

Components of a Successful Capacity Building Program

By Janette Keiser, JD, PE

A successful capacity building program requires 5 basic components. If one is missing, successful outcomes are unlikely. If two or more are missing, successful outcomes are virtually impossible.

1. A knowledgeable and committed owner.

The construction project owner must be (a) knowledgeable enough to understand and manage the legal framework, technical issues, and political implications of a capacity building program, and (b) committed enough to facilitate, and be an advocate for, the individual and organizational changes required to make the program work.

2. A receptive contractor community with a base level of capacity.

The contractor community must be receptive to the program's features and benefits so they will cooperate with the program's requirements. The contractors may need to adjust their individual and business behavior to meet the program's requirements. Further, a capacity building program is not well suited to assist start-up companies. Rather, a capacity building program needs contractor participants to have a base level of technical skills, financial strength and management capability so the program's features and benefits have something to work with. The contractors may need to change individual and business behaviors to address capacity issues on their own, or with other resources, before they can take advantage of the features and benefits of a capacity building program

3. Bond and financing tools.

A business who wants to access larger contracts must be able to access bonding and financing to support those more complex contracts.

4. Competent technical resources.

The contractors must have access to people who can help them develop the additional technical and managerial skills the contractors need to effectively manage more complex contracts. This means the technical assistance resources must have personnel experienced in managing contracts of substantial size, scope and complexity. This may require technical assistance centers to build collaborations with each other, adjust staffing, upgrade operational protocols or otherwise change the way they do business so they can provide offer qualified, relevant assistance.

5. Direct connections to jobs.

Contractors need to be able to pay the bills before they can focus on upgrading their capacity. Plus, technical assistance only works if it is provided in a relevant context. An effective capacity building program needs a way to channel contractor participants into actual contracts. This component empowers the contractors to invest in themselves because they will be applying the knowledge they gain from technical assistance into real-world projects and making enough money to afford to do so.