



Recognizing Workforce Learning in the Context of Rural Community Economic Development

Presentation to the 2025 CAPLA Conference - Recognizing Prior Learning in Rural Spaces

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Antigonish, Nova Scotia*

Dr. Gary McNeely, PLAR Coordinator, Registrar's Office

Dr. Wayne Kelly, Director, Rural Development Institute



Today, as we talk about capacity, planning and community development, we respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 lands, the traditional homelands of the Dakota, Anishanabek, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples. It is important to note that Indigenous peoples in Canada, First Nations, Inuit and Metis take a holistic view to community, and there, the concept of capacity, roles, and overall well-being is central to both community and development for Indigenous cultures.

Introductions & Overview of RDI

Capacity Building / Workplace Learning in Rural

- What is the capacity issue?
- Community Actors in CED and their capacities / competencies?

Capacity Challenges

- Organizational Capacity?
- Community Assets & Resources in CED?
- Types of CED Projects and Community Involvement?

Recognizing Learning in CED

- CED Competency Assessment Process

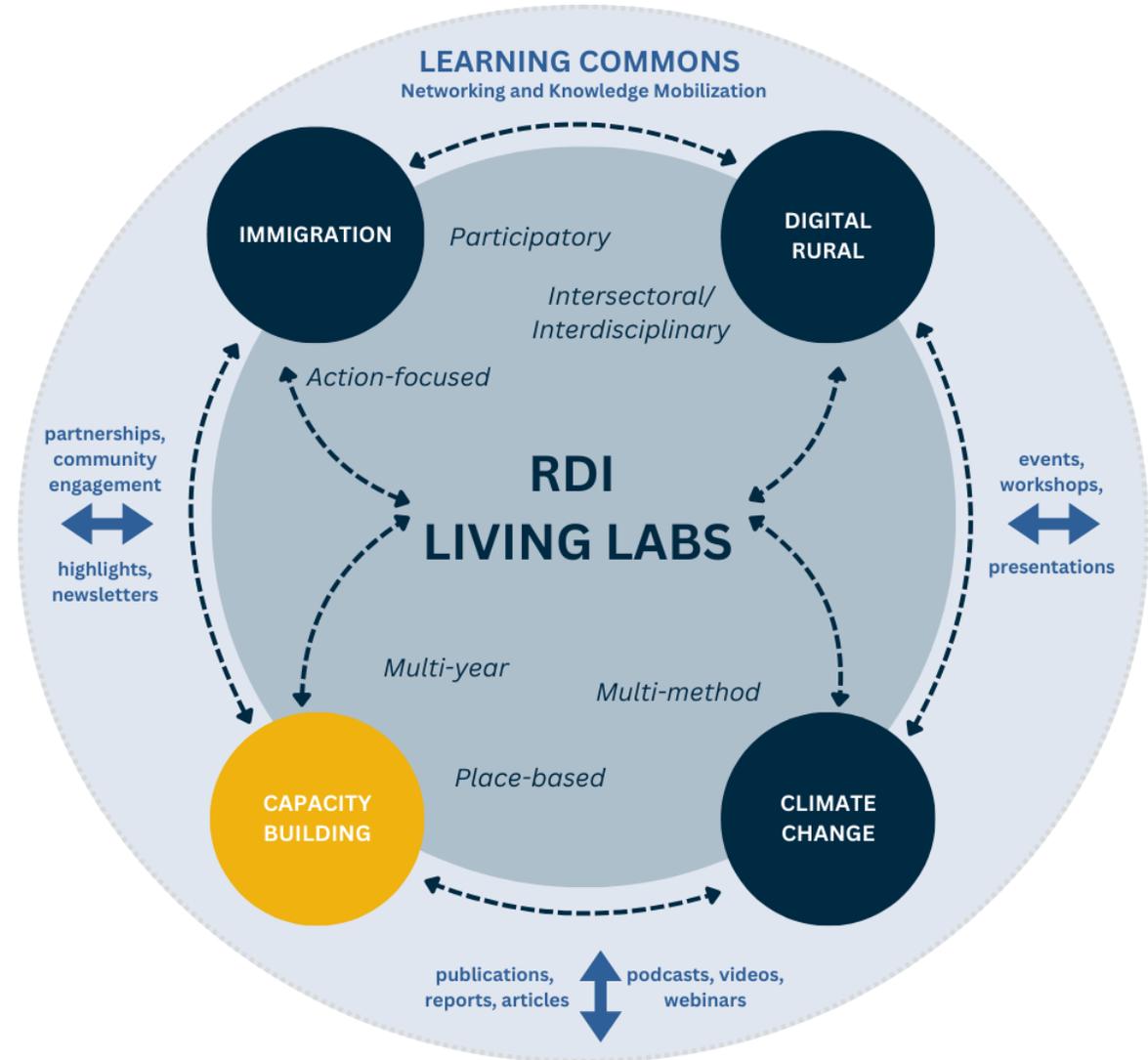
Discussion



<https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/>

The Rural Development Institute is a research centre focused on engaging in community-based projects with rural partners and communities. The projects address topics affecting rural in order to:

- ▶ support development for rural communities and regions;
- ▶ build capacity for rural communities, practitioners, researchers and partners; and
- ▶ inform policy makers on rural solutions, programs and planning.



CAPACITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CED PROJECTS REFERS TO

- **The knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals, organizations and other agencies to:**
 - **Prioritize, plan and implement CED projects**
 - **Access and utilize the resources required to undertake and complete these projects**

Capacity requires gathering the right people, organizations, and agencies with the right knowledge, skills, and abilities at the right time and place to undertake these tasks.

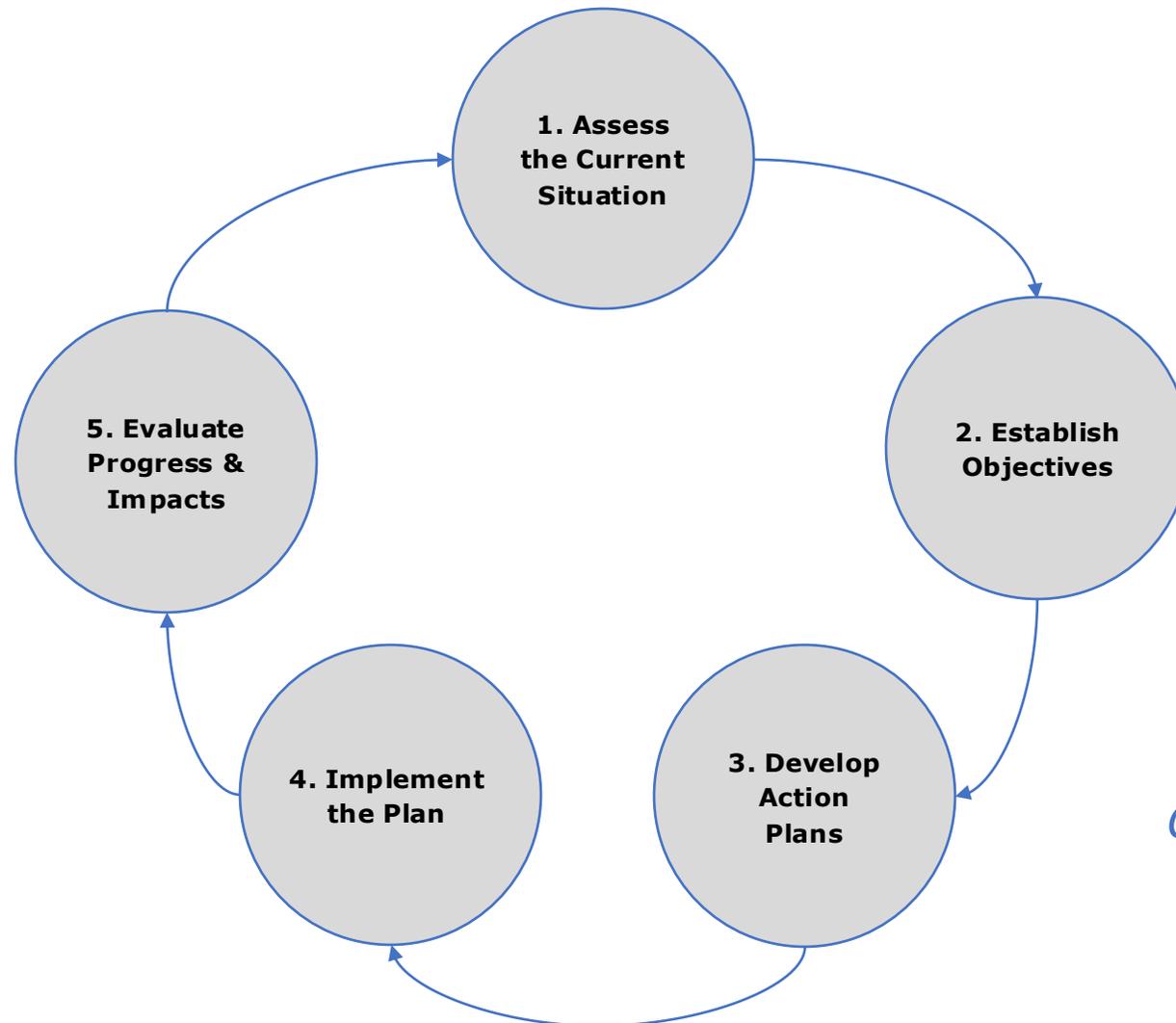
In rural communities, capacity challenges continues to be acute.

- **Community Leadership and Departments**
 - Mayors and Council Members; Chief Administrative/Financial Officer; Economic Development Officer; Planners; Executive Directors, etc.
- **Regional Political Leaders**
- **Local Businesses Leaders** – Employers, Chamber of Commerce
- **Community Organizations** – Directors, Managers, Members
 - Sports / Arts / Immigrant / Social / Environment / Education / Health / Religion & Cultural / Youth & Seniors / Tourism groups ...
- **Individuals** – concerned citizens
- **External Experts or Consultants**

| NOC No. & Role | Knowledge | Skills / Abilities | Education / Training |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| 21202 - Urban and Land Use Planners | Business management | Critical thinking | Higher Education - College / University |
| 41402 - Economic Development Officer | Communications | Analytical thinking | Possible Sector Certification |
| 00011 - Chief Administrative Officer / Municipal Administrator | Human Resources Financial Resources | Decision making Evaluation | Career Advancement through Work Experience and Professional Development |
| 00012 - Chief Financial Officer | | Information ordering | |
| 11201 - Project Manager | | Categorization flexibility | |
| 40030 - Manager of Community Organizations | | Collaboration Coordinating | |
| 41403 - Community Organizer | | Attention to detail | |
| 54100 - Program Leader in recreation | | Concern for others | |

Source: Government of Canada. (2024). Occupational and Skills Information System (OaSIS)

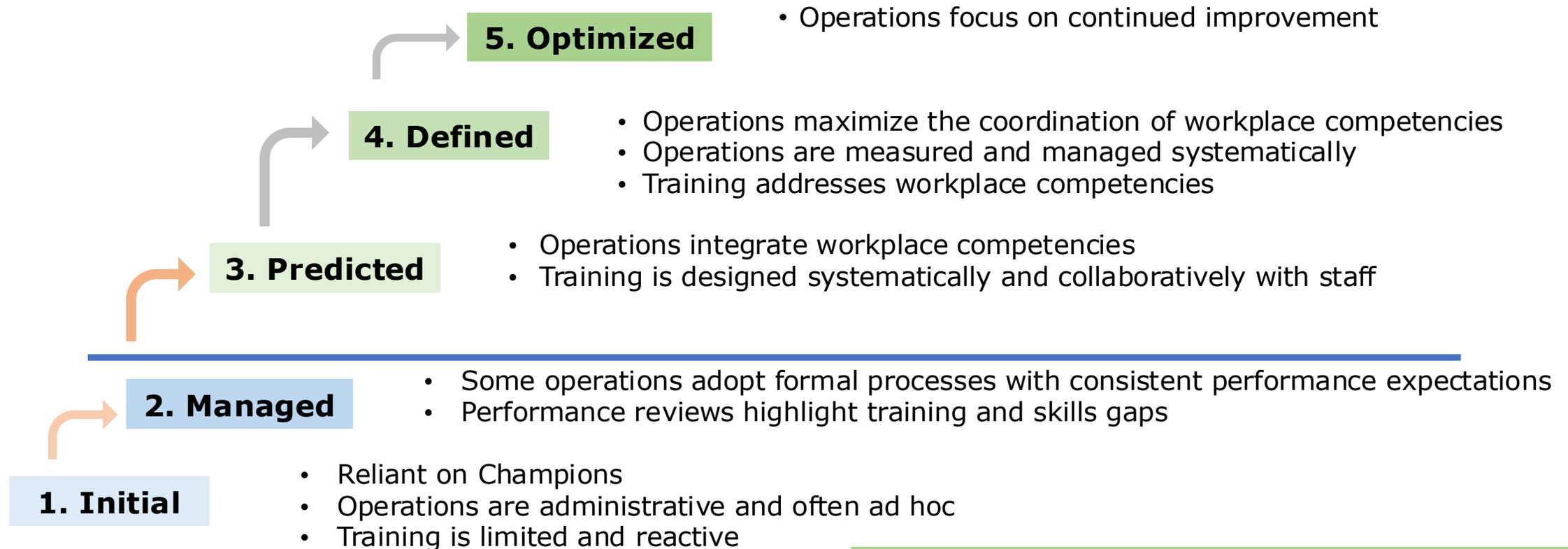
*Do rural community have the resources to hire these roles?
Which knowledge, skills, & abilities align with CED?*



PLACE-BASED COMMUNITY REALITIES

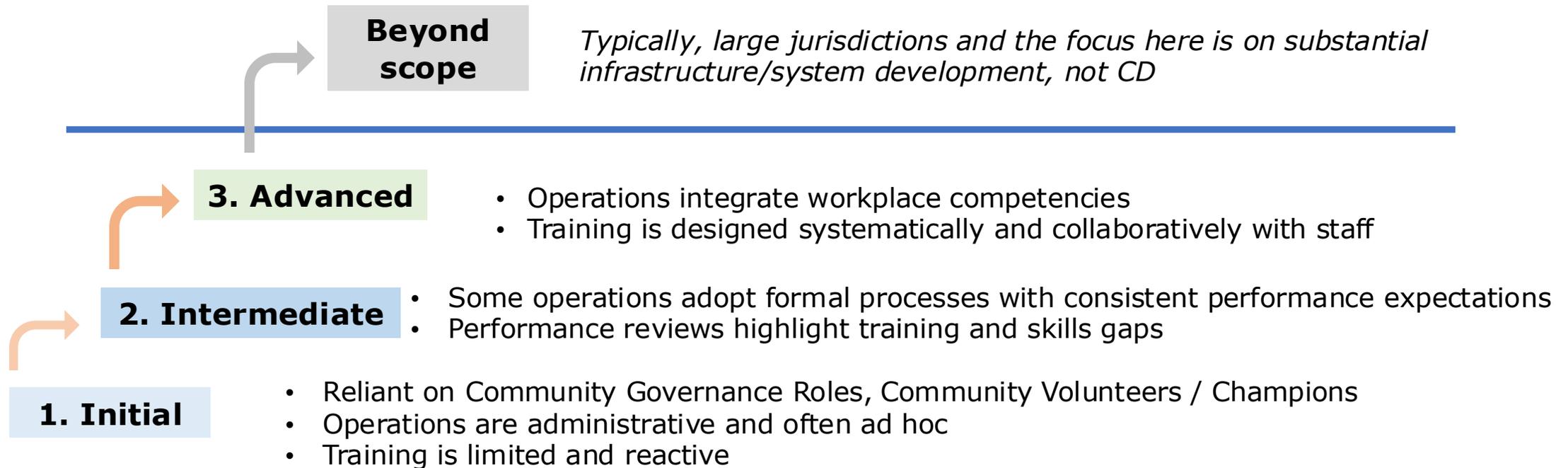
- Rural communities are unique: demographics, economic sectors, education/medical services, amenities, governance, region
- Communities, Organizations, and Individuals participating in CED have differing capacities / competencies
- CED participants are often community champions and volunteers
- All stages in CED are opportunities for recognizing learning and building community capacity *

Can RPL practices be applied in these phases of CED projects to recognize rural communities' capacities/competencies?



Sources: Curtis, 2009; Heller & Varney, 2013; Prosci, 2023

Management Maturity Models apply in sectors:
IT, Health, Education, Business, Manufacturing,
and **Community Economic Development**



Adapted from McNeely, G. & Kelly, W. (2024). *Recognizing Prior Learning in the Context of Rural Community Development*. 5th VPL Biennale Conference – People, Validation, and Power: Democracy in Action? Kilkenny, Ireland.

***What level are local rural community organizations align with?
How can these organization's capacity be enhanced?***

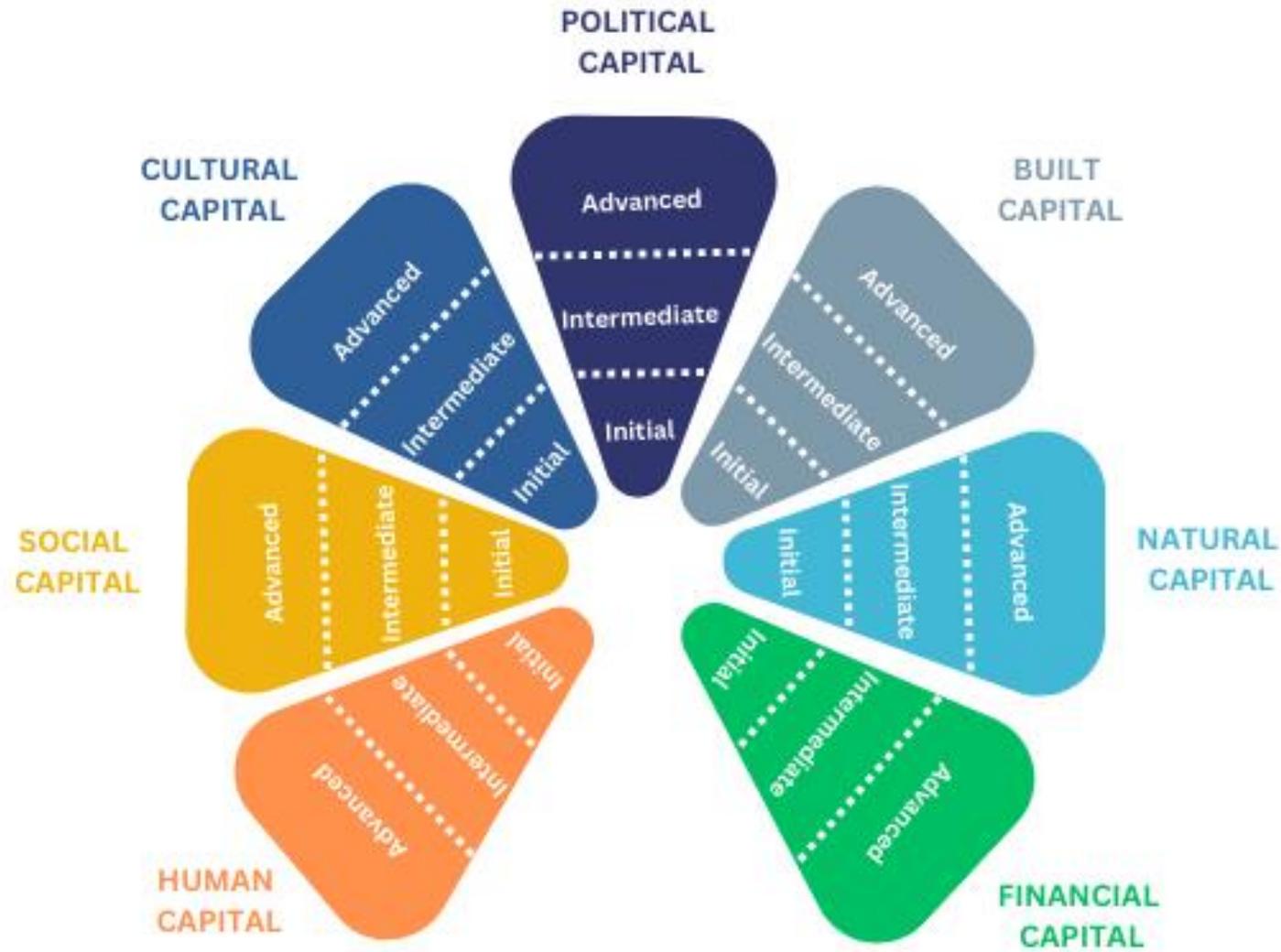


- Assets and resources applied in CED projects
- Interacting dimensions within CED projects intended to enhance Community Well-being
- Fluid, enacted and engaged rather than static
- Prioritized differently depending on the community
- Knowledge and skills interconnect all capitals

CED Projects can draw upon Capitals if there is:

- Access to Capitals
- Knowledge and Skills to Use
- Application of Capitals
- Assessment of Impacts

Source: Emery & Flora, 2006; Fey et al., 2006; Kelly, 2020



What level of competency are required for CED actors?

| Individuals | | Organizations | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Knowledge | | Knowledge | |
| i. Leadership | | i. Economic development (business, commercial, real estate, housing sectors) | |
| ii. Organizational development | | ii. CDO organization development | |
| iii. Collaboration strategies with organizations | | iii. Leadership and staff training | |
| iv. Group dynamics | | iv. Community education and training | |
| v. Cultural competency | | v. Project management | |
| vi. Community assets and resources | | | |
| vii. Sustainability | | | |
| viii. Self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses (H/S) | | | |
| Skills | | Skills | |
| i. Public deliberation | | i. Community engagement | |
| ii. Facilitation and conflict resolution | | ii. Volunteer management | |
| iii. Coaching | | iii. Strategic planning and initiative development | |
| iv. Strategic planning | | iv. Data management | |
| v. Asset-based methods | | v. Digital literacy (software platforms and social media) | |
| vi. Project and program planning | | vi. Communications (written, interpersonal) | |
| vii. Research methods & data analysis | | vii. Critical thinking & creativity | |
| viii. Communications (oral, written, interpersonal, cross-cultural) | | | |
| Values/Attitudes | | Values/Attitudes | |
| i. Collaboration | | i. Professionalism | |
| ii. Community-led collective action | | ii. Motivation, ethics, integrity | |
| iii. Public involvement | | iii. Self-awareness & development | |
| iv. Empowerment | | | |
| v. Democracy | | | |
| vi. Social justice | | | |
| vii. Diversity, equality, empathy, humility | | | |

- Human
- Social
- Cultural
- Political
- Built
- Natural
- Financial

- CORE CED Competencies:**
- Communication
 - Community Engagement
 - Project Management
 - Data Collection & Analysis
 - Leadership
- Project Specific Competencies**

Hains et al., 2020.

Building the Engine of Community Development in Detroit. (2018).

| | GRASSROOT <i>(Initial)</i> | DIRECTED <i>(Intermediate)</i> | IMPOSED <i>(Advanced)</i> |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| OWNERSHIP | Locally-driven and initiated by community members/groups. | Internal/external-driven on essential services. For community, not with. | External-driven, multi-community infrastructure or institutional development |
| COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT | Community is usually very engaged | Engaged - but might only be to share information or token approval | Little to no involvement or input from community |
| CAPACITY | Low capacity required – builds the capacity/ empowerment during | High (external?) capacity required – might build moderate capacity/ empowerment | External Capacity required - Does not build capacity or empower community typically |

*Example:
Community Gardens*

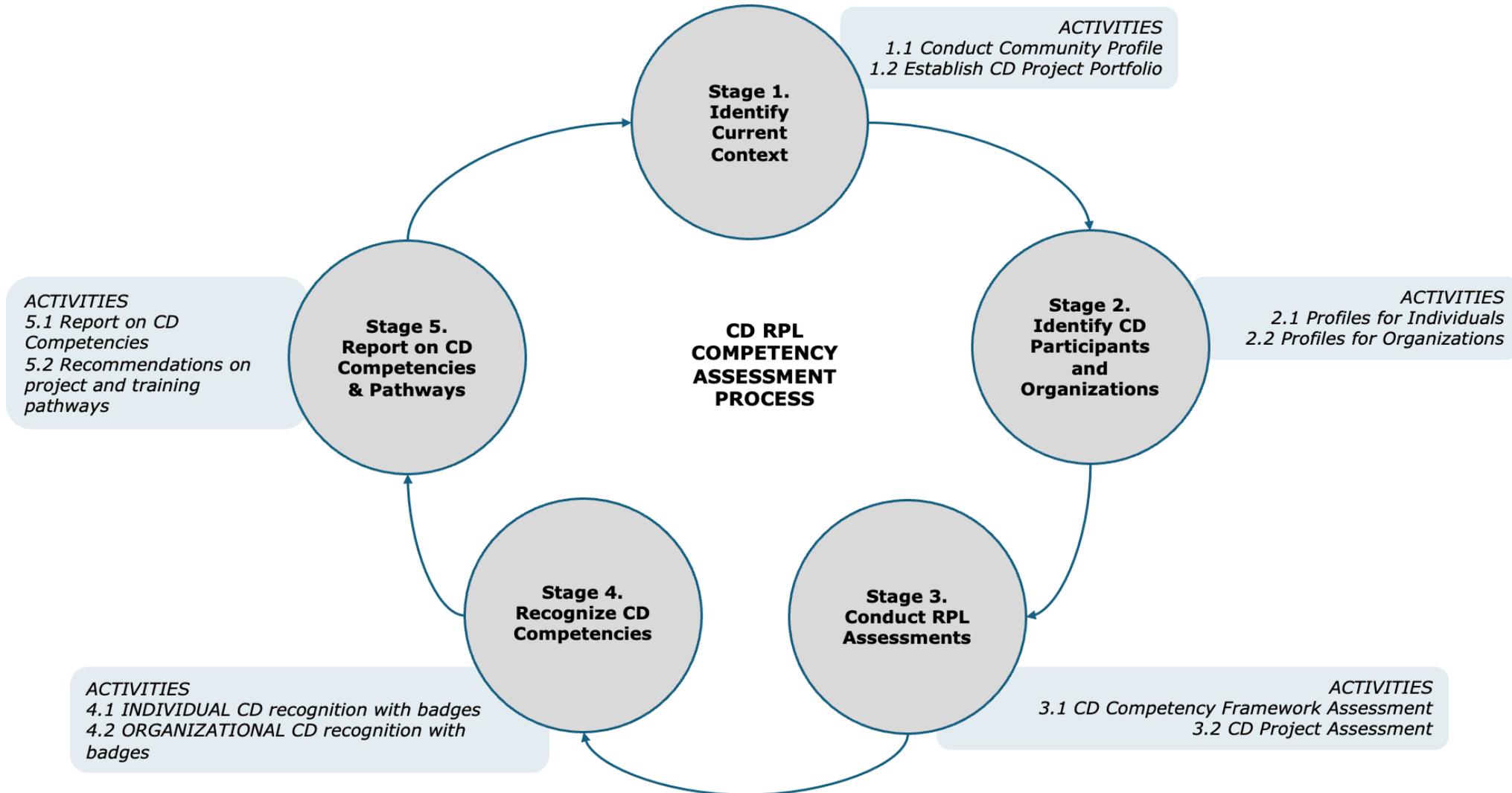
*Example:
Bike Paths*

*Example:
Provincial roads*

Source: Modified from Matarrita-Cascente & Brennan, 2023

***Are community members & organizations restricted learn through Grassroot CED projects?
How can community members & organizations involved in CED enhance their learning opportunities?***

CED COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT PROCESS



| Organization/Institution | Credential Title | Degree | Certificate 1yr | Diploma 2yr | Non-Formal |
|---|--|--------|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| Brandon University | Rural & Community Studies | BA | | | |
| | Rural Development | MA | | | |
| University of Winnipeg | Applied Project Management | | X | | |
| University of Manitoba | City Planner | MA | | | |
| | Municipal Administration | | X | | |
| | Public Sector Management | | X | | |
| University College of the North | Community Economic Development | | | X | |
| Red River Polytech | Social Innovation & Community Development | | X | | |
| | Community Development | | | X | |
| | Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship | | | X | |
| Economic Developers Association of Manitoba | Community Edge Training (8 Mods) | | | | X |
| Canadian CED Network | Community Leadership; Leading through Change; Navigating Change | | | | X |
| Community Futures MB | Workshops on Entrepreneurship & Economic Development (13 in total) | | | | X |
| Cape Breton University | Community Development | MBA | | | |
| | Business Analytics | | | X | |

*What formal and nonformal CED training is available, accessible and feasible in rural regions?
Is CED informal learning recognized in rural communities?*

Final Discussion – Ongoing Research Questions:

Is the CED Competency Assessment Process feasible?

How best to operationalize the CED Competency Assessment Process?

What is an effective method for assessing the impact of recognized CED KSA and CED training?

Can rural sustainability be enhanced through recognized CED KSA and CED training?

Interest to Participate in a Data Collection Exercise: A 1-hour Interview addressing open-end questions

Brandon University Research Ethics Committee: Rural Capacity Building, Ethics File Number - 23555

Please contact me at: mcneelyg@brandonu.ca

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THANK YOU!

- Gary McNeely – mcneelyg@brandonu.ca
- Wayne Kelly – kellyw@brandonu.ca

For more on the RDI Capacity Building Project:

QR CODE/LINK –

<https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/projects/designing-capacity-building-pathways-for-rural-community-development/>

