



Mobilizing Local Resources to Support Health Programs

Local resources can directly contribute to program implementation by complementing, strengthening, and extending existing resources.

Increasingly, donors and national governments are asking local governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private-sector companies, and communities to take more responsibility for supporting health care programs at the local level. While it is natural to think in terms of funding, there are other equally important material and in kind resources that can be locally mobilized. These can include human resources, space, pharmaceuticals, advocacy, and transportation.

Local resources can significantly contribute to national governments' and external donors' efforts to maintain and extend health programs. By identifying and using a full range of local resources, health programs can help build partnerships among public, private, and government sectors; involve individuals and groups in the community; and strengthen and expand health services.

Assessing Local Resources

Every local setting has resources that you—as a clinic or program manager—can use to improve your work. Before you can benefit from local resources, however, you will need to take some preparatory steps.

Identify and prioritize your program's resource needs. To identify what will help your organization better fulfill its mission and succeed in project implementation, collect information from various sources, including organizational and program documents, staff, and clients.

Conduct a local resource assessment. Many local sources of support are probably commonly known or can be easily identified by you, members of your staff, or members of the local community. As you collect this information, organize it in a way that will help you match what you find with what you need.

Develop simple profiles of potential sources of support. On a piece of paper or a card, compile the following information for each potential source: name of organization or individual, key contacts, types of resources offered, what is required in exchange for the resources, and the cost to your program in meeting the exchange requirements.

Match appropriate resources with your organization or program needs. Weigh the costs and benefits of resources against your mission. The selection of appropriate resources should be based on need and efficiency.

Practical Tips for Mobilizing Resources

THINK BEYOND MONEY	Find ways to use every available resource required for the program. Don't assume additional financial resources are needed—get past the response “We don't have the money to do that.” This is often used as a substitute for creative thinking.
GET PEOPLE TO CONNECT WITH THE WORK BEING DONE	Conduct site visits with potential stakeholders to encourage them to invest resources. Share the goals, objectives, and status of the program with stakeholders and the community.

BE COST-EFFECTIVE	Look for ways to keep costs low and limit administrative costs to make resources go further. Capture resources that complement what you are already doing. Only accept resources that add more value than they cost.
BUILD LOCAL SKILLS	Implement cost-effective training programs. For example, in “cascade training,” previously trained volunteers provide training to other volunteers, who train still more volunteers.
KEEP RECORDS	Document your experience to help others access mobilized resources and to encourage additional contributions. Quantify cash and in-kind contributions from different sources to demonstrate your increased sustainability.
STAY IN LINE WITH YOUR MISSION	Seek resources that further your organization’s mission and goals, support long-term activities, and extend the reach of your activities.
DIVERSIFY YOUR SOURCES OF SUPPORT	You will be less vulnerable if you have many sources of support, so that if one source is discontinued, you have others to fall back on.

Taking Action/Developing Strategies for Mobilizing Local Resources

When you have assessed your local resources and are working to increase community awareness of your services, you can decide which strategies to use to mobilize local resources. Some of the strategies that have worked in programs around the world include:

- gaining the commitment of influential local individuals and groups;
- securing resources from local governments;
- obtaining resources to procure and manage essential drugs;
- mobilizing private-sector resources; and
- charging client fees to those who can afford to pay.

Before you begin to mobilize resources, you should be sure that you have the staff needed to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate this effort. If you do not, your organization may need to train current staff, hire additional staff, or find partner organizations whose areas of expertise complement your own. No matter what the circumstances of your local community are, if it values the work you are doing, it will find ways to support you.

Where to get more information: This brief is based on *The Manager*, Volume 11 no. 2, published with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. See www.msh.org/resources/publications/LandM_handbook.html.

References:

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