Recognizing Prior Learning in the context of Rural Community Development

Dr. Gary McNeely, PLAR Coordinator, Registrar's Office
Dr. Wayne Kelly, Director, Rural Development Institute

Learning Outcomes – Adapting VPL/RPL to Rural Community Development (CD)

- Demonstrate how learning is achieved throughout the CD Cycle and how CD Projects (successes and failures) highlight CD competencies and community capacity

- Recognize how VPL/RPL reflective assessments function as a first step in asset-mapping of Individuals, Organizations, and Communities engaged in CD

- Analyze the impact of gap training tailored to community capacity levels and competency requirements

Asset Mapping – process for identifying the knowledge, skills, & resources available within a community

Brandon University's Rural Development Institute

RDI
RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

MAJOR RESEARCH THEMES

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Major Research themes: community assessment, capacity building, agriculture, climate change, immigration, digital technologies, and economic development

Community-based Research Projects are conducted as collaborative learning exercises to make a positive impact on rural community well-being
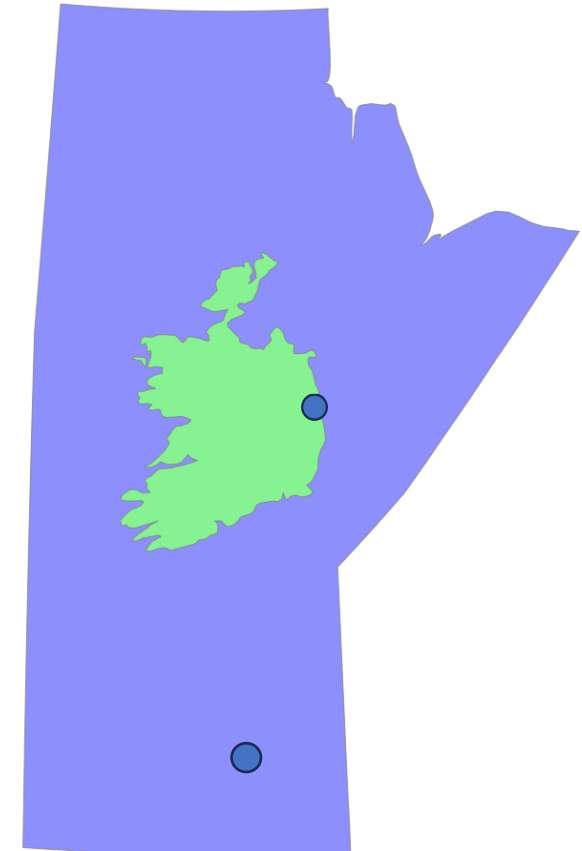
Project Partners are active participants in the research design, data collection and analysis, and mobilization of research findings

Rural landscape of Manitoba and Republic of Ireland

Manitoba	Ireland
647,000 km^2	70,000 km^2
137 municipalities	26 counties
Population – 1.4 MM	Population – 5.09 MM
Large Metros: Winnipeg – 850,000; Brandon – 55,000	Large Metros: Greater Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway – 2.45 MM
8 centres over 10,000	49 centres over 10,000
Rural towns – less than 1000	Rural towns – less than 1500
Statistics Canada	Central Statistics Office

RDI's Experience in Rural Community Development (CD)

Community Well-being

- Assess the Current Situation
- Establish Objectives
- Develop Action Plans
- Implement the Plan
- Evaluate Progress and Impacts

- Rural communities are unique: demographics, economic sectors, education/medical services, amenities, governance, region

- Communities, Organizations, and Individuals participating in CD have differing capacities / competencies

- All stages in CD are opportunities for recognizing learning and building community capacity *

* Source: International Association of Community Development, 2018

Who is involved in CD projects?

- **Community Leadership and Departments**
  - Mayors and Council Members; Chief Administrative 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

This diversity is evidence of Democracy in Action, but
what about the Validation of whose learning?

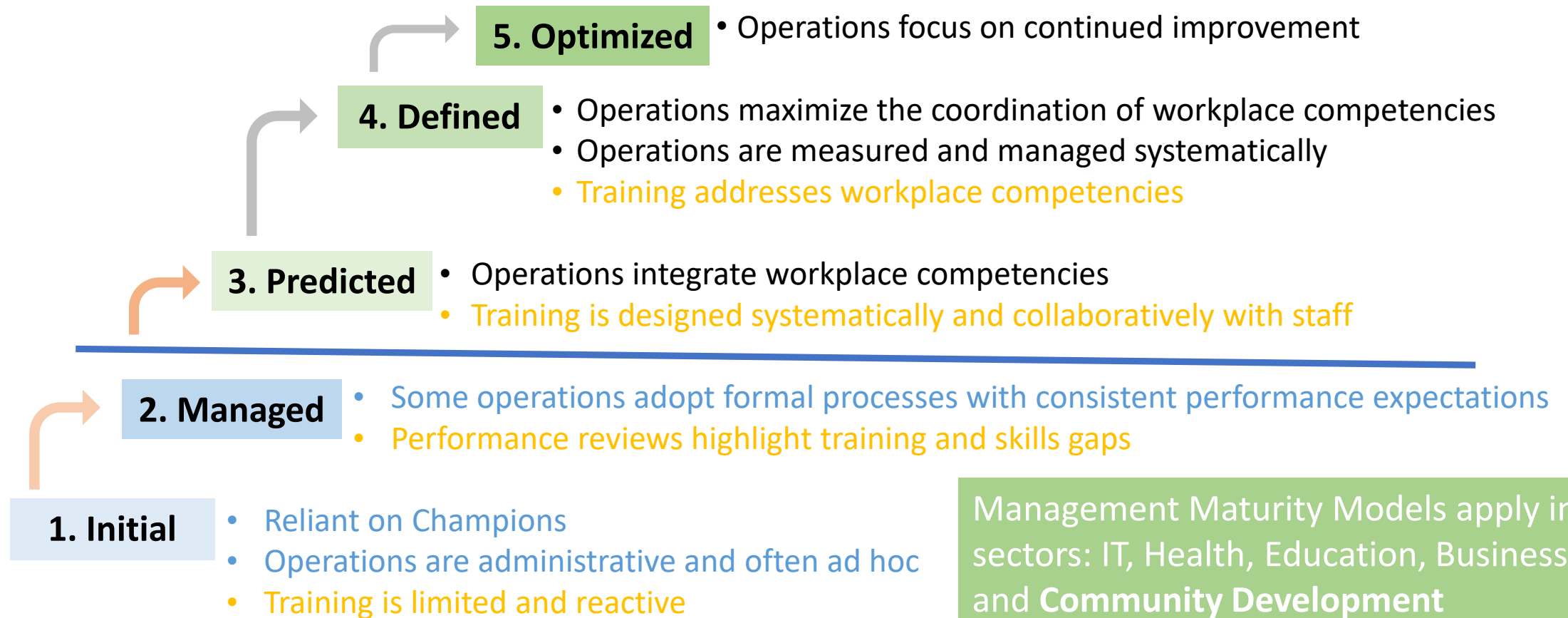# Phase 1: Scan of National Occupational Codes: Baselining CD Competencies

- Project management – throughout the CD Cycle
- Project specific Expertise / Experience / Education
- Financial management
- Leadership, Collaboration, Community & Regional Engagement
- Effective Communication (e.g., Grant Writing, Reporting)
- Research and Data – (publicly accessible & community-based): Access, Methods & Analyses, Applications, and Measuring Impacts

Source: Government of Canada, 2024

Phase 1: Preliminary Observations

- **NOCs stress university or college programming but acknowledge work-based training and informal learning in selected roles**

- **NOCs are too vague** and not articulated as competencies linked to CD nor the specific focus of CD projects (e.g., employment, tourism, arts, digital)

- **NOCs competencies are presented as an Ideal case but not the Local Community Reality. This means (1) relying on who is available locally, (2) recognizing their competency levels and building capacity from there, (3) CD competency levels can range from basic to expert, and (4) expert level competencies is not a pre-condition for CD.**

Phase 2: Aligning Rural Community's CD Capacity against Management Maturity Levels

5. Optimized • Operations focus on continued improvement

4. Defined • Operations maximize the coordination of workplace competencies
• Operations are measured and managed systematically
• Training addresses workplace competencies

3. Predicted • Operations integrate workplace competencies
• Training is designed systematically and collaboratively with staff

2. Managed • Some operations adopt formal processes with consistent performance expectations
• Performance reviews highlight training and skills gaps

1. Initial • Reliant on Champions
• Operations are administrative and often ad hoc
• Training is limited and reactive

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

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

Phase 2: Preliminary Observations

- **As in all sectors involving management, rural communities are challenged in CD moving beyond level 1 -> 2**

- Community members, organizations, communities lack experience in different dimensions of CD projects and **Default to hiring external consultants – Learning through CD becomes truncated**.

- Organizations & Communities plateau at #2 based on willingness/desire, $$ & human resources, & time – **BUT Is this inevitable**?

- **Champions have competencies, but if some leave, CD momentum and capacity may decline but evaporate? What's the tipping point?**

- **Many organizations** and communities have Managed Processes in CD, but these are not recognized as latent CD Competencies – begs the question whether maturity models understand competencies levels (an all or nothing proposition)

- **Decision-making through CD Cycle are collective and can be recognized as shared learning**

- Project evaluation throughout the CD cycle can identify challenges & gaps in knowledge and skills, so CD training can be strategic, prioritized and planned

- Incremental training measures can have an important impact on rural community capacity building

Phase 3: Accessing and Utilizing Community Capitals in CD

Diagram of Community Capitals surrounding COMMUNITY Well-being:

- HUMAN CAPITAL — Knowledge, Skills, expertise, training
- SOCIAL CAPITAL — Communication, relationships, participation, shared experiences
- CULTURAL CAPITAL — Values, heritage, perceptions, local content
- POLITICAL CAPITAL — Accountability, power, civic engagement
- BUILT CAPITAL — Local Infrastructure: telecommunications, housing, etc.
- NATURAL CAPITAL — Location, environment geography, amenities
- FINANCIAL CAPITAL — Monetary resources, local business capacity, local workforce

Capitals are:
- Assets and resources applied in CD projects
- Interacting dimensions within CD projects intended to enhance Community Well-being
- Fluid, enacted and engaged rather than static
- Prioritized differently depending on the community

CD Projects can draw upon Capitals if:
- ➤ Access to Capitals
- ➤ Knowledge and Skills to Use
- ➤ Application of Capitals
- ➤ Assessment of Impacts

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

Phase 3: Preliminary Observations

- Only applications of capitals can have on impact on community well-being

- A focus on Human, Social & Financial Capitals, excluding knowledge and skills relating to other capitals, diminishes the latter's relevance to the CD projects

- Capitals are prioritized (CD participants' agenda/interest), which can diminish community equity, diversity, inclusion

- Capitals is a holistic framework, so awareness of capital interactions is important for conceiving, planning CD projects and measuring impacts

Case Studies of CD Capacity and Competency: Walking the Talk!

Rural Development Institute:

- Review of applied research projects – Identify capacity levels and gaps in Research themes
- Used Reflective Assessment to outline Professional Development Opportunities – Digital Badges for Staff & Students
- Micro-credentials for organizations and community development practitioners

Connect MB: Enhancing Digital Connectivity in rural Manitoba

- Multiple Teams through the CD Cycle
- Identified key Roles and Competencies in rural communities but questions remain how these blend through the CD Cycle

Learning Outcomes – Adapting VPL/RPL to Rural Community Development (CD)

- **Demonstrate how learning is achieved throughout the CD Cycle** and how CD Projects (successes and failures) highlight CD competencies and community capacity

- **Recognize how VPL/RPL reflective assessments function as a first step in asset-mapping** of Individuals, Organizations, and Communities engaged in CD

- **Analyze the impact of gap training** tailored to community maturity levels and competency requirements

Key References

International Association of Community Development (2018). *Towards Shared International Standards for Community Development Practice*. https://www.iacdglobal.org/

Government of Canada (2024). National Occupation Classification. https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/

Curtis, B., Hefley, B., & Miller, S. (2009). *People capability maturity model (P-CMM) version 2.0* (No. CMU/SEI-2009-TR-003). *Pittsburgh, PA: Software Engineering Institute, Carnegie Mellow University*. https://insights.sei.cmu.edu/documents/808/2009_005_001_15095.pdf

Heller, A. & Varney, F. (2013). *Using Process Management Maturity Models*. American Productivity & Quality Centre. https://www.apqc.org/

Prosci. (2023). *An Introduction to Change Management*. https://www.prosci.com/blog/change-management-maturity-model

Kelly, W. (2020). *Digital Youth Building Digital Capacity.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Galway.

Fey, S. Bregendahl, C., & Flora, C. (2006). The Measurement of Community Capitals through Research. *Online Journal of Rural Research*. *1*(1). http://doi.org/10.4148/ojrrp.v1i1.29

Emery, M., & Flora, C. (2006). Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework. *Community Development*, *37*(1), 19–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490152

Project Contact Information

- Gary McNeely – mcneelyg@brandonu.ca

- Wayne Kelly – kellyw@brandonu.ca

Interest in the RDI Capacity Building Project – https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/projects/designing-capacity-building-pathways-for-rural-community-development/