

Organizational Capacity and Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP)

What is organizational capacity?

Organizational capacity is “the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance and a persistent rededication to assessing and achieving results”¹. A number of frameworks have been developed to help organizations define and assess their organizational capacities. The Conservation Company² has developed one such framework which has been adopted by a number of non-profits and funders. It consists of the following four capacities:

Leadership capacity – The ability of the leadership team to develop a vision, set priorities, and inspire others in order to achieve the organization’s mission. *Is the organization’s leadership team actively involved in providing direction and inspiring others in achieving the organization’s mission?*

Operational capacity – The ability to obtain and maintain the resources – including human resources– necessary to carry out the organization’s institutional and programmatic activities. *Does the organization have the people, skills, space, funding, and other “stuff” necessary to carry out institutional and programmatic activities?*

Management capacity – The ability to use resources in an effective and efficient manner. *Does the organization implement policies and procedures that result in the cost-effective delivery of programs and services?*



Adaptive capacity – The ability to monitor and assess activities and respond to changes both within the organization and in the broader community. *Does the organization collect data that is used to ensure programs and services are making a difference for youth? Is the organization able to “change course” when necessary?*

Why is it important to assess organizational capacity?

In order to implement a teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) program, organizations must have adequate resources, policies, and procedures in place. It is critical to assess the capacity of the entire organization, not merely the divisions or teams that will be directly responsible for implementation. A lack of capacity at any level of the organization could place direct or indirect strain on staff or other resources intended for TPP program implementation. For example, if a new staff member –who was hired to manage data collection and analysis full-time for a TPP program– is constantly pulled away to support other programs in their data collection efforts the quality of the data could suffer. Such demands could make it difficult to assess whether the TPP program is being implemented effectively.

¹ Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. (2003). Grantmakers for Effective Organizations theory of change. Washington, DC: Author.

² <http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/buildingthecapacityofcapacitybuilders.pdf>

A thorough organizational capacity assessment can also inform both TPP program selection and implementation planning. Some TPP programs may require more resources than a given organization could reasonably expect to acquire. Identifying such needs ahead of time allows an organization to limit the selection process to TPP programs that are feasible given current staffing and funding levels. However, identifying a gap in organizational capacity ahead of time does not always limit program selection. In fact, when an organization understands which capacities need to be addressed in advance, staff can spend some time exploring options for capacity building. For example, an organization might adjust their TPP program budget to reflect additional training and staffing needs, or staff might identify potential partner organizations with complementary capacities.

For these reasons, and many others, an assessment of organizational resources is a component of many frameworks for high quality implementation of evidence-based programs^{3,4}. In fact most implementation frameworks include organizational capacity assessment and capacity building as crucial steps for program implementation. Remember, it is a lot easier (and safer!) to repair a plane before taking off than it is to make repairs mid-flight!

What does the organizational capacity assessment cover?

The Organizational Capacity Assessment for Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) is intended to assess common aspects of organizational capacity, with an emphasis on components that are particularly important to improve adolescent sexual health outcomes and reduce teen pregnancy. The items in this assessment measure the four broad components of organizational capacity that were listed above:

Leadership capacity – These items assess how well the selected TPP program aligns with an organization’s mission and the capacity of the leadership team to support implementation of the program.

Operational capacity – These items assess whether organizations have sufficient resources for general operations as well as the necessary resources to implement their TPP program.

Management capacity – These items assess whether organizations effectively and efficiently manage their financial resources, staff performance and strategic relationships with partner organizations.

Adaptive capacity – These items assess how well organizations use data to achieve sustainable impacts and adjust programming to meet the changing needs of their community.

When should organizations complete the organizational capacity assessment?

Organizations can complete the assessment before selecting a TPP program so that selection can be restricted to programs that align with the organization’s current capacity. Alternately, the assessment can be completed after selecting a TPP program to identify capacities that may require additional strengthening (such as hiring new staff, training staff in new skills, acquiring other resources, or identifying potential partner organizations with complementary capacities) prior to implementation. The

³ Little (PSBA) GTO was adapted from Wiseman S, Chinman M, Ebener P, Hunter S, Imm P, Wandersman A (2007). Getting to Outcomes: 10 Steps for Achieving Results-Based Accountability. No. TR-TR101/2. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation

⁴ Meyers, D. C., Durlak, J. A., & Wandersman, A. (2012). The quality implementation framework: A synthesis of critical steps in the implementation process. *American journal of community psychology*, 50(3-4), 462-480.

assessment should then be completed on an annual or bi-annual basis to monitor any changes in organizational capacity so that capacity building activities can be modified in a timely manner.

Who should be involved in completing the organizational capacity assessment?

A team approach should be taken to completing the organizational capacity assessment. The team should include individuals with expertise or knowledge in related areas (e.g., finance, program staff, management staff, etc.) to ensure that the information collected is accurate and thorough. Ensure that team members who have been assigned specific items understand their task and have adequate time to compile the requested information prior to meeting as a team. Timely preparation will ensure that team members will be able to have well-informed and productive discussions as they work through the assessment. Make sure to include someone from the leadership team to ensure organizational support!

How will the results of the organizational capacity assessment be used?

Building organizational capacity is critical to ensuring high quality TPP programs and program sustainability. Organizations can use the information gained through this assessment process to **prioritize, plan** and **monitor** efforts to build their organizational capacity.

Prioritize - These results can help organizations to identify priorities and develop a plan for building organizational capacity. Some organizations may prioritize areas with lower scores; others may choose to focus on areas that are of particular importance based on their current stage of program implementation or other contextual factors.

Plan- As organizations work to develop a plan for building organizational capacity, they should consider inviting other individuals to contribute to the planning process who were not involved in completing the assessment. Capacity building efforts should also be integrated into organizational work plans and/or sustainability plans!

Monitor- Once organizations have begun to implement their plan to build organizational capacity revisiting the assessment tool at regular intervals can serve to document progress and ensure that necessary adjustments to the plan are made in a timely manner.

TPP Resources to Strengthen Organizational Capacity

Needs and Resources Assessment Tip sheet:

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/tip_sheets/needs-assessment-508.pdf

Performance Management Assessment:

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/learning/performance_mgmt/index.html

Performance Management Tools:

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/performance-management.html#program

Collaboration Toolkit:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/learning/coll-tk/index.html#.U3pWoPldWfU>

Sustainability Resources:

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/sustainability.html