

# **Community Capacity: A Useful Concept for Community Development**

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# Outline

- Context
- What is community capacity?
- How do we measure it?
- Methods of data collection
- What purpose can it serve?

# The Context

- conditions are changing in natural resource communities
- in many communities, decreasing opportunities in primary industries
- local people, leaders, policy-makers looking for ways to diversify local economies

# Why Community Capacity Assessment

- helps to identify the strengths (opportunities) and weaknesses (needs) of a community
- a tool for identifying locally appropriate development strategies

# What is Community Capacity?

- many definitions
- common thread: it is the bundle of skills/resources the community possesses which can be mobilized in order to improve the community
- Examples...

The ability to identify, enhance and mobilize the human potential, economic opportunities, social relationships, and ecological resources found within a community for the purpose of improved community stability.

**- Simon Fraser Community Economic Development Centre**

The collective ability of residents in a community to respond (the communal response) to external and internal stresses; to create and take advantage of opportunities; and to meet the needs of residents, diversely defined

- Kusel 1996

The collective ability of a group (the community) to combine various forms of capital within the institutional and relational contexts to produce desired results or outcomes.

Capital= economic capital, social capital, natural capital, human capital

**- Capacity Team, New Rural Economy Project**



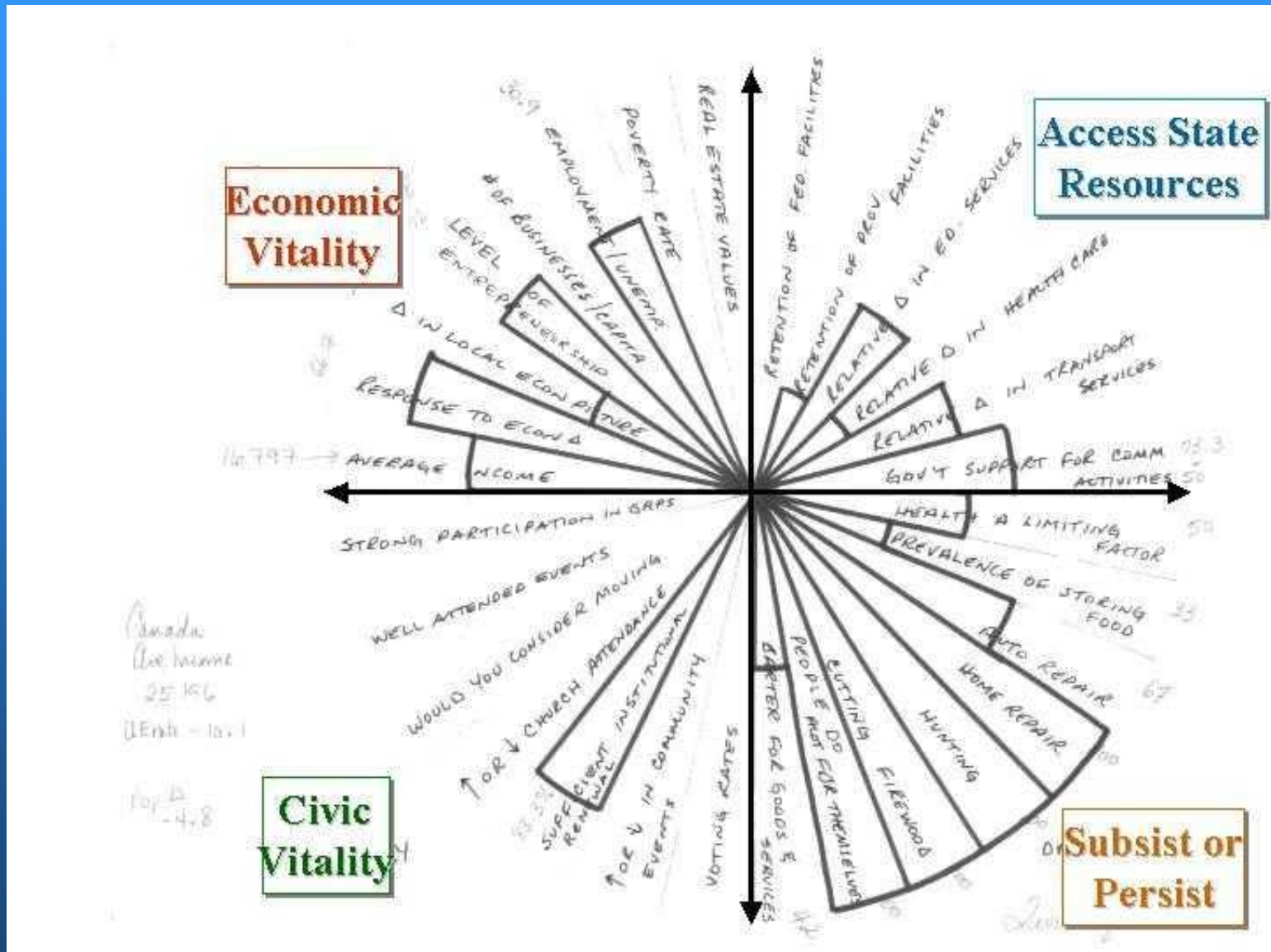
# How to Measure Community Capacity?

- different frameworks exist
  - capital (economic, social, natural, human)
  - building blocks (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- indicators approach common
  - descriptive measures of capacity

## Example 1: Community Economic Development Centre, SFU

	<b>Success Factors</b>	<b>Indicators (examples)</b>
Human Capital	Skills/education Leadership Civic engagement	Education levels Integration of retirees/youths Rates of volunteerism
Social Capital	Sense of community Community organizations Community participation	Crime rates Number/health of groups Avenues for info sharing
Economic Capital	Economic health Local control Access to capital	Employment levels # of locally owned businesses Local sources of capital
Ecological Capital	Ecosystem health Natural resources Stewardship	Water and air quality Harvesting rates Recycling programs

# Example 2: New Rural Economy Project



# Methods of Data Collection

- quantitative and qualitative methods useful
  - census data
  - interviews
  - surveys
- examples from Alma, N.B.
  - average household income
  - real estate values

# What Purpose can it Serve?

- allow communities to become more aware of their collective needs/aspirations
- allow communities to undertake better planning
- allow for the initiation of community monitoring
- allow policy makers to better understand what can be done to build on community assets

**The End**