Building Organizational Capacity

Progress on community based management initiatives requires some level of organization. Some communities choose to incorporate as a non-profit organization while others may choose simply to come together as a community group. There are advantages and disadvantageous to each approach. Forming a non-profit organization requires considerable administration and management with several regulations that must be met. However, non-profit organizations are able to seek funding directly from donors and being incorporated may strengthen a group's credibility when pursuing key co-management actions such as working with State or Federal agencies. Choosing not to incorporate, but come together as a community group or organization provides more flexibility and much less administrative burden; however, it may be more difficult to fundraise and hire or contract people to help pursue key activities. Before a community chooses which path to follow they should consider their short and long-term goals and whether or not they have the desire and capacity to manage their organization as a non-profit entity.

Whether a community forms a non-profit organization or moves forward as an unincorporated community organization or group, it is important to address the following key questions:

1. How you organize and structure your group or organization?
2. How will you coordinate and communicate internally with members and externally with partners?
3. What is your shared vision for your place and resources?
4. What is your organization's role (mission) in achieving that vision?
5. What do you want to accomplish (their priority objectives)?
6. What are the priority activities that are needed to achieve their objectives?
7. What resources and skills are required to achieve the objectives?
8. Does your group have the needed resources and skills and if not how will you get them?
9. How will you track your progress and adjust your activities and objectives as needed?
10. How will you support yourselves on your journey? This includes financial support, kōkua from friends and partners, and how you will sustain motivation and enthusiasm.

Strategic Planning is one of the main tools that community-based groups or organizations can use to answer these questions. Please see the resources on Strategic Planning for Community-based Organizations which can help your organization to develop a Strategic Plan.

Additionally, community organizations, particularly those that incorporate as nonprofits, need to develop their Board and Leadership and put administrative and operational systems in place.

Finally, to be fully functional, an organization will need to generate resources to support its activities. This may come in many forms including any or all of the following:

1. Voluntary donations of time
2. Seeking donations from individuals
3. Fundraising through events such as car washes, bake sales, and others
4. Writing grant proposals to foundations, government, and others funders

Please see the resources on Proposal Writing that may help you if you chose to write grant proposals.