



# The Roles Community Economic Development Practitioners Can Assume

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## Philosophy for working with communities:

Helping communities make more informed decisions.

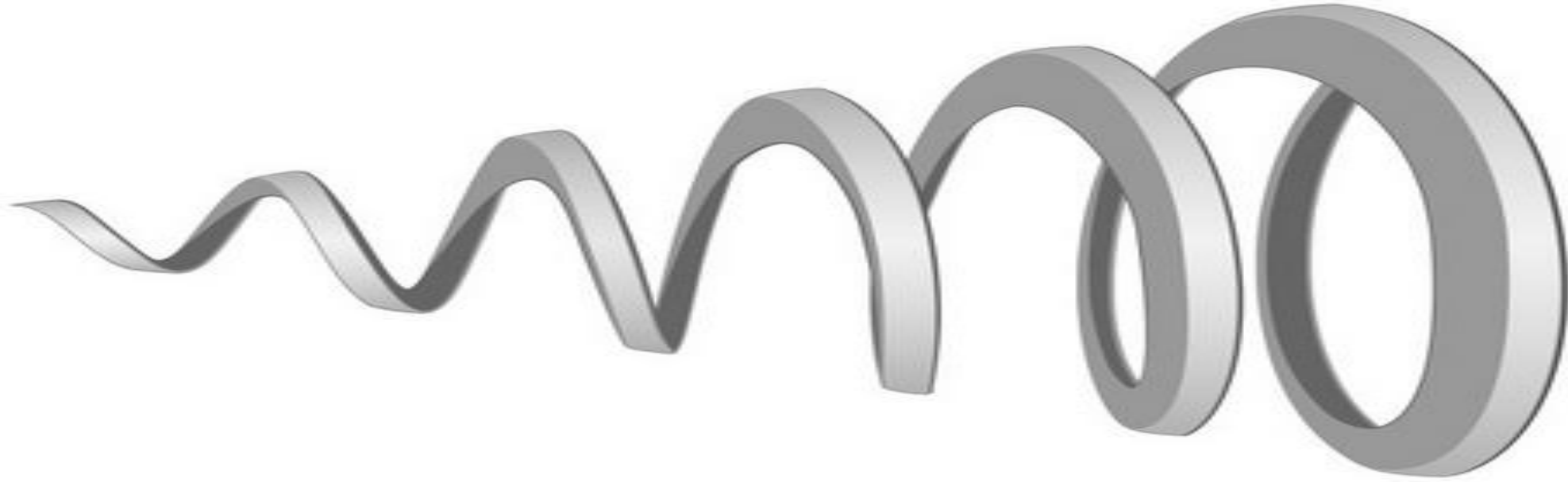
Helping make decisions:	Process oriented
More informed decisions:	Content oriented

Content: Information, research based, best practices.

Challenge: What is the proper balance between process and content? Answer hinges on the level of preparedness or capacity of individual communities.



# Spectrum of Community Capacity



Limited Capacity:

Limited Sense of Community  
Little Civic Engagement  
Passive Local Government

Or/

Dysfunctional at Multiple Levels

High Capacity:

Strong Sense of Community  
High Civic Engagement  
Proactive Local Government

Or/

Highly Functional at Multiple Levels

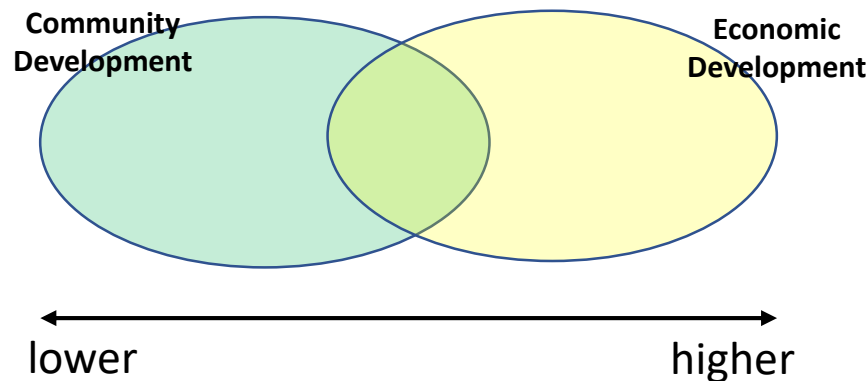


Challenge: What is the proper balance between process and content?

Answer hinges on the level of preparedness or capacity of individual communities.

Effective leadership, active pools of volunteers, organized business organizations, network of effective non-profits, strong bridging social capital.

Higher levels of these, leans toward content orientation, lower levels of these lean toward process.



Are all communities ready to undertake economic development? The answer speaks to level of preparedness.



Drawing on Christenson and Robinson (1989)

## Three Basic Roles that a Practitioner Can Assume:

- self-help
- technical assistance
- conflict

Toomey (2011) suggests eight roles and Kenny (2016) talks in terms of two broad roles, Haaland and Smutko (2004) suggest that Extension educators can assume an infinite variety of roles, so these classification or grouping of roles are not “cast in stone”.

Christenson, James A., and Jerry W. Robinson. *Community development in perspective*. Iowa State University Press, 1989.

Haaland, Kay and Steven Smutko. “Handling Scientific and Technical Information in Contentious Public Issues: A Public Issues Education Approach.” NC State University. 2004.

Kenny, Sue. *Changing community development roles: The challenges of a globalizing world*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2016.

Toomey, Anne H. "Empowerment and disempowerment in community development practice: eight roles practitioners play." *Community Development Journal* 46.2 (2011): 181-195.





*Self-Help* is based on the premise that the people of the community can, should and will solve their own problems.

- The practitioner is a facilitator of the process. The self-help approach requires the practitioner to act differently depending on whether or not the community is well defined.
- If the community is not well defined, or lacks organization, the practitioner serves as a facilitator or organizer, and as a proxy leader.
- On the other hand, the practitioner injects the right kind of information to key participants if the community is well defined or organized, but may not be forward thinking.



### Advantages Self-Help

- it often builds a stronger sense of community;
- it often evolves into a holistic approach;
- it builds a self-sustaining ability to deal with new problems; and
- it allows for community specific solutions.

### Disadvantages Self-Help

- it works best in smaller communities or neighborhoods but change is often slow;
- special interests may cloud issues and cause the true community to take a longer time to appear;
- since the practitioner is concerned about the community learning to do-it-itself, accomplishing specific tasks may be secondary;
- decisions may be based on impression rather than fact.



The *Technical Assistance approach* is based on the premise that the community is well defined, the community has identified a problem or goal, and is moving toward a plan of action.

- The practitioner supports task-oriented actions.
- For the practitioner, approaches to technical assistance vary with whether one is doing policy development or implementation.
- In policy development, the practitioner uses the *scientific method* to identify strengths and weaknesses of the community. These analyses are then used to help formulate policy.
- In policy implementation the approach is based on the premise that the community has identified policies to achieve defined goals or objectives. The practitioner helps in the technical implementation of the policy.





### Advantages of technical assistance

- change can be rapid;
- it works in any size community;
- it is task driven (easier to "sink your teeth" into it); and
- that decisions are based on fact.

### Disadvantages of technical assistance

- it can give the illusion of finality of the process;
- that the process may be lost to task accomplishment;
- that it often loses the *holistic* view; and
- that it presumes the practitioner has, or can obtain, the necessary technical skills.



*Conflict* is based on the premise that the community is fragmented and grid-locked. The practitioner works to break the gridlock.

- Here the practitioner works either as an advocate or mediator.
- As an advocate, the practitioner works with a segment (perhaps the silent majority) of the community assumed to be suppressed by the leadership of the community or other more vocal groups.
- The role of the practitioner is to act as an advocate for the oppressed group.
- As a mediator, the practitioner acts as a facilitator to open lines of communication between and within sub-groups then works toward compromise to effect change.





**Saul Alinsky** (January 30, 1909–June 12, 1972) was an American community organizer. He is generally considered to be the founder of modern community organizing and has been compared in *Playboy Magazine* to Thomas Paine as "one of the great American leaders of the nonsocialist left."

- Alinsky is often credited with laying the foundation for the grassroots political organizing that dominated the 1960s.
- Hillary Clinton's senior honors thesis at Wellesley College was on Saul Alinsky.
- Adam Brandon, a spokesman for the conservative non-profit organization Freedom Works, which is one of several groups involved in organizing Tea Party protests, says the group gives *Alinsky's Rules for Radicals* to its top leadership members.



## Advantages of the conflict approach

- rapid change;
- communication within the community is opened (silent majority); and
- future alliances forged.

## Disadvantages of the conflict approach

- the possibility that the practitioner may be viewed as biased;
- that opponents may become enemies;
- that change is often not sustainable; and
- don't plan on living in that community very long.....



Regardless of how the practitioner chooses to work in the community there are some common themes that apply throughout.

- Self-interest is assumed until proven otherwise (recall growth machine theory). This includes not only people in the community, but local governments and external actors and agency people.
- It is important to look at the community as a collage of interacting interest groups each seeking the self-interest of its members.



- The practitioner should not expect people to behave rationally from their (the practitioner's) viewpoint.
- They (community members) may be dealing rationally from their perspectives, goals, values and understanding of the situation, but not yours.
- The community practitioner should not worry about who is right or wrong.
- If the practitioner imposes their own normative views, they begin to lose their objectivity and are less able to understand why people are doing what they are doing (a weakness of the conflict approach?).





- It is also important to remember that participation is a means, not an end. Most people participate to do something or get something. (Trade off between process vs content?)
- Each approach to community economic development should expect conflict and take steps to manage it.
- The practitioner must learn to negotiate and form coalitions.
- Negotiation is all about the dynamics and chemistry of community power.
- The effective practitioner should understand power and be able harness it for the betterment of the community.



- Most community decisions will not always appear to be rational, purposeful, or controlled.
- This simply says that most community decisions are not made by one person and there is seldom a culprit to blame.
- These themes tend to apply regardless of approach, and the practitioner who keeps them in mind is more likely to stay sane.



As faculty/staff of UW-Madison, there is one additional role or element that stands out:

## Scholarship

Academic study or achievement; learning of a high level.

Learning; knowledge acquired by study; the academic attainments of a scholar

Knowledge resulting from study and research in a particular field.

The activity, methods or attainments of a scholar.

Deller's lame attempt: creating new knowledge.



From the **UW-Madison Social Sciences Divisional Committee**.....

.....**scholarly inquiry that makes a contribution to knowledge**. These accomplishments and productive scholarship may be demonstrated in one or more of the following ways:

- (1) conducting research with appropriate methods and rigor;
- (2) conceptualizing and theorizing in an original way;
- (3) *synthesizing, critically analyzing, and clarifying extant knowledge and research;*
- (4) developing innovative methods for conducting scholarly inquiry; or
- (5) *conducting research related to the solution of practical problems of individuals, groups, organizations, or societies.*



From the **UW-Madison Social Sciences Divisional Committee**.....

Evidence of research performance ..... includes

- (1) scholarly books, monographs, chapters, bulletins, media, videotapes, computer programs, technical reports, web sites, etc.;
- (2) articles published or accepted for publication in scholarly or professional journals;
- (3) extension/outreach publications and exemplary materials;**
- (4) citation of the work, along with norms for the field or subfield;
- (5) research awards, grants, and proposals;**
- (6) evaluations by authorities, especially those from other major universities, in the candidate's field of specialization;
- (7) papers read at professional meetings,** invited lectures at other universities and learned societies, invitations to participate in professional meetings, editorial positions with major professional journals, testimony before governmental committees, and professional honors, awards and consultations, and
- (8) patents or evidence of intellectual property.



## The Practice of Community Economic Development

Situation	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
What issue is the community struggling with? Is it a 'symptom' or the underlying issue?	Community/regional resources Community/regional partners Extension colleagues Grants Existing knowledge base	Community/regional meetings Community/regional workshops Issue focused research Scholarly products	Work your way out of a job!

### Process vs Content

The UW-Madison implicit bias is “scholarly products” which historically means academic journal articles (or academic books). They struggle with documenting “outcomes” (journal citation counts?).

For Extension faculty/staff, greater emphasis on “outcomes”...is the work causing a difference?

BUT, is that work based on and/or adding to our scholarly understanding of the issues?





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# Questions, Comments, Complaints

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