained facilitator marry the precision of a survey instrument with the richness of a focus group discussion. This dialogue among staff around each capacity area brings important information to the surface in a way that a survey alone could not do. It adds depth to the discussion content and rigor to the process.

3. The measurement of organizational *consensus* helps to triangulate against bias and refine the organizational diagnosis. By measuring the diversity of opinion among staff, steps can be taken that help an organization better understand the range of viewpoints that exist and identify appropriate capacity building activities.

4. When used at the cohort level, participants can compare performance across organizations. The cohort concept enables OCA users to benchmark their organization's performance against a wider group of peer organizations in order to better understand the reality of their individual organization's situation and accelerate progress toward achieving goals. The creation of a cohort is intended to foster a network of organizations that can lend support to one another as they pursue their individual change efforts and better understand the experience and resources of their "community" or peer group.

3. OCA'S THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Root Change's OCA methodology draws upon a rich tradition of applied research as well as a growing body of organizational assessment tools that have been tested in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Many assessment instruments have been developed from theories of individual, group and organizational behavior. They include self assessment tools for leadership style, interpersonal needs, personality orientation, and management style.[1]

The foundation for these organizational assessment tools can be viewed from two separate but related perspectives. The first is philosophical: during the late 1950s and 1960s, the basic assumptions of organizational development were largely influenced by a philosophy about people, work, organizations, and change. This philosophy is sometimes referred to as the Human Resources School. Two thought-leaders that shaped this school of thought include Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg [2]. These psychologists by training championed a new view of people and how they change that stood in contrast to the pessimistic assumptions of behavioralists like B.F. Skinner and Sigmund Freud. Maslow and Herzberg's assumptions about the learning process and the learners themselves had an important imRoot Change on the evolution of adult learning principles, coaching, self-direction and the potential of untapped human resources. These theories of human behavior have largely shaped modern organizational development thinking and practice.

The second perspective is methodological. The techniques that form the theoretical basis of organizational assessment were developed by applied social scientists in the early 20th century. This early survey research was later refined by Rensis Likert, who between 1950 and 1970, refined the use of written survey questionnaires to collect information about an organization and its problems, and to stimulate joint planning. The vast majority of today's organizational assessment tools are built on the foundation of Likert's pioneering survey testing.

Root Change's OCA methodology marries the Human Resources School's philosophy about perception, judgment, attitudes and empowerment, with the methodological rigor of Rensis Likert's survey techniques. In developing OCA, Root Change's intent – along with co-developer EDC – was to create a rigorous methodology for capacity assessment that would go beyond traditional models to provide diagnostic information to participating organizations, and allow confident inferences or conclusions about appropriate capacity building practices.

A number of other theories and models have influenced the development and practice of OCA. These include:

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[1] Many of these methods are reviewed in a classic book by J. W. Pfieffer called "Instrumentation in Human Relations Training". A more contemporary book on the subject is called "Practicing Organization Development" by William Rothwell.

[2] American psychologist Abraham Maslow is best known for his theory of human motivation, which led to a therapeutic technique known as self-actualization. Together Maslow and another psychologist Frederick Herzberg developed several theories related to work factors and employee motivation.

- *The Assumptions-Perceptions-Conclusions-Feelings-Behavior (APCFB) model*[3] – This model helps us understand why people and organizations act the way they do. *Assumptions* affect the *perceptions* that people have. Those perceptions affect their *conclusions*. And those conclusions prompt *feelings*. Ultimately, in an organization, those feelings drive *behavior*. OCA has been developed to investigate this causal pathway within an organization, which is sometimes referred to as a "ladder of inference," and integrate it into the assessment and organizational learning process. Several aspects of OCA help organizations to analyze the assumptions, expectations, beliefs and values that underlie and affect staff perceptions of performance.

- *Critical Incidents* – The literature on information-processing raises questions about the validity of retrospection and self-analysis, pointing out the biases that underlie individual judgments about performance. In order to correct for the inherent bias of self-assessment teams, OCA applies a critical incidents framework that involves the use of "discussion anchors." Discussion anchors are open-ended questions about time-specified data and closely defined events. Facilitators work within an objective framework to lead participants through objective fact-seeking to analytical reflection. Fact-seeking is supported by a wide variety of OCA analytical brainstorming, mapping, priority ranking and direction-setting tools.

- *Objective-Reflective-Interpretive-Decisional (ORID)*[4] – ORID traces the processing of information – from the time we observe something, through our immediate and/or instinctual reaction, to our inquisitive search for more information, to a decision. This theory is relevant to the facilitation of the assessment day's alternating focus group discussion and scoring process. Rather than scoring the OCA tool in isolation, team members engage in discussion around perceptions and experience of each capacity area. The role of the facilitator is to *encourage dissonance* or different opinions during the discussion period. *Before* the group arrives at the decisional state, the facilitator guides the team members to each mark their individual score sheets. Theoretically, this helps balance against individual biases, providing each individual with information from colleagues that serves to prevent reactional scoring, and lends greater reliability to OCA results. This theoretical underpinning underscores the value of a trained facilitator in the full OCA process. (*See the ORID section, p15, for more detail).*

- *Capacity and Consensus* – Unlike other assessment tools, during the OCA process key staff within the organization are involved in measuring and discussing two dimensions of organizational performance:

    1. <u>Capacity</u> – Perceptions held by staff members concerning the organization's capabilities, skills, and competence in relation to core capacity areas (i.e., Vision & Mission, Human Resource Management,

[3] Related to the Rational Emotive Behavior Model, advanced by Albert Ellis, Robert Harper and other "rational emotive" researchers.

[4] From The Institute of Cultural Affairs, Technology of Participation (ToP).

etc.). Perception involves all the ways of becoming aware of things, people, events, or positions.

2. Consensus – The degree to which members of the assessment team agree on their perceptions about specific areas of core capacity.

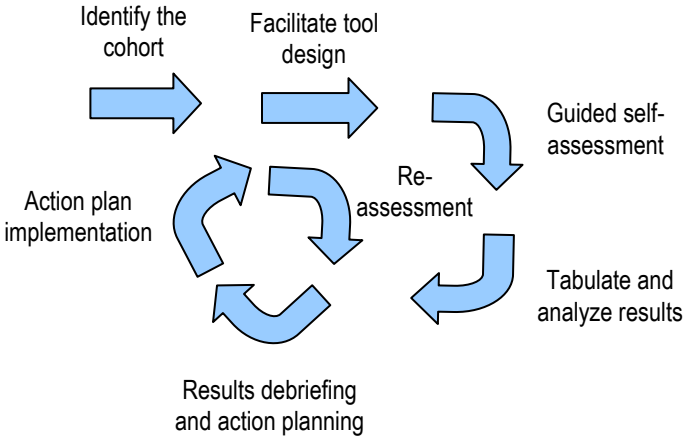
The capacity and consensus measurements enable us to observe specific differences within and across organizations. Further they enable staff and leadership to cope with these differences more constructively. The consensus lens also provides an additional safeguard against bias by capturing divergence of opinion among staff regarding performance in each capacity area. The use of consensus and capacity measures underscores a key OCA principle: *meaningful organizational development occurs at the intersection of two processes – identifying perceived organizational strengths and weaknesses and exploring differences of opinion regarding these perceptions.* In other words, organizations are really challenged to grow and learn when leadership and staff are able to discuss and debate issues and experience. The OCA framework encourages prioritization of issues and reaching consensus about improvement strategies, providing invaluable direction for that growth.

4. FACILITATING OCA

The application of Root Change's methodology is guided at each step by a trained OCA facilitator. The role of the facilitator in the overall process is to bring the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of organization members out in the open for reflection and learning. The facilitator is also key in supporting the group to generate diverse ideas and, at other points in the process, guiding the group toward consensus. In order to fulfill these roles, the facilitator must utilize techniques that encourage full participation and help staff and leadership to do their best thinking.

While the success of OCA hinges on a number of critical factors, such as organizational commitment to assessment and the inclusion of appropriate staff/constituents in the process, the level of skill of the facilitator can greatly influence the outcomes of OCA. Thus, it is important that facilitators are well-trained in the key aspects of the methodology, have the ability to effectively manage the group process and have a deep understanding of the context in which participating organizations are operating.

The following diagram highlights key steps in the process that require facilitator guidance:



STEP 1: DEFINING the COHORT of ORGANIZATIONS

The first step in the OCA process is to determine who will participate. Will more than one organization be assessed? If so, it is important to ensure that all participating organizations understand the process, are fully committed, and share a basic level of similarity with the other cohort members. Ideally the OCA process would involve a self-selected group of NGOs that represent a geographic or sectoral "community." These organizations should share an interest in identifying standards of practice, engaging in rigorous self-assessment and be open to sharing results with peers, with a view towards moving their sector forward.

Participation in the full OCA process is time consuming. Organizations that wish to participate must be prepared to invest the time in design, implementation and follow up. Facilitators might encourage participating organizations to identify an "OCA coordinator" to take responsibility for maintaining open and regular communication, coordinating assessment activities, and facilitating the sharing of information and documentation of the process.

In some cases, more formal tools to conduct outreach may be required. See Attachment A for samples.

STEP 2: PARTICIPATORY TOOL DESIGN

OCA does not typically include pre-designed assessment tools. Rather OCA is a *methodology* through which a framework of "organizational excellence" is developed and applied in a given environment or context. Through a 2-3 day structured brainstorming workshop, organizations identify and define the factors that are essential for making an organization successful in the context in which it operates. (See Attachment D for a sample tool design workshop agenda.) If conducting OCA with an individual organization, participants should represent each of the organization's departments or functional units and board members, volunteers, or constituent representatives as appropriate. For a cohort, each organization should have representatives in attendance.

Day 1 of the Tool Design Workshop

The content of the first day of the workshop is quite open and should be carefully designed around the needs and interests of the organization(s) with which you are working. For organizations that are new to capacity building and organizational development, you should consider designing sessions that focus on reviewing or defining those concepts. When facilitating tool design for a cohort, you might consider incorporating activities into day 1 that help create a sense of common "history" upon which to base collective capacity building activities. (See Attachment B for a sample timeline exercise).

Day 2 of the Tool Design Workshop

Day 2 of the workshop focuses on the development of an assessment tool framework that forms the basis of the organization's/cohort's OCA tool. Root Change uses a structured brainstorming technique[5] to achieve this goal. To facilitate the group brainstorm, the facilitator will need one full day and the following materials: flip chart paper, blank 5x7 cards, "symbol cards", "naming cards", and a display board.

Full group participation is critical during this session since participants will later draw on key concepts identified during the group brainstorm. Ensure full participation by calling on trainees for input or comments.

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[5] This technique is adapted from Technology of Participation (ToP), Institute of Cultural Affairs.

Day 3 of the Tool Design Workshop

If you choose to continue the workshop beyond 2 days, this gives you the opportunity to begin converting the brainstorm session outcomes into an assessment tool. To make this transition, the participants can spend time doing the following:

1. Developing, in small groups, clear definitions of each critical success factor;
2. Generating a list of priority concepts to measure for each critical success factor; and,
3. Drafting indicators/statements of excellence.

A typical OCA tool will consist of approximately 6-12 success factors or capacity areas and 60-80 indicators.

These steps ensure an assessment tool that accurately reflects the technical and cultural environment in which the organization functions. It also enables participants to identify and prioritize specific areas to be leveraged or strengthened in order to improve the effectiveness, quality and long-range sustainability of their organization and program activities.

When developing indicators or "statements of excellence" be sure to keep the following rules in mind:

1. Present only **one concept** at a time. Indicators that have multiple ideas or attributes are very hard to answer with the survey tool, will confuse readers, and are difficult to validate.

   Weak indicator: Our budgets accurately reflect the direct costs of our activities and allow us to predict our future financial needs.

   Strong indicator: Our budgets accurately reflect the direct costs of our activities.

2. Develop **organization-centered** criteria. In addition to promoting ownership, this is a self-assessment and must be scored from that perspective. As with "hearsay", the organization cannot assess the perceptions of others. Additionally, indicators should not measure the performance of *individuals* but rather of the *organization.*

   Weak indicator: US government donors hold our organization in high regard.

   Strong indicator: The quality of our grant proposals contributes to substantive funding from US government donors.

3. **Model indicators around excellence** and a uniform positive response. The indicator should set high standards, describing the *ideal* rather than the *satisfactory* situation. Often this includes the use of adjectives such as: continuously, consistently, highly, timely, etc. Ensure that a "yes" response is registered as uniformly desirable. This preliminary classification of adverbs and adjectives useful in writing indicators that model excellence:

Classification	***Examples***
Frequency	consistently, routinely, regularly, continuously, always frequently, periodically
Mode	competently, openly, successfully, strictly, systematically
Specificity	essential, directly, significantly, relevant, completely, fully
Quality	accurate(ly), clear(ly), well-defined, well-developed, effective(ly), well-understood, efficient(ly), timely
Reach/Scope	(wide) range, (wide) variety, high

Weak indicator: We engage in partnerships with relevant government agencies.

Strong indicator: We actively engage in partnerships with relevant government agencies.

4. Optimize indicator **validity**. Test to be sure that the indicators in fact measure the functions you want to measure. (For example: what is the best indicator for a fever? Sweating may indicate a fever, but may also indicate that you've just run five kilometers. Temperature would be a more valid indicator for fever.)

   *Weak indicator (for measuring the **efficiency** of an organization's structure): Our organizational structure accurately reflects the roles and responsibilities of all our staff.*

   Strong indicator: Our organization's structure helps us to efficiently meet strategic priorities.

5. Optimize indicator **reliability**. Check that indicator language is concise, clear and likely to be understood in the same way by all respondents consistently over time.

   Weak indicator: When implementing projects, we routinely give attention to sustainability.

   Strong indicator: When implementing projects, we routinely give attention to the sustainability of our project impacts.

STEP 3: PREPARATION OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The OCA assessment team of an organization is composed of representative staff members and sometimes board, volunteer and constituent representatives. During the assessment, team members work with trained facilitators to answer discussion questions in an active setting that closely resembles a focus group or PRA workshop.

For smaller organizations, all members of the staff should participate in the assessment team if possible. If the organization has more than 15-20 staff, facilitation can become challenging and it may be difficult for everyone to participate fully. In this case, an assessment team should be

formed that best represents a "microcosm" of the organization. This means all departments or functional units, all levels of staff (junior to senior), a mix of male and female staff, a mix of newer and more tenured staff, etc. The more representational your assessment team is, the more reliable your results will be. You may also want to invite representatives from the board of directors or your constituents to participate. If your organization typically uses volunteers, you should also include one or two on the assessment team. Not everyone on the team will know about the details of every success factor. That is why the discussion activities are so important. This is a very valuable way for staff to learn about the organization and exchange and understand each others' experience and perspective.

There is considerable debate over whether the director of an organization should participate in the assessment discussions. Because the OCA process is facilitated by an external expert, it is usually a good opportunity for the director to hear first-hand staff's perceptions and experience working in the organization. The highly participatory discussions are found to be a very valuable experience for all levels of staff. Participation by the director also helps to ensure that the results are "owned" by the organization and acted on. At the same time, some staff may find it intimidating to participate fully with the director present and the director herself may find it difficult to monitor her participation, and not overly influence the discussion. Directors should prepare for the assessment with the facilitator and the two should consider how to best handle these issues in advance.

STEP 4: GUIDED SELF-ASSESSMENT

The assessment is conducted in a workshop-like setting and can be completed in one full day (approximately 6-8 hours), or in two half-day sessions. A facilitator is required to lead the team through the assessment process.

First participants must be familiar and comfortable with the workshop guidelines, processes and use of the OCA tool and score sheets. In some cases a glossary is prepared to ensure a common understanding of terms among team members (and across the cohort, if applicable). Following each group discussion and activity, participants will respond to each indicator statement using a scoring scale of 1-5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". Over the course of the day, each member of the assessment team will record his individual assessment of each indicator on his own score sheet. Again, for a productive and accurate assessment, it is essential that participants have a clear and common understanding of the terms, the 1-5 scale and scoring procedures, and that an environment of respect for differing opinions and conducive dialogue is created.

Over the course of the workshop the facilitator leads the team through the OCA tool - facilitating discussion of each capacity area, and instructing individual scoring of the indicators for that area using individual score sheets. Through this process, the facilitator focuses each

discussion on actual events from the organization's experience over the past 12 months, ensuring that the self-assessment is less subjective and more rigorous. By using activity-based discussion techniques, participants are encouraged to express their views safely through a variety of media. The qualitative and quantitative insights that emerge from this process open new channels of communication and information sharing, and serve as a catalyst for team-building and organization-wide learning.

It is generally preferable to engage an external facilitator for the assessment day. Experience has shown that when internal staff attempt to facilitate this type of assessment, it is too difficult to remain objective and not participate in or influence the discussion. If at all possible, it is recommended to use a trained OCA facilitator.

The facilitator opens the discussion of each capacity area with some general questions on the topic, and leads the team into a discussion activity. The aim is to involve different members of the assessment team, and get as many varying experiences and points of view as possible out on the table. The discussion activities are *not intended to generate solutions* to problems or engage in in-depth analyses. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled for these tasks. Instead, team members are asked to view the discussion activity as an opportunity to share ideas, and the private scoring as an opportunity to express individual response to the indicator statement.

ORID, or the Focused Conversation method[6], is the basis for all OCA discussions, whether they are *simple* discussions or *activity-based* discussions. ORID is a method of leading a group of people through certain phases of reflection in a way that allows them to process their experiences and opinions as a group. The focused conversation is led by a facilitator who asks a series of questions to elicit responses that take a group through a simple process of four levels, from the surface of a topic to its deep implications. The four levels are:

- *Objective* – questions about facts and external reality.
- *Reflective* – questions to call forth immediate personal reaction to the data, an internal response, sometimes emotions, feelings, hidden images and associations with the facts. Whenever we encounter an external reality, we experience an internal response.
- *Interpretive* – questions to draw out meaning, values, significance and implications.
- *Decisional* – questions to elicit resolution, bring the conversation to a close, and enable the group to make a decision or action about the future.

These four levels of reflection form a template or pattern from which innumerable conversations can be designed. It is important to note that in the OCA process, when conducting the assessment the conversation is almost always suspended at the end of the interpretive level. In a sense, the act of scoring constitutes the decisional level. In another sense, we pick up the discussion again and complete the decisional level during the action planning phase of the process. Also note that OCA tools often do not include an explicit question at the

[6] ORID is loosely based on the adult learning cycle. However, the majority of the material we use to describe this method is taken from the Institute of Cultural Affairs' Technology of Participation (ToP) Method.

reflective level. Generally the facilitator must decide if the participants' internal reaction to the data is strong or diverse and if so, ask the participants to share their feelings or reactions to the objective level data.

Here are some examples of typical OCA discussions using the ORID method:

Example 1:

a) When was our most recent staff training? (O)
b) How often over the last 12 months have we held staff training events? (O)
c) For our three most recent staff training events, what evidence is there that they strengthened staff capacity and performance? (O-I)
d) To what extent were the areas of improved staff capacity relevant to our human resource needs? (I)
e) To what degree did these training events prepare staff to respond to our strategic objectives? (I)

Example 2:

a) What are three recent procurements? (O)
b) Did procurement follow written procedures? (O-I)
c) What was the impact of these procedures on costs? (I)

Example 3:

a) Select three representative projects that have been conducted in the last 3 years. Who are the target groups/beneficiaries for each project? (O)
b) What technical assistance have we provided to our target groups? (O)
c) To what extent has this assistance been provided in a timely and useful fashion? (I)
d) To what extent has this assistance increased the target group's ability to achieve its objectives? (I)

STEP 5: GENERATING OCA RESULTS PACKAGES

At the end of the assessment day, score sheets are collected, numbered and data are entered into the **OCA Online** system, a web-based program that facilitators can use to quickly and easily generate comprehensive report packages. (See Appendix F for a flow chart describing how to use the system).

While the system is automated, facilitators may have an interest in understanding how the scores are calculated. The organization's capacity scores are derived through an indexing of the total average scores for each. The consensus score for each capacity area is derived through standard deviation, measuring the degree of dissonance between responses. For details on the steps for generating these scores, see Appendix G.

These results are presented to participating organizations in the form of OCA results packages or reports, and provide the basis for analysis, priority setting and forward planning by the assessment team.

Results packages include the following:

Organizational Grid

This report provides a "snapshot" of the organization's perceived capacity and consensus. All capacity areas are mapped out according to data analysis results. Assessment team members should spend sufficient time sharing reactions to the mapping of capacity areas.

Cohort Grid

This report illustrates the overall average capacity and consensus scores for all participating organizations in the cohort. It can also be represented by capacity area to demonstrate relative strengths and weaknesses of the "community" and form the basis for resource sharing.

Cohort Comparative Analysis

These bar charts, which are developed separately for capacity and consensus, profile the capacity and consensus levels of a single organization in comparison with the mean or median cohort results.

Indicator Analysis

This detailed report shows how assessment team members rated their organization on each item or indicator from the tool. This data includes both the mean score (capacity) and the percentage of respondents selecting each score (consensus). It is possible to see why, for example, one capacity area scored higher or lower than expected, or where there was strong or weak consensus that brought the total capacity area scores up or down.

A sample set of OCA results is available in Attachment H.

Based on the principle that the organization itself is best positioned to assign meaning to the OCA data, the assessment packages include little narrative, and as such the facilitator should walk the assessment team through each section and answer questions before beginning the group discussion. (See Review of Report Package below).

STEP 6: ANALYSIS OF OCA RESULTS & ACTION PLANNING

The Results analysis and action planning steps of the OCA process are critical for taking the assessment data and transforming it into meaningful, productive, and relevant action. Through results analysis, participants gain an understanding of and draw meaning from OCA data.

Through action planning, participants are able to come to consensus on their most pressing organizational challenges (as determined by the assessment) and identify plans and resources to help them address those challenges.

During this phase of OCA, the assessment team can examine its performance as an autonomous organization or in comparison to the data of a community of peer organizations and set change strategies most appropriate to its environment. Again, a facilitator is important for helping the assessment team interpret the data, and ensuring the contextualization and validation of the results.

STEP 7: ACTION PLAN MONITORING AND RE-ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUED LEARNING

A good starting point for moving the action planning agenda forward is the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) committee. This committee should be comprised of individuals with decision-making authority within the organization as well as representatives from each action planning team. Committee member selection could take place at the close of the Results Analysis and Action Planning workshop or at another date if not all ideal potential members are present at the event. Ideally an M&E committee coordinator will also be selected at this time.

M&E committee meetings should be held on a quarterly basis and are opportunities to both discuss *and document* progress made on action plan implementation. The facilitator of the M&E committee meetings (likely the committee coordinator) should follow these steps:

1. Prior to the meeting, disseminate the Progress Report Template (Table 1) to each action plan team with instructions to complete the table and come to the meeting prepared to present to the full committee. Each team's preparation should include a discussion about what evaluation measures they will use for their plan.
2. At the meeting, ask the lead for each action plan team to present a summary of the quarterly progress and results achieved, highlighting challenges and successes, any ad hoc adjustments that were made (particularly those that might affect other plan elements or the organization as a whole). If anticipated results/progress were not achieved, ask the presenter to provide an explanation and describe how this might effect future implementation.
3. Following each presentation, be sure to allow time for committee members to provide comments and suggestions.
4. Draft a brief report that consolidates the information shared in the presentations and highlights overall progress and results, major adjustments, and lessons learned, and share with the Executive Director and, as appropriate, other staff.

Table 1: Plan Progress Report

Action: **Reporting Period:**					
Tasks planned for implementation during this period:	**Degree of implementation**			**Results achieved in this period (describe in detail)**	**Comments/ lessons learned/ suggestions**
	Complete	**Near completion**	**Incomplete**		

Once every 12-18 months, organizations conduct a re-assessment to monitor change. By regularly reassessing performance over time, organizations can track the effectiveness of their capacity building efforts and make adjustments as needed. Organizations have the opportunity to continuously improve their performance and integrate new learning by adapting their strategies to fit their changing needs, rising standards, and increasing capabilities.

The OCA re-assessment process mirrors the original assessment. A number of techniques are used throughout the re-assessment to help the assessment team measure the current situation against the baseline of the previous year.

- A **Timeline** activity (as described on pX) can be used to help participants identify significant activities, milestones or events that took place during the past year.
- After scoring each capacity area, participants are asked to compare the current situation with the situation one year earlier by assigning a score of 1, 2, or 3 (1 representing a drop in performance, 2 maintaining the same, and 3 an increase in performance).
- The **Time Series** report shows capacity and consensus scores for each capacity area in Y1 and Y2. The **Comparative Analysis** report is based on the 1, 2, 3 scores for each capacity area, and helps triangulate change in performance over time. These two reports are included together in Appendix 8 and 9 respectively.

To assess progress in your organization, plan to re-assess periodically. How often you re-assess depends on how fast your organization or the environment experiences change. Typically about once a year is appropriate, but if the organization has experienced significant change or the action plan becomes outdated, you may want to reassess more frequently. On the other hand, if the action plan is still relevant and there have not been any significant changes internally or externally, once every 2 years may be sufficient.

5. INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS OF OCA

LEARNING NETWORKS

OCA can be a valuable tool for helping establish strong and vibrant "learning networks", or cohorts of NGOs that form to exchange experience and innovative approaches related to key themes or topics. Root Change's work with learning networks has included the Mexican Conservation Learning Network and the Zambian HIV/AIDS Learning Initiative.

Mexican Conservation Learning Network

Members of the Root Change team, the Mexican Nature Conservation Fund, and The Nature Conservancy partnered in 2001 to launch an initiative to strengthen the management capacity of NGOs working in conservation in Mexico. The Mexican Conservation Learning Network (MCLN) provides an integrated process through which conservation organizations can better access high-quality capacity building services and collaborate with other institutions to identify and meet their learning goals. By improving the effectiveness of capacity building services in Mexico, the MCLN helps participating organizations realize their conservation objectives and respond to new and evolving challenges.

The Mexican Conservation Learning Network consists of four major components:

- Organizational capacity assessment, benchmarking and improvement planning
- Knowledge management
- Thematic training and technical assistance
- Service provider marketplace

A primary concern of the Mexican Conservation Learning Network lies in connecting people, mobilizing information and enabling more frequent and effective learning. This initiative has represented an aggressive step forward for institutional development efforts in Mexico, integrating the fruits of the information age with the time-tested fundamentals of communication, community and knowledge sharing. By focusing on these important issues, individual and organizational capabilities have been developed and stronger institutions have emerged that are better equipped to protect the biodiversity of Mexico.

Through implementation of the program, several key factors that have contributed to the success of the network have been identified:

- Organizational self-assessment is a useful tool for creating a sense of community among members and shared commitment to the network.
- The promotion of the MCLN as a *human* network, rather than one that is simply virtual, is integral to sustaining meaningful interaction of members.
- The creation of a web portal to supplement the human network and facilitate the exchange of program information is effective at supporting an active community of

practice, particularly because of the geographic distance between some members of the network.

For more about the Mexican Conservation Network visit the following website: www.imacmexico.org

The Zambian HIV/AIDS Learning Initiative

The Zambian HIV/AIDS Learning Initiative (ZHLI) aims to strengthen the capacity of Zambian NGOs working in the area of HIV/AIDS, particularly enhancing the ability of these organizations to address the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS through multisectoral approaches. The ZHLI has four key "pillars" that support program goals of organizational capacity building and innovation in multisectoiral response to HIV/AIDS:

1. NGO Excellence, which includes organizational assessment, follow-up technical support, and executive leadership strengthening;
2. Sharing and Learning Teams, which aim to promote collaboration among participants working in various sectors and regions;
3. Innovations in Multisectoral Response to HIV/AIDS, which includes a training program in multisectoral response as well as annual awards for excellence in multisectoral HIV/AIDS programming; and
4. Service Provider and Knowledge Resource Referral Service, for linking capacity building supply and demand and the management of program related information and resources.

NGOs committing to participate in the NGO Excellence component of the ZHLI begin by exploring the definition of organizational capacity and setting standards for organizational performance that are challenging, yet appropriate to their level and reflect a holistic view of organizational development. This is be followed by an internal self-assessment and the development of a 12-month organizational improvement plan. Root Change helps each organization pursue its plan by offering customized follow-up consultation, which includes linking to intermediary service providers that specialize in organizational strengthening. The follow-up technical assistance is explicitly designed to rely on local trainers and service providers.

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

OCA can be an effective means for helping organizations develop a clear understanding of, and strategy for, effectively supporting the capacity strengthening of their *partners*.

Lutheran World Relief

Beginning in September of 2002, members of the Root Change team worked alongside Lutheran World Relief (LWR) to support the implementation of a capacity strengthening pilot

for LWR's local office and partners in India. The pilot enabled both LWR and partners to equally participate in:

- Developing and testing a self-assessment process that would help to determine organization-specific capacity strengthening needs and priorities;
- Developing action plans to address those needs, ultimately increasing organizational effectiveness in achieving mission; and
- Identifying a viable, effective method for capacity strengthening of both LWR and its partners, while concurrently determining the roles, skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes required for such a method.

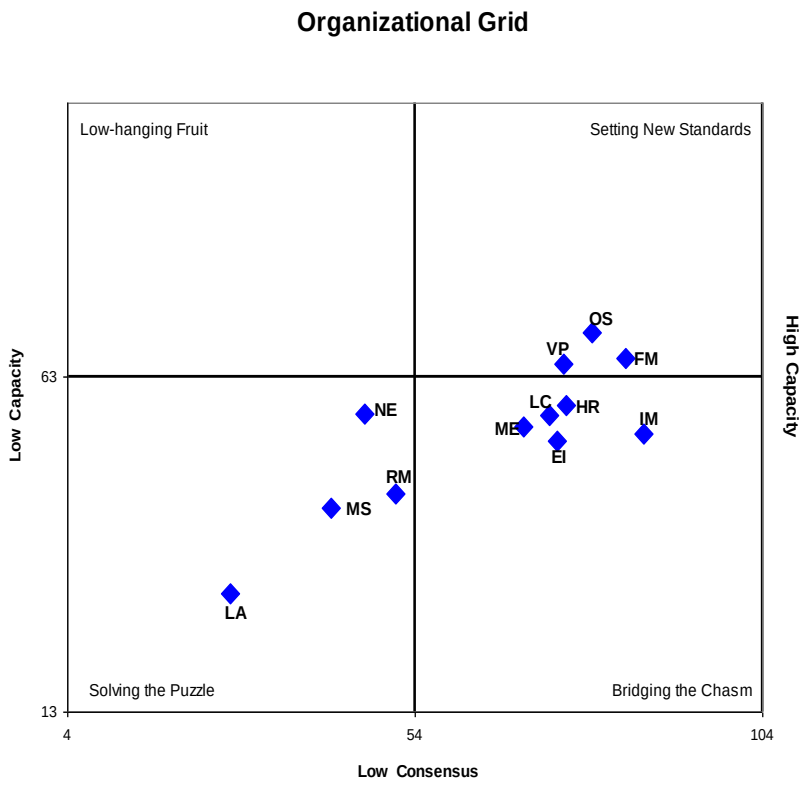
CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The OCA methodology can also be integrated into larger, more complex processes that require well-defined, participatory assessment and action planning. In Brazil, members of the Root Change team worked with Samarco Mineracao, a national mining company to help it achieve competitive advantage by supporting innovative business strategies that deliver greater social and environmental accountability and performance. The key steps in the project included:

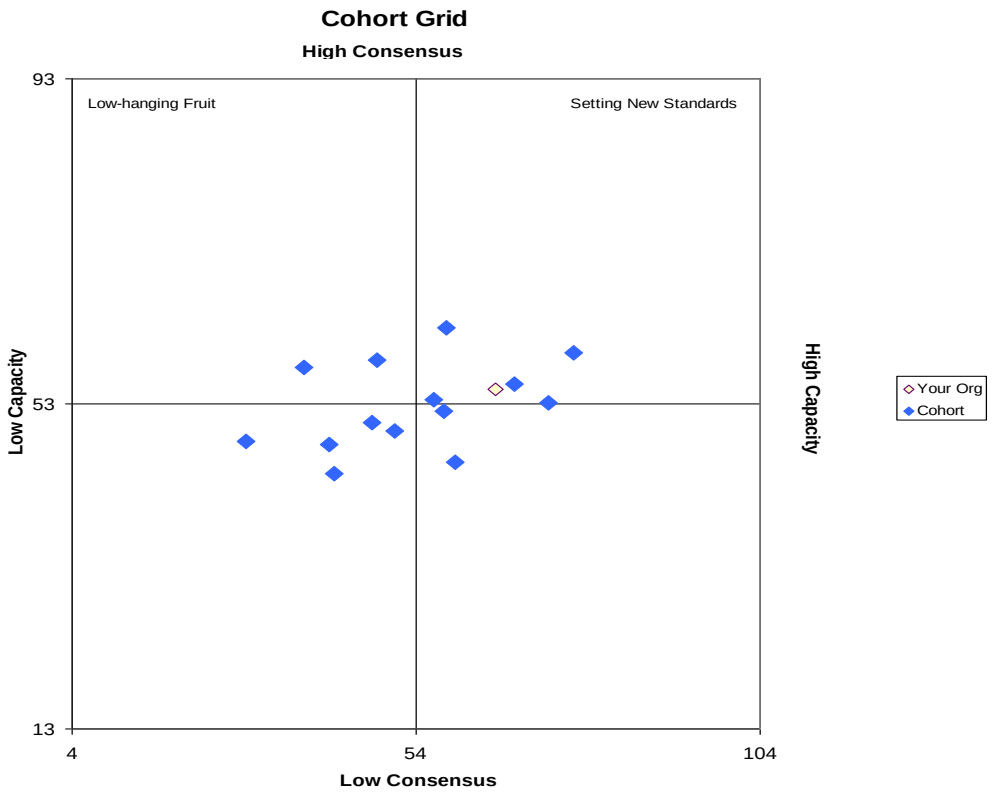
- Engagement preparation – the collection and review of key demographic and organizational data and the mapping of stakeholders and community resources.
- Framework development - design and validation of an assessment tool to measure the effectiveness of Samarco's social investments through collaboration with stakeholders.
- Assessment – administration of assessment tool, tabulation of results, and delivery of executive debriefs on findings about community perceptions regarding Samarco performance in the areas of community development, company social investment, and stakeholder engagement activity.
- Action planning - facilitation of a workshop to present assessment results and generate action plans for community engagement.
- Implementation – provision of ongoing support to enhance effectiveness of company-community interactions, including meetings with the company and community to assess progress and address areas needing adjustment.

EI = Equipment and Infrastructure

ATTACHMENT H: SAMPLE OCA RESULTS



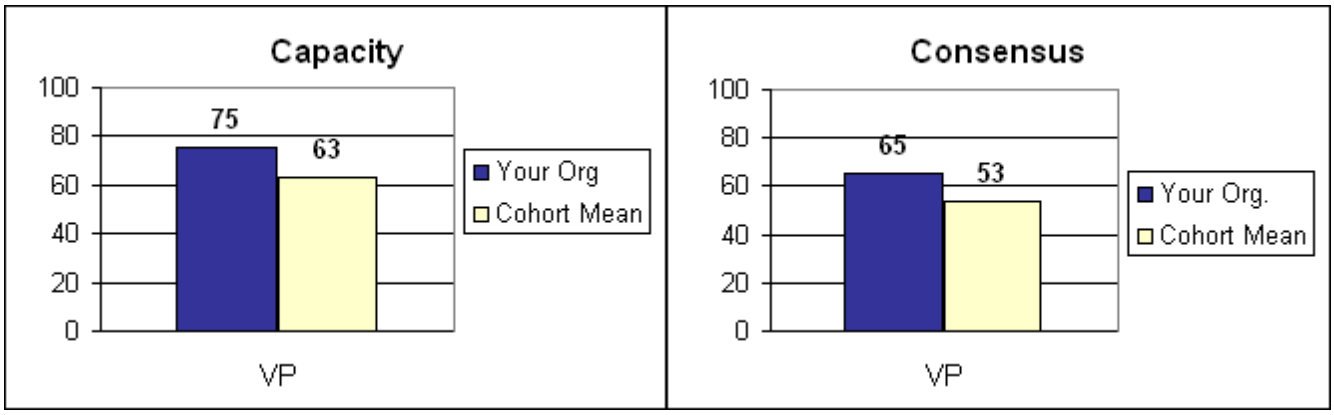
FM = Financial Management
LA = Lobbying and Advocacy
LC = Leadership and Change
ME = Monitoring and Evaluation
MS = Multisectoral HIV/AIDS Response
NE = Networking
OS = Outreach and Support
RM = Resource Mobilisation
VP = Visioning and Planning

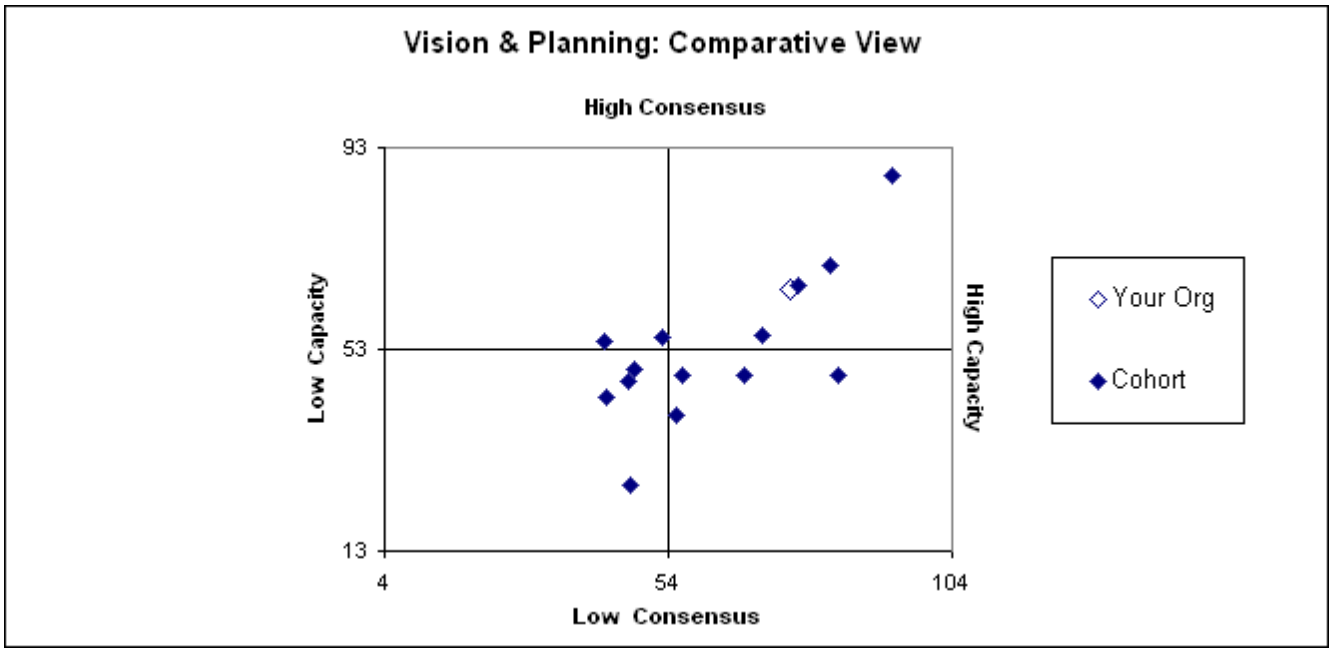

Cohort Grid
High Consensus
93
Low-hanging Fruit
Setting New Standards
Low Capacity
53
High Capacity
13
4
54
104
Low Consensus
Your Org
Cohort

Vision and Planning (VP)

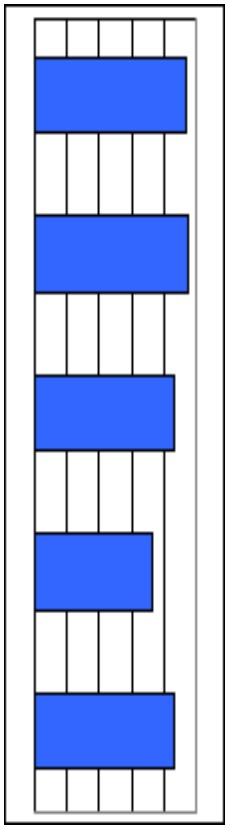
Vision and Planning (statements 1-5) focuses on what an organization would like to achieve and putting in place multisectoral strategies for achieving it.

Ranking Table	Comparative Rank (out of 15 Orgs)	Relative Rank (out of 12 success factors)
Capacity	5	5
Consensus	4	3





Indicator Analysis



	mean	*strongly disagree never*	*disagree seldom*	*neutral some-times*	*agree often*	*strongly agree always*	**priority count**
1. Our organisation has well-defined vision and mission statements.	**4.70**	0%	0%	4%	22%	74%	5
2. Passion for our mission and vision is reflected in the actions taken by staff and volunteers.	**4.74**	0%	0%	0%	26%	74%	8
3. Our organisation implements activities based on a clearly defined strategic plan.	**4.30**	0%	0%	9%	52%	39%	4
4. Our strategic planning incorporates innovations in multisectoral HIV/AIDS response.	**3.65**	4%	9%	17%	57%	13%	5
5. Our org has short-/medium-term plans that help us achieve our strategic plan.	**4.30**	0%	0%	9%	52%	39%	1

NOTE: FOR EACH SUCCESS FACTOR (LIKE VISIOING AND PLANNING), THE PARTICPANTS WOULD RECEIVE A SIMILAR SET OF GRAPHS AND TABLES.

ATTACHMENT I: GRID QUADRANT DESCRIPTIONS

Low Hanging Fruit Where team members agree that there is a weakness and also tend to agree on the nature of the weakness. Success in harvesting these "low hanging fruits" builds the confidence and abilities of team members while preparing them to address, over time, more challenging and contentious issues.	**Setting New Standards** Where capacity and consensus scores are both high, team members should make deliberate efforts to build on areas of strength and set new standards. Capacity areas that fall in this quadrant may be models of excellence that can be studied for clues as the team seeks to determine how best to address weaknesses in other areas.
Solving the Puzzle Where need is high (relatively low capacity) but agreement is low and change can only come after the team reaches agreement on the nature of the problem to be addressed. The organization may recognize that it has a weakness but isn't yet ready to address it because there is little consensus on the nature (and, hence, the causes) of this problem.	**Bridging the Gap** Where the need is low (relatively high capacity) but agreement is also low and further discussion is warranted to ferret out hidden problems and uneven performance. Some staff members may feel disenfranchised or underserved. Consensus-building efforts should take priority over technical capacity building.

ATTACHMENT L: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Winning through Participation: Meeting the Challenges of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation by Laura J. Spencer (The Institute of Cultural Affairs, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company).

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making. 1996. Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger. New Society Publishers.

The ART of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace.