5

Steps 5–8, Completing the Hybrid Process

Table 5.1 contains the last activities for needs assessment and asset/capacity building. The community or organization decides to take action, and the digesting of assets and needs is by and large over. Let's get going to improve.

Table 5.1 Hybrid Framework for Needs Assessment and Asset/Capacity Building With Possible Methods/Strategies

Step	*Purpose*	*Methods/Strategies*
5. Using what has been learned to make decisions for possible new programs	Align the two parts of the improvement picture. Agree if alignment is the best way to proceed. Determine if more data and information should be collected.	Each subcommittee does an independent review of the other's results. Develop a matrix to see where needs and assets overlap and where they don't. Consider use of group procedures: • check in/tune in • what/so what/now what • concept mapping/mind mapping • others

(Continued)

Table 5.1 (Continued)

Step	*Purpose*	*Methods/Strategies*
6. Developing a strategy for improvement	Translate findings into action plans for development and positive change.	Use a variety of techniques: • success mapping • fist to five • multi-attribute utility theory • others
7. Implementing and evaluating the action plan	Conduct planned activities. See how well they are functioning and what their outcomes are.	Use to-do lists and responsibility sheets. Conduct formative and summative evaluations of activities.
8. Recycling back to first steps for expanding the improvement package	Pick up other facets of improvement that could not be done as first or early activities.	The group revisits previous findings and moves ahead with those it selects.

AN INTERESTING EXAMPLE OF MOVING FORWARD

In the suburb where the author lived, an expanse of open land was ceded by the school district to ensure borders with the neighboring urban district. In trade, a big revenue-producing area was given to the latter, and harmony was forever after—or was it? The space that had long been fallow underwent rapid growth with the construction of homes, condos, apartments, restaurants, companies, and office buildings. Many more children had to be educated, and since major tax dollars were given away, the burden was on less rich sources to support schools.

The pressure on the elementary and middle schools and the one high school intensified. When the author's youngest son was a senior, crowding was so bad that teachers had to direct traffic during the change of classes (to prevent class clowns, the author's son included, from acting out). The number of school-age children rose to more than 11,000, close to double what it was before.

Needs were apparent, but so were opportunities. Was a needs assessment called for, or would it be better to think about asset/capacity building? How to proceed? Exhibit 5.1 is a synopsis of what happened with the name of the district changed, and Figure 5.1 is an adaptation of one of the drawings that the schools used when approaching the public with their work.

Exhibit 5.1 The Illustrative Case of the Westington Schools

Administrators, teachers, the board, and community members began to meet, and the consensus was that thinking about the future must start. Data gathering and planning efforts would be required. This led to a committee consisting of teachers and community members. From the start, the stress was on needs being created by a population press and that it was a unique opportunity to build on positives for the future. It was a nexus of needs and assets.

The suburb was close to a state university with many members of the faculty calling it home, including one experienced in planning processes and who was an active parent with the schools. She consented to lead the endeavor and was very good at creating involvement, which was instrumental in the success that was realized. This was a key factor. (Leadership and facilitation were absolutely mandatory for establishing the right ambience. Whether it is needs assessment, asset/capacity building, or a combination, this is the deal maker. A committee or an individual can do it so long as there is good sense of how groups work.)

What was done? The initiating group sought information about needs and assets. Questions were raised to focus the undertaking.

- What are the strengths in the schools and in the community (assets/resources)?
- Is it possible to expand the current facility and take advantage of a readily available resource?
- What might happen as the student population gets larger (needs)?
- What have other districts done when facing similar situations (benchmarking for needs and assets)?
- What does the formal and informal literature say that would be helpful?
- What does our community (within and outside of education) think? The voice of the community is important.

(Continued)

(Continued)

The guiding group with its exceptional leadership did the following:

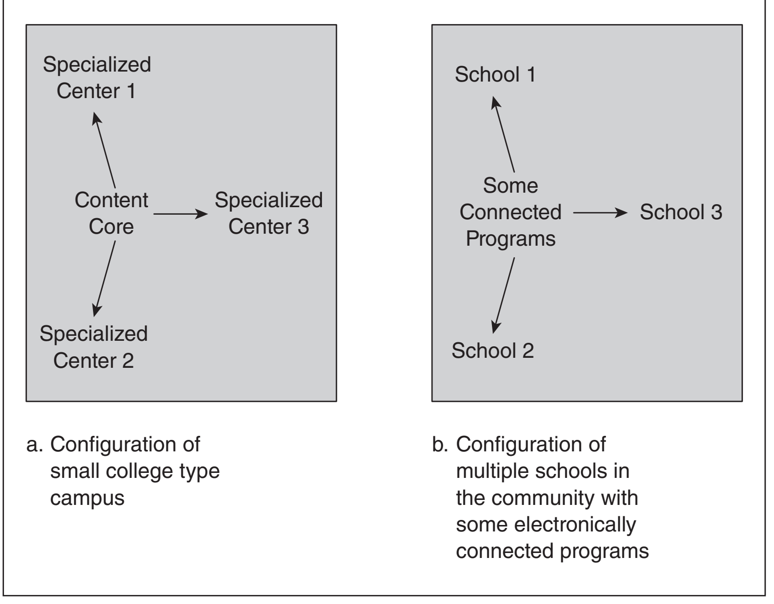
- Subgroups looked at literature regarding the future of education and trends in the field.
- An architectural study of the high school was commissioned to see if it could be expanded to accommodate burgeoning numbers of students. The finding was negative, with huge costs to be incurred if the school were enlarged or reconfigured. It might be best to tear it down and build anew.
- Local newspapers were examined for what was happening or likely to happen in the community and the overall urban area.
- Committees began working with the community in small group discussions using what was found and summarized from the literature and other sources.
- Brief scenarios (one or two pages in length) dealing with trends in education and the society were handed out to participants. The idea was to get people considering what the future might mean for the schools.
- Larger community meetings were held to consider issues.
- Results from these efforts were collated into four options for the district to pursue.
- The district identified individuals (the author was one) to take the options to the community. Pairs were formed, usually a respected teacher and a community member, and trained to conduct community meetings for about 50 people per session.
- Using handouts, the teams led community meetings, which were highly publicized. The purpose was to explain what had been done and learned, and potential new directions. (This is similar to community forums in needs assessment for soliciting views and perceptions about what has been learned and next steps.)
- As each meeting was ending, a survey was administered to attendees. The four options were shown in pictures, two of which in adapted form are in Figure 5.1, and participants were asked to rate them.

- Nearly 1,000 forms were completed, representing about 3% of the entire population in the district. It was not random, but most respondents were the parents of school-age children.

The work paid off in a big way. In the following years the district passed a new bond issue, built a modernistic second high school, and made changes to the existing one and to the curriculum.

It is doubtful that this would have gone as smoothly as it did without the procedures described above. The initiating core/working group created a milieu highly receptive for action, and all of this came about from an involved citizen base that was well led.

Figure 5.1 Depicting High School Possibilities by Simple Descriptive Drawings



How does "Westington" stack up against the hybrid framework? Was it needs assessment, asset/capacity building, or both? Needs assessment was there in terms of the current status being measured against the population changes and what they would do to the system over the next decade.

Assets were examined, not in the detail of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), but they were reviewed. Many methods were used to obtain data and perceptions.

The most striking aspect was immersing the community in the decision-making process. Some of this was after the fact since the four choices were proposed by the district, but they were openly brought to the community for discussion and debate. The meetings about them were lively, with many thoughts expressed. They were in the spirit of building communities from inside, and the purveyors were not those heavily vested in what might happen.

Even with extensive volunteer participation, the overall effort was not inexpensive—meetings, training, architectural study, reviewing the literature, and benchmarking required resources. Investment from the school board and in-kind contributions of many individuals were essential. The district was an upper-middle-class one, the expenditures were deemed worthy, and the outcomes supported that position. Without such a financial base, this would have been more difficult, so what is realistic for a different environment should be carefully examined. Implementing the hybrid framework at some point requires funding. This should not be a deterrent, and probably Westington did not know what it would cost when it embarked on the venture.

STEP 5. USING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAMS—BEGINNING TO DO SO AND PREPARING ACTION PLANS

Go back to Table 3.3 in Chapter 3. Look at the identified needs and assets. Is there a match between them? Go to the literature for past actions that have been proposed or tried. If benchmarking was done, how did comparable communities or organizations handle needs, assets, and issues?

What did they experience?

What actions did they take in terms of people, finances, and other related factors?

How did they organize for action?

Who were the prime movers, and how did they manage to gain support?

What structures (committees, working groups) did they establish?

What activities and programs did they implement?

What snags did they run into, and how did they handle them?

What seemed to work, and what did not?

Is the effort still in operation?

Did they do any evaluations of their efforts?

What did they find?

Did they do any cost-benefit analyses?

What changes did they make based on the data collected?

Were new programs and projects sustained after their initiators were no longer involved with enthusiasm and energy? Are the new endeavors still there?

What are things to avoid doing?

Were there any unique uses or combinations of resources and assets that might be applicable to what we have been studying?

Did they leverage resources on the margin for a larger impact?

What would they do differently if given a chance to do it over?

If you describe your situation, do those being benchmarked have any insights into how to proceed knowing the constraints and opportunities available to you?

A lot of information has been gathered and is in focused summaries. Individual committee members prior to a meeting of the group should review what is there. *How should we move forward? What are the most pressing needs? What are the assets and resources? Do they align, or would it be better to go outside the box and form unique combinations of ideas?* Be open rather than constrained.

Encourage the group members to jot down their thoughts in abbreviated form for the meeting. It might include features such as those specified below.

- Needs or problem areas in consideration
- Assets/resources that could fit here or be applied in innovative ways

- The gist of the action strategy
- Where it is coming from (community suggestions, benchmarking, the literature, etc.)
- What the action strategy might look like—what actually would occur
- In the short term
- In the long term
- The pros and cons of the idea

Participants would bring their efforts to the meeting, or ideally they would send them out three to five days before everyone gets together. Action-oriented strategies would be generated by each person for what might be accomplished in the short term and down the road. They are input for a discussion, and if new directions arise during it, they are fine.

It is important to have ground rules for the meeting. View the session as guided brainstorming that will propel the group closer to solutions or improvements.

1. First, all ideas are welcome. There is not a bad one. There may be ways to think about using ideas in a manner not previously considered. Everything proposed is valuable.

2. Second, individuals will be asked to briefly describe what they are suggesting and its merits. Stress brevity, not a polemic about what they have come up with. It is not to be defensive, and when questions are raised, it is not to be perceived as a personal issue. We are just trying to get to possibilities for moving forward.

3. Third, as part of Point 2, all strategies have pros and cons, so they are to be mentioned in a straightforward manner.

Allot about 90 minutes for presentations and subsequent interactions. Excitement should be noticeable as the group is getting closer to action items. The prior work is moving the organization or community to a higher level of functioning. Notes or highlights of what has transpired should be kept. The moderator(s) of the session should give a short recap of what is to be pursued and eventually offered to the community for consideration. Coming to this point is an important step.

Since the group is not large and has been operating as a collective, one way to do this is to ask for a simple vote (show of hands) on what seems most propitious. Tally the results, and select the top options. Another version is to give out colored pens or Post-it notes to each individual. Then ask participants to assign points to each option with no more than 3 out of a total of 10 points being given to any one choice. This zero-sum game forces examining all options rather than focusing on one. Or suggest that people not vote on what they have developed. This could bring to the surface choices freer of bias and vested interest. Ratings are to be done independently. As the group gets ready to choose, state that ideas can be modified/combined later for what will be brought to the community at large.

The author did a procedure like the one just described with a statewide organization when its board was doing strategic planning. Possible new directions (one per sheet) were listed on poster paper with subheads, and then the papers were hung on the walls of a conference room. Each person reviewed them and placed independent votes on the sheets. In addition to the votes there was a draft of what options required. Here is what happened as the election proceeded.

People quietly started scanning. They were familiar with the content, but now they had to put their money (votes) on the table. It was "put up or shut up" time. The mood was somber.

No one rushed. The charge was important and was done in a serious manner. The process took about 20 minutes and produced much agreement about where the organization should be going over the next few years.

Some board members felt so strongly about an issue that they assigned most of the points to it. That is neither good nor bad, but it is why only a certain number should be allocated to a choice. It makes for a fuller inspection of all the ideas that have been generated. The group reviews the votes, and the top three choices are identified.

STEP 5. USING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAMS—OTHER PROCEDURES FOR COMING TO A DECISION

A few other ways give the flavor of what can be done. If more are desired, see Stevahn and King (2010) in which there is a compendium of 24 ("double dozen") techniques tied into needs assessment. Adaptations of several (check in/tune in; what/so what/now what; concept mapping/mind mapping) that apply to the hybrid framework will be overviewed.

Check In/Tune In

Group members are asked reflective questions and given time to consider answers prior to discussion. They bring to the surface group perceptions. Questions could be along the lines of these:

> What is your biggest "aha" moment, or what revelations are coming to mind about what we have come up with?
>
> How well do you think that we are making connections across ideas?
>
> Have we linked important ideas together?
>
> What insights do you carry away from this work?
>
> What do you think is the most innovative vision we have?
>
> Are there any questions that we perhaps should answer before moving ahead?

This pause is useful for thoughts about the solutions that are now in front of the group.

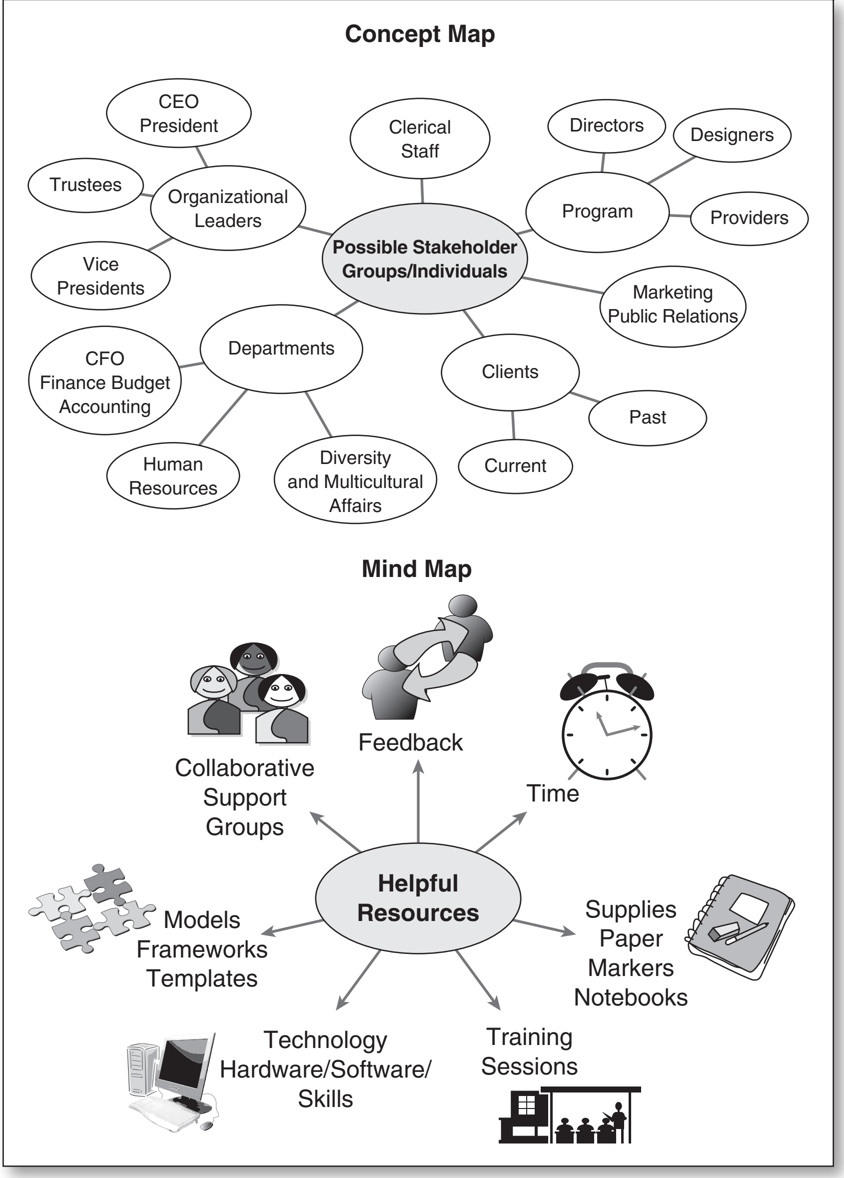
What? So What? Now What?

Divide the group into triads and then give the "so what" and "now what" part of the exercise. *"So what" do the solutions or new programs mean for our community or organization, and "now what" are the next steps? What concrete measures and activities will we have to undertake to make it a reality?* This may seem to be jumping the gun since we are in Step 5, not Step 6, of the hybrid framework. True, but thoughts like this are probably on the minds of individuals. Why not capture them as we move to implementation plans and conducting activities? After sufficient time for small group responses, pull the total group together for an exchange of thoughts and record them for subsequent input to options.

Concept Mapping/Mind Mapping

The goal is to develop a map of a new program or structure for change. Divide the group into triads. For each solution option, ask group members to create a description of key elements or aspects of it. Who are the key stakeholders or groups involved, and who would be impacted by new services? The group might also suggest resources to be incorporated into a solution. The essence of the task would be placed in the middle of a diagram, and then the participants would individually or as a group complete the diagram (see Figure 5.2). This is followed by a large group exchange of ideas.

Figure 5.2 Sample Maps



Source: Stevahn and King, 2010. Used with permission.

STEP 5. USING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAMS—FINISHING THE OPTIONS

Small groups subsidiary to the larger one expand/examine the options in more detail, looking into advantages and disadvantages (pros, cons) and what a program might look like in the short and long run, how it might be started, what resources are necessary, where assets and monetary support could come from, and so on. The final product is not a full plan but a five-page explanation of it. The pros and cons are vital for how it will be portrayed to the larger community, as will be resource decisions. If someone in the small group has drawing or sketching ability, provide a depiction of the main theme of an option. This was done effectively in the Westington example to convey ideas to the entire community.

Keeping pace is critical because the committee should be energized. Motivation is high and maintaining it important. The suggestion is that the small groups do their work over a week. What they produce leads to an overall discussion about how to get the community/organization involved and what its reactions might be. This session is a biggie, and much is riding on it! It is best if all participants have reviewed the more finalized options prior to meeting. Get recommendations for modifications, and after that the meeting will move to two main activities. Exhibit 5.2 is one of them.

Exhibit 5.2 Role-Playing as to What Might Happen With a Change or New Direction

The author was part of a committee of staff, administrators, and faculty members looking at the personnel evaluation practices for 450 employees and graduate students in a major college of education. The undertaking was large, and evaluation of this type is always tricky.

The committee reviewed the literature, looked at past and current practices, benchmarked with other colleges, surveyed different groups, and did other research. These efforts led to a new system to be proposed. The committee wanted additional input across the college as it vetted the new strategy. It was far from a done deal.

What the committee had been doing, its findings, how it had arrived at the system, and what it would mean were to be explained in open forums. In a sense this is parallel to what the initiating group for the hybrid framework would do.

Fortunately, the committee was facilitated by two internal university consultants who participated in its activities and meetings. They knew group processes and what it might take to sell a radical change to members of university staff, some of whom had been there for many years and were protected by the civil service system.

The committee proposed a fun way to anticipate what could happen. Participants were put into role-playing situations. Pairs were formed (other variations could be used), and each person was given a role card. For example, the author was a 30-year staff member who had never been evaluated and was negative. The other individual was a new employee who did not have much in the way of formulated opinions. The new employee interviewed the senior one.

Roles are not difficult to create. Needless to say, this was not an ordinary activity, and everyone quickly got into it. In some cases, the role-playing was conducted in front of the committee. The interviews sensitized everyone as to what might be encountered when taking its work to groups in the college. It also made the committee think more about the new procedures.

All in all the experience was a hoot! (See Altschuld & Lepicki, 2010a.)

The technique in Exhibit 5.2 could easily be used with the hybrid framework. Remember that the initiating group consists of individuals who have been chosen to represent the heartbeat of the community or organization. They are aware of concerns and issues, and it would be a simple matter for them to come up with types who would be in attendance at community forums and meetings, such as

naysayers—those who seem to always be negative about everything and will undoubtedly be in attendance;

resource questioners—who think, "We'll never have the resources to do this, so why even think this way?";

those who tacitly agree—the nodding ones who appear to be in agreement and supportive, but you don't know what what is on their minds;

talkers—when talkative people get the floor, they can run on and in effect destroy a meeting;

nontalkers—those for whom you have no indication of what they are thinking and whom you may have to draw out into the discussion;

uninvolved individuals—who for some reason came to the meeting but have no interest in and are doing things (texting, reading materials that are not pertinent) that have no relation to the intent of the assembly (they can be disruptive); and

others—recall meetings in which you have participated, and the people in them, that have led to less-than-successful outcomes (a long list could be generated).

The role-playing should be helpful for going public and dealing with what might happen. Have strategies for tabling comments from those who are long-winded, from those who will have to be drawn into the discourse, and so on.

STEP 5. USING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAMS—TAKING ACTION PLANS PUBLIC

What is needed for bringing plans to concerned audiences is in place. If you are in a large organization, set up meetings with areas or departments—make sure that they are not so large that people will feel inhibited. If in a community, get publicity about the meetings and activities to the local media and schedule sessions at times that will draw well from residents.

When a meeting begins, welcome everyone and explain the purpose of looking at new directions that have been explored and obtaining feedback from the community/organization. Set ground rules (everyone is encouraged to speak; you may have to briefly summarize what a person is saying so that others can state views; the moderator must keep everything flowing; the agenda will give a sense of what will occur). Table 5.2 contains a possible agenda (time, materials) with meeting length approximately two hours.

Having someone take notes to capture the highlights is worthwhile. When the meeting ends, use surveys for rating options and expressing perceptions. Simplified drawings are useful for understanding choices. Since the tone is positive, don't offer the negatives of an option, but if questions come up, be ready to respond. (This fits with the asset emphasis on the positive.) Note that each course of action has provisions for short-term and fuller implementation.

After all meetings are concluded, pull together the collected data and inputs that were offered. It is hoped that one or two options are preferred

Table 5.2 Agenda, Time Allotment, Materials, and Comments

Agenda	*Time Allotment*	*Materials*	*Comments*
Introduction	5–10 minutes	Handout, packet, name tags, refreshments	Preparation and planning are critical for success. Establish ground rules and stress that input will be sought and welcomed.
Description of what has been done previously	10 minutes for presentation 10 minutes for questions and comments	Packet containing short, clearly labeled summaries	Make it obvious as to where the initiating group is coming from. Don't overdo but ensure a feeling of what has been done. Be open if someone disagrees or has alternative views.
Discussion of the options for action	40–60 minutes for questions and discussion	Option descriptions in the packet	Make sure that distinctions among options are clear. Ask for what the attendees are thinking as they review the descriptions.
Closure	10–15 minutes	See above	Summarize what transpired. Make sure that all complete the survey with ratings for the options.

via ratings and what participants said. This provides an impetus for moving forward. The results should be communicated to the media and the organization that eventually will be involved with the change.

STEP 6. DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Nearly everything is in place for final plans for improvement. It is possible that there is enough without having to do much more. Step 6 is just for fine-tuning options and generating detailed plans for proceeding. Here are other things that might be done.

First, the initiating group should review what has come from the community or organization meetings. What suggestions were made that could be in the final plans for the highly rated choices? What possibly could be deleted from them? If we did the “what/so what/now what” and “concept mapping/mind mapping” activities, what do they mean in terms of implementation? Who are the stakeholders and involved parties, and are they currently on board? Are they organized for new efforts, and if not, what would it take? As for resources, how could they be accessed for improvement? What about the immediate and long-term features? What would be best to get us going? When should we begin—what are the time frames? What should we be doing right away to start? Should we enlarge our capacity (people, organizations, financial resources) to do all of this? What are concrete next steps and activities? Earlier work has led to many answers to these questions. These are just examples of group deliberations. For the sake of argument, the text is going to move to three techniques that deal more with the nature of final plans.

Success Mapping is a one-page pictorial display of the project or new endeavor that shows how its components relate to each other.

Fist to Five is a rating technique for a solution or parts of a solution along continuums such as from least to most important; needed, doable, feasible; and so on.

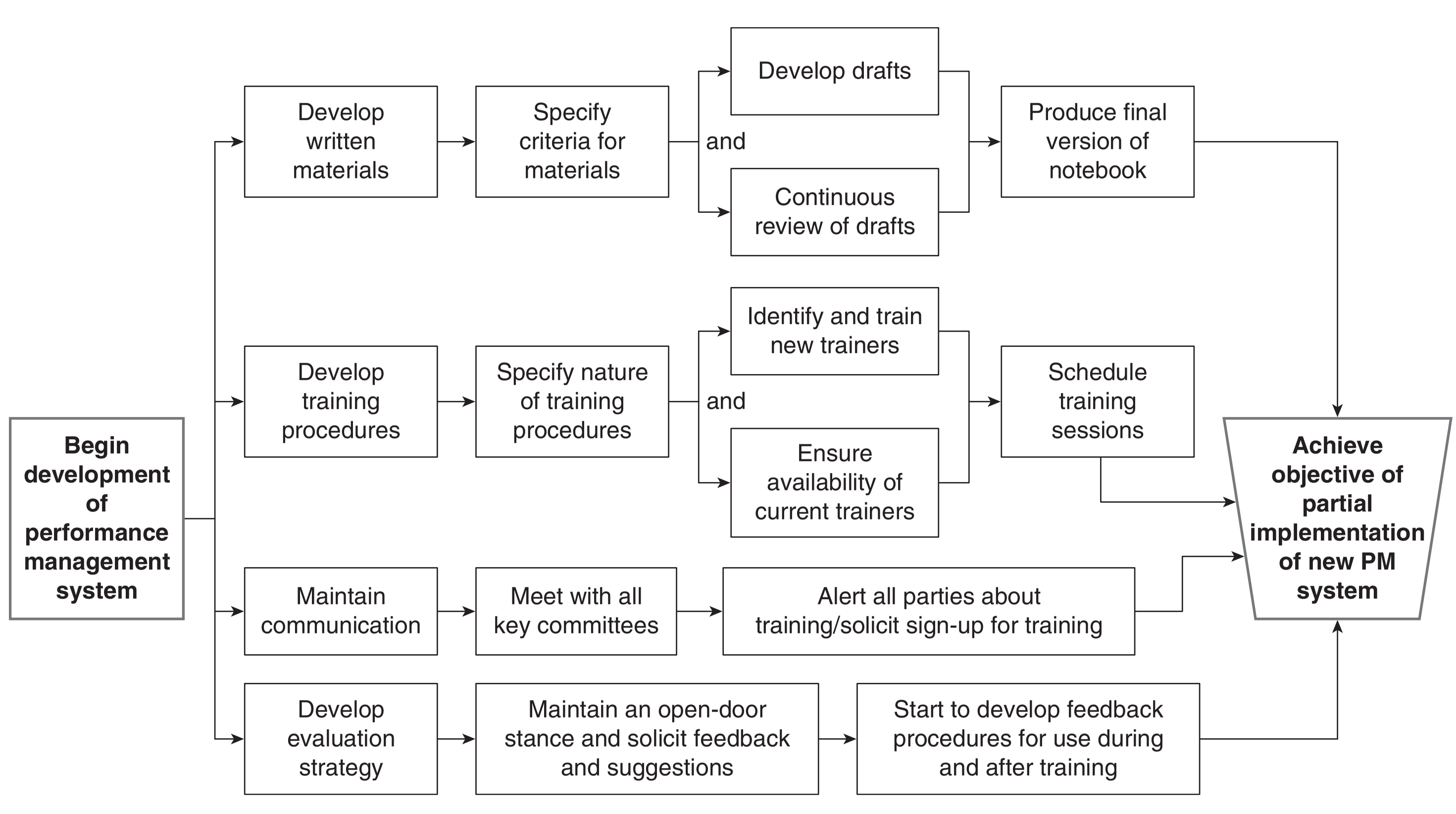
Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) is a procedure for selecting the best solution strategy based on its likelihood of satisfying rank-ordered criteria.

Success Mapping

Success mapping, a one-page map, sets the stage for what is to be undertaken. It does not show all the minutiae but lays out basic elements uncluttered by tons of details. It is simpler than a logic map or an activity responsibility table that might be seen in planning efforts. It is an overview device for people to comprehend the whole picture before getting into the nitty-gritty. Sometimes there can be too many specifics. They are needed, but the success map would be the constant reference for group members when they think about the new direction or effort. What does it look like?

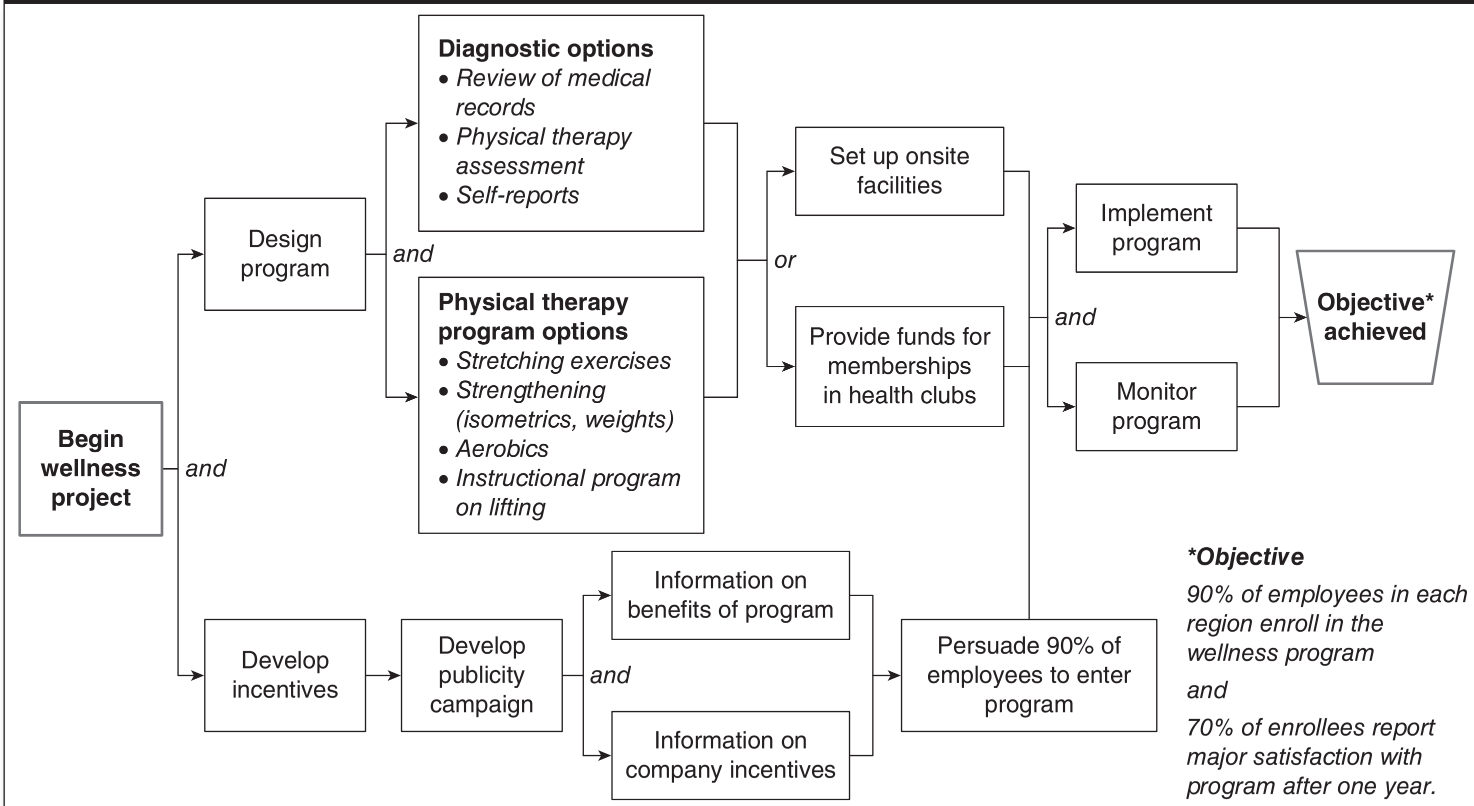
Figure 5.3 is for the performance improvement and evaluation system for the major college of education. Figure 5.4 is for a nationwide moving company fitness program intended mainly for males working on the trucks.

Figure 5.3 Success Map for First Tryout of Performance Management System



Source: Altschuld and Kumar, 2010. Used with permission.

Figure 5.4 Rudimentary Success Map for a Program Designed to Reduce the Back Problems of Employees of a Nationwide Moving Company



Source: Altschuld and Kumar, 2010. Used with permission.

(These examples come from needs assessment but fit the hybrid context.) In the figures, key parts of what is being proposed are apparent. In Figure 5.3 the second column contains four facets that must be done to get the new system developed and running. In 5.4, there are two such entities that propel the wellness initiative. Some things are important to note. The end objectives with standards may be displayed, thus pinpointing what is to be accomplished. Another is that the page gives a feel for formative and summative evaluation. Mapping like this is invaluable and highly recommended, and coupled with "fist to five" its impact is magnified.

Fist to Five

Paraphrasing "the best laid plans of mice and men" can go astray. Success maps are only plans, and they can be off the mark and fail. There are several ways to probe for failure such as cause-consequence and fishbone analyses with the former being least sophisticated. Fault tree analysis (FTA) is an in-depth but more complex technique. All these approaches for determining failure are valid, and each has plusses and minuses. (See Witkin and Altschuld, 1995.)

"Fist to five" is a quick way of getting to sources of failure. Remember that the small working group has been investigating needs and resources for some time. Why not have it do the exercise? Review the overall success map (Figures 5.3 and 5.4) and ask group members to rate feasibility, the importance of what is being suggested, ease of implementation, and so forth. They would use a 5-point scale going from low to high, and the ratings, done independently, would be collated.

An even better way to do this would be to look at subparts of the system and subject them to the same kind of analysis. The four parts of Figure 5.3 could be rated on variables such as those above to identify the weakest links in the proposed new direction. It would not take much time and could lead to a productive conversation that had not occurred before. Interestingly, for Figure 5.4, the author and B. R. Witkin in 1995 did an FTA and perceived that the system would fail on the incentive side. If "fist to five" came to the same conclusion more easily and in much less time, that would be a good result.

One thought about looking at solutions in this way is that it might have the negative cast of needs assessment that was vehemently criticized (Chapter 1). That is partially correct, but if the goal is to have a stronger design for moving ahead, the benefits outweigh the tint of negativity. Another consideration is that there is a side benefit to doing this type of activity. At some time as resources are applied to problems and issues via new developments, the ugly head of evaluation will be reared. What bang are we getting for the work we have done? Is it making a difference, in what ways, and what evidence can be collected about impact and effectiveness? Who or what is changing in accord with what has been implemented? If more resources for the new effort are warranted, how can they be justified to investors in the public and private sectors?

These are legitimate inquiries, and the techniques in this section are useful for evaluation. They help in spotting what might go wrong and suggest where to target evaluations—critical points in systems. We might even go so far as to consider whether there are differences in short- and long-term solutions, and if the long term is more problematic, perhaps the effort should be concentrated on the near or immediate time frame.

Multi-Attribute Utility Technique

The multi-attribute utility technique, or MAUT, is applied where multiple solution options have been proposed. Which of them would work best against criteria that the group established for a solution? Here are a few:

- Number of people in the organization or community impacted in a positive way
- Dealing with a concern that is of great importance to a large number of individuals
- Length of time for implementation in the short and long term
- Complexity of the option with the less complex being more desirable
- Whether the option, if implemented, would impact more than one issue (a new library program for a school-age population might spill over to senior citizens—an instrumental effect)
- Cost factors in the near and longer future
- Demonstrating a positive outcome, galvanizing support, motivation, and involvement
- A situation that requires immediate attention and for which delaying would not be reasonable

- An option that could lead to unique ways of combining existing resources and strengths
- Community or organizational willingness and enthusiasm to change
- Feasibility of implementation
- Others

More criteria could be added, so the list could get quite long, and deciding on options against all of them would be difficult. That is where MAUT comes into play. It uses the Pareto principle or, as implemented in MAUT, the preserving of ratios. Examples of Pareto would be if you have a large group involved in a meeting, a small number of people do most of the talking, or if you have identified many causes of a problem, only a few are the real ones. As applied to choosing the best option, it would be that just a small number of criteria are what we should be concerned about. There is a formal set of rules in MAUT for reducing the number to four or five (Altschuld & Kumar, 2010; Altschuld & Witkin, 2000). Here, a simplified version is being offered.

Convene the committee and explain how criteria would help in choosing the best strategy. Show a few criteria as a seed to start a brainstorming session on important ones. As they are generated, list them and then have the group consolidate the list into a more manageable entity for rank ordering. Assuming that there are 15 criteria, have group members pick what they see as the top 5 and put them in rank order. Stress that they be very careful in deeming their top 5 inasmuch as MAUT works best when criteria are limited. If a consensus is not there, quickly discuss issues for reconciliation so that everyone agrees and can live with the result.

Look at the rankings and starting at the bottom or lowest one give it an arbitrary value or weight of, say, 10. Then move up to next lowest ranked one and give it a value of 20, and proceed through the list in this fashion. This is preserving ratios in a formal MAUT. Enter these values into a table as shown in Table 5.3. Preserving ratios means that if a 10 is given to the lowest ranked criterion, then by assigning 20 to the one immediately above it, Criterion 4 is twice as important as Criterion 5. Criterion 1 is 5 times as valuable as Criterion 5. The weights for the criteria are all ratios of the lowest one. The starting weight of 10 was arbitrary, and one could start with a different weight and the ratios would be different as well, such as 25 for Criterion 4 (2.5 times the lowest weight), 35 for Criterion 3, and so on. A quick discussion can resolve the weights.

Table 5.3 A MAUT-Type Structure for Deciding on Best Options

Criteria with weight (x)	*Option 1*	*Option 2*	*Option 3*	*Option 4*
Criterion 1 (50)				
Criterion 2 (40)				
Criterion 3 (30)				
Criterion 4 (20)				
Criterion 5 (10)				
Total				

With weights and the criteria in rank order, the table is now to be completed. Each person looks at each option in terms of the criteria and says that Option 1 has a .60 probability for meeting it, Option 2 a .45, and so on down to Option 5 where the probability is .08. The probabilities are averaged for the group per option in a cell, the average is multiplied by the appropriate weight for the row, and products are summed down the column. The higher the total, the better the option is, and the more likely it is the choice for the group to pursue.

There is a very beneficial feature of doing this. Some options may fit well with some criteria and not others. Different patterns of satisfying criteria may be observed. An option may work for one but not another. This presents an opportunity for the committee that another procedure might not. Look closely at how the options function and what might be behind a lesser preferred option highly satisfying a certain criterion. What does it have in it that another one does not, and could it with modest tweaking be built into the option that received a higher total? Could this be done without much cost while maintaining the integrity of the higher option?

This aspect of MAUT is intriguing and is related to something brought up previously. Could an option have an effect on more than one issue or subgroup within the population, as with a new library program for the school-age population spilling over to senior citizens? This aligns with a premise of asset/capacity building and needs assessment and is called an instrumental effect (Sork, 1998). This in the hybrid framework represents an ideal outcome.

STEP 7. IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING THE ACTION PLAN

The group developed a success map from techniques such as MAUT, fist to five, and other activities. Everything has been discussed with constituencies, and it is now ready for action. One caution before beginning! The worst thing that can happen is to try to do it all at once on a massive scale and get bogged down. When this occurs, the energy of a group can quickly flit away. People get discouraged, motivation drops, and things grind to a standstill. It may be better to start smaller, more incrementally, and build up over time. Demonstrate success on a limited scale to maintain morale. Then it becomes easier to ratchet up and expand. In some cases the wisdom to go slower may not be valid. Assess the local conditions before deciding to go big or small.

At this time it might be prudent to solicit some participants with experience in translating plans into real-life events. The group could be enlarged with individuals with management experience who blend into the existing group structure and dynamic. If the effort is a volunteer one, consider assistance from retirees in the community or individuals from the organization who would be willing and able to contribute to the endeavor.

From there, carefully review the success map, asking questions such as the following:

- What are essential things that must be done right away to get going?
- What are the human and financial resources and assets that can be applied to the new venture?
- Concretely, who should be doing what, and when should they be doing it?
- What would be indicators that the process was going as planned, and what would be indicators of success?
- What kind of data or evidence would be useful for demonstrating what we are doing, what we have done, and achievement of outcomes?
- If we are starting small, what would the next phase look like, and what resources would it entail?
- What would the schedule look like?

- Where might we encounter snags?
- How should we manage the program or project?
- As we move off the starting block, how often should we be meeting to see how things are progressing?
- Are we organized in a manner to proceed?

The answers imply the use of Gantt charts, schedules with due dates, planning techniques, and establishing responsibilities and roles for various actors.

One basic suggestion that has merit is from the work of Stevahn and King (2010; see Figure 5.5). It is straightforward for making assignments and scheduling and can easily be adapted. It is appropriate at this point since in general the program would be limited in scope as the community or organization begins to take action. Some of the above questions are particularly important for action and will be further explained.

Starting with the last question in the above list, activities don't just suddenly appear by chance. They are the fruits of thinking them through and having the building blocks necessary to change from a plan into an actuality. Who is going to be responsible for managing what should occur? What would they be doing? It could be a small subset of the original group with the necessary skills. This may seem top down, but it cannot be avoided, and it is critical for movement forward. Or it could be by the addition of new members who have the experience, blend with the chemistry of the group, and are catalysts, not disruptive forces.

Leadership is embedded in the questions. One of its functions is a gentle or at times a more sharply focused pushing of those doing the work to keep going. Another is to make sure that everything is on target with what is described on the success map and, when it isn't, what corrective actions must be undertaken. In the "Westington" example there was excellent leadership; without it, failure was to be expected. Also in that case, leadership was long-term. This is important even if the initiative is not very large. A consistent and steady hand at the tiller eases the journey even in the face of problems. This is a major consideration and must be given careful attention.

One of the other questions deals with resources. As we move from a humble beginning to an expanded set of activities, the concern shifts to where support will come from. This is being posed not from a

Figure 5.5 "To Do" List

Meeting Date: *Year/Month/Day*

Committee Name
"To Do" List
Date ______________

Task (description)	**Who (person responsible)**	**Target Date (for completion)**	**Current Status (progress/completed)**
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			

Source: Stevahn and King, 2010. Used with permission.

dependency mind-set but from a practical one. At the base of almost all things we do is money. The initiating group must talk and deliberate about the longer term and what will be required to get there. What agencies, groups, or individuals could be providers? Are there pots of resources that could be tapped? What persuasive arguments might be employed to get access to them? What information could influence decisions this way?

This links to concerns about *evaluation*. The choice of indicators and ways to portray them will play an important role in the unfolding advancement drama. Many of the steps in the hybrid framework dovetail nicely with evaluation. From the start, queries were made about what was done before and how well it worked. What evidence is there of effectiveness, what indicators have been measured, what different programs or approaches have been done, and what led to results? Go back to benchmarking against other situations, and note in some of the probes there is a heavy amount of evaluation.

Look at the success maps and the idea about outcomes and how they might be measured. The discussion of causal analysis has overlap with formative and summative evaluation. These aspects of hybrid work add much to assessing the enterprise. When the committee gets to evaluation, things have already come up or are in place, and it is not a new albatross around the neck.

A couple of other things done before are also helpful. One is the recommendation that important tables and products be dated and kept as feasible in electronic form for easy access and retrieval. Dating is a running process record of what the committee has been doing. It enables the group to reflect on what it has produced and allows those in the future to see how issues were studied, what was learned, what was pursued and what was tabled for later review, what key variables were studied, what kinds of data and information were found, and so forth. This documentation is a simple way to collect valuable data from day-to-day operations.

The second thing is to think outside the box. There is a neat example of this that came up several times in previous chapters. It is the technique of photovoice. In the newspapers of most major cities in the United States, there are often photographs of sections of the city in "then" and "now" format. German Village photos over time would confirm an effect. Current pictures would show that on the edge of the village new large office buildings have been constructed. This could be adapted to other situations, and with the advent of easy computer storage this is an excellent way to evaluate.

This does not negate the need to do other evaluation activities. Continuing with German Village, one could monitor population trends in the area over time. The same would hold for property values. Have they increased, and what does the path forward look like? New surveys could be conducted about a variety of issues and developments and to ascertain the perspectives of individuals who have lived there a long time or more recent residents. For the former, some questions could be about how the area has changed.

The seeds for many variables that could be assessed are planted at the beginning of the hybrid process and embedded into almost all of its activities. Bringing onto the team someone with evaluation background will be helpful, as will hiring an evaluation consultant. But doing that is not intended to abrogate the responsibility of the group for evaluation or underestimate its potential for doing so.

STEP 8. RECYCLING BACK TO FIRST STEPS FOR EXPANDING THE IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE

The last step in the framework is recycling back through it. Return to how the process began. The goal was to identify and sort through issues related to the community or organization. What are its strengths? What are the needs and gaps? Do they mesh together for change? How do we move the organization and community to a higher level? We gained a lot of information and understanding as the work was being completed. But not everything could be done at once. Many areas of importance were found, and fortunately they have been kept track of, in formal documentation. Go back to see if there are other areas to be pursued. Examine earlier results and ask new questions about what we knew previously.

- What stands out as valuable to now set our sights on?
- Given what we have done for a new program, are there ways we can leverage or tie it to another area of need by using assets at the margin?
- Since the original work was done a year or so before, does the portrait that we painted still seem pertinent? Does it hold up?
- If it has changed, in what ways has it done so, and what do those differences look like?

Review what Steps 1 and 2 produced. Do we need to update the knowledge? This may entail much new work that no one is willing to get into; however, records have been kept, and they contain the instruments and procedures used to collect data. Can we take advantage of this without tremendous expenditures of time and human resources? The group should have a frank discussion about exploring additional avenues.

If it decides to, avoid starting anew. Find ways to use what is there instead of going through the entire process from the top. Be proactive about what has been done and creative about reviewing the information from a unique angle. The one concern is that an issue may have been lightly explored and upon revisitation may seem to warrant an extensive investigation. Do so after careful deliberation since it might require a lot of effort. The compensating factor is that the group is no longer novice but expert.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHAPTER 5

1. Building from the first four steps in the hybrid framework, there is excitement since the process is now going into an action implementation phase.
2. The "Westington" schools were a case in which a community engaged in an elongated period of study based on needs and assets.
3. Notable in that example was the immersion of the community in the process.
4. In Step 5 of the framework the group reviewed everything done before via questions about needs, assets and resources, and what had been tried earlier in the community or organization. This was for focusing on actions to be taken.
5. Ways to assist the group in coming to a decision about actions were presented: check in/tune in, what/so what/now what, and concept mapping/mind mapping. Also sound out stakeholders about strategies for improvement.
6. Step 6 deals with details for making options operational. Success mapping, multi-attribute utility theory, and fist to five were provided to do this, as was a short overview of causal analysis.
7. Step 7 stresses translating plans into action and evaluating implementation and outcomes. Building blocks for this were embedded in previous hybrid framework efforts. Responsibility for evaluation resides with the group.

8. Step 8 relates to recycling back through the framework with the admonition to not start anew but to take advantage as feasible of what was done before.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There is a lot to do in the four last steps with much time and effort required. Do you see places where the process could be shortened without sacrificing quality?
2. What do you think of starting small and incrementally expanding as a strategy? What are the up- and downsides of doing so?
3. At some point the initiating group shifts from visionaries and information gatherers to managers and implementers of new directions. How should this occur while preserving the enthusiasm of the overall effort?
4. Leadership is success. What should the nature of leadership be?
5. What are the major areas in which the hybrid framework could fail?
6. Approaches to help the group in deciding about options for improvement and fine-tuning them were offered. Do you know of others that would be useful?