



# Scaling Transformative Change

***Guiding Principle for Strategic Capacity Building: When organizational capacity for change is strategically planned, developed, and continuously implemented, transformative change is scaled.***

The context in which community colleges operate has changed in complex ways and engaging in change requires attention to both culture and capacity. Change initiatives may start off successfully, and then fail during the implementation phase when the organization needs to draw on its infrastructure, structures, or policies. Capacity is required at all levels to achieve systemic reform. Embarking on systemic change requires robust capacities that enable organizations to execute essential current activities while undertaking change, moving back and forth between incremental and developmental initiatives while constantly learning. These robust capacities enable individuals to make sense of the change, remain agile as change is undertaken, and engage in continuous assessment and adaptation (Century, 1999; Fullan, 2014; Harsh, 2013; Kezar, 2014).

This level of change, which has been described by many names, such as deep, second-order, whole-system, and double-loop learning (Argyris, 1997; Fullan, 2009; Kezar, 2014), substantially challenges existing assumptions and beliefs, and alters the operating systems, values and culture of organizations. The strategic planning for systemic change involves asking the questions of where capacity is needed, what kind of capacity is needed to achieve what end, and what plan is needed to move forward with building the capacity to achieve the change. Building capacity does not merely mean finding more resources – more is sometimes just that, and not necessarily better (Lassiter, 2013). Also, change may be welcome even when there are limited financial resources to support it, calling on transformative leaders to strategize, motivate and inspire others to act. Building the capacity of diverse groups of people to engage in the change process, to share expertise, learn, celebrate success, and vent concerns can be just as important as financial incentives (Kezar, 2014).

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Early planning involves giving attention to the readiness for change, for building the will of individuals for change, and moving toward a culture that invites change and encourages risk. The work involved to move forward with change can be especially difficult for people in complex and dynamic environments because it requires extra time, attention and focus, especially in organizations where people have multiple and conflicting demands on their schedules (Argyris, 1997). Individuals may have different reasons for wanting the change, and have questions about the usefulness of change that include: how the change will affect themselves and their colleagues; how the change will affect resources and the status of their unit; how much time and energy will be needed to do the work; and what risks and benefits may emerge from getting involved (Kanter, 2000). Transformative leaders engage with diverse groups of individuals to communicate the vision for change and engage with them about the work that will need to be done across the organization. Together, core operational areas are examined to understand their health and functionality and to identify areas in which capacity needs to be built or expanded (Kezar, 2014). This process values the existing capacities of all stakeholders and engages them in focusing on strengthening the organization rather than lingering on deficiencies and pointing out deficits. Capacity building efforts that recognize the unique context of the organization help to magnify organizational strengths and strategically reinforce areas where more support is needed (Stokes, Stacey, and Lake, 2006).

To scale and sustain change, organizations often need to build capacity in multiple areas, including human, organizational, structural, and materials. The following table includes strategy building activities organized under each of these areas. These are not discrete categories; in fact, they are intertwined and interdependent. A collective view of capacity – how the various kinds are aligned and related – can help with understanding the fit of a potential change with the organization and the organization's readiness for that change (ATD, 2012; Century, 1999; Fullan, 2014; Kezar, 2014).

Transformative  
Leadership

Equity and  
Outcomes

Strategic Capacity  
Building

Policy Change

Partnerships and  
Networking

Data Utilization

Intentional  
Communications

## Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to sustaining and scaling change that closes equity gaps and improves student outcomes in the community college education context.

## Guiding Principles for Scaling Transformative Change

| Human Capacity   | Structural Capacity  |
|--|--|
| Building will – bringing people on board; building interest, patience and persistence; encouraging and developing the willingness to risk and be comfortable with uncertainty; surfacing discontent; and connecting change to larger system  | Policies; procedures; formalized practices – building leadership support; developing data capacity; fostering trust to examine and challenge current structures; engaging with policy makers to build areas of cooperation and collaboration; and enlisting participation of staff to assess systems and provide input on change |
| Acquiring knowledge – getting people the information they need; facilitating the understanding of the information; identifying possibilities for action; engaging in collaborative, social learning, relevant to local context; and analyzing the impact of change in relation to outcomes |  |
| Networking – meeting others who have made change and learning from them; and nurturing the vision of change  | Support systems – restructuring or creating structures (units, departments) as needed; realigning roles; and reallocating resources  |
| Building diversity – engaging diverse groups of people with multiple roles, perspectives, and skills   |  |
| Organizational Capacity  | Materials Capacity   |
| Vision for change – accessing external expertise; and engaging with internal stakeholders to develop vision and plan   | Fiscal – reallocating resources as needed; and facilitating planning for identifying sources of revenue  |
| Venues for intentional communications – discussing plan; encouraging questions; addressing inconsistencies; and engaging with diverse groups   | Data – identifying ways to balance reporting requirements along with building capacity to support change; reducing operational silos; engaging IR and IT as part of change team; planning for data use, not just collection; and developing new measures that respond to local context   |
| Networks & teams – encouraging collaboration and interaction; and building infrastructure for change   |  |
| Leadership – using collective leadership to draw on different groups; building a culture of inquiry; mobilizing people for action; raising awareness; and building expectation for data-driven decision making   | Equipment/Technology – Engaging with internal and external partners to plan for acquisition and maintenance  |

Strategic capacity building involves bringing diverse groups of people together to build a collective understanding of and commitment to change. Capacity is built to enable the organization to answer complicated and sometimes unspoken questions; develop mutual goals; solve problems; pool resources to tackle issues more comprehensively; and develop practices and strategies for undertaking, scaling, and sustaining the change. This work is not accomplished by an individual or small group that identifies the change and tells others that it will happen. Rather, it requires non-stop partnering to build a common vision, collaborating to internalize the concepts, and sharing stories and examples of the potential of the vision as it becomes a reality (Fullan, 2014). In education, capacity building for change is undertaken with insistence on better student outcomes by developing improved approaches to opportunity and enhanced performance that transforms the institution.

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