Capacity Development and Institutional Strengthening: Assessment, Strategy and Results

26 April – 7 May 2027
Paris - Right Bank business hotel



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Introduction:

Capacity development in public institutions is often reduced to a calendar of workshops: staff attend courses, yet mandates overlap, processes stall and performance barely moves once advisers leave. Development agencies and donors then fund repeated rounds of support without evidence of lasting institutional change. This Core Concept programme gives capacity advisers, reform units and partner programme teams a structured way to assess capacity at individual, organisational and enabling environment levels, design a capacity development strategy, strengthen institutional systems and measure capacity outcomes. Participants finish with a Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development Plan for a case public institution.

Course Objectives:

- Distinguish capacity development from training and diagnose capacity at individual, organisational and enabling environment levels
- Conduct a capacity assessment and facilitated organisational self-assessment that produce a scored, evidence-based gap profile
- Analyse incentives, power and stakeholder positions that will help or block institutional change
- Design a capacity development strategy, action plan and theory of change with sequenced entry points
- Strengthen institutional systems, processes, leadership and internal governance using learning methods beyond classroom training
- Measure capacity outcomes through a results framework and plan sustainability, exit and coordination with donors and partners

Target Audience:

- Capacity development advisers who diagnose institutional gaps and design support programmes for public bodies
- Institutional reform and strategy units responsible for strengthening ministries, agencies and authorities from within
- Development agency programme staff who plan and oversee capacity support to partner institutions
- Donor portfolio teams who fund, coordinate and review institutional strengthening programmes
- Programme managers who run multi-year capacity programmes with government counterparts and technical partners

Course Outline:

Day 1: Capacity Concepts, Levels and the Case for Capacity Development

- Capacity and Capacity Development Definitions: Unleash, Strengthen, Create, Adapt and Maintain
- Three-Level Capacity Model: Individual, Organisational and Enabling Environment
- Capacity Development Versus Training: Why Workshops Alone Rarely Shift Institutional Performance
- Endogenous Change Principle: Building on Existing Capacity Assets Rather Than Replacing Them
- Capacity Traps Checklist: Supply-Driven Support, Parallel Implementation Units and Staff Attrition

Day 2: Capacity Development Frameworks and Process Models

- UNDP Capacity Development Process: Engage, Assess, Formulate, Implement and Evaluate
- Five Consensus Components: Policy Framework, Institutional and Legal Development, Citizen Oversight, Human Resources and Sustainability
- Functional Versus Technical Capacities Matrix for Public Institutions
- Hard and Soft Capacity Dimensions: Structures, Systems, Relationships and Organisational Culture
- Capacity Development Principles Scorecard: Ownership, Alignment and Mutual Accountability

Day 3: Capacity Assessment and Organisational Self-Assessment

- Capacity Assessment Scoping Note: Purpose, Level, Entry Point and Assessment Team
- Capacity Assessment Matrix: Baseline Rating, Desired Level and Gap Score
- Organisational Self-Assessment Session Design and Facilitated Scoring Rubric
- Evidence Triangulation: Document Review, Key Informant Interviews and Process Observation
- Capacity Asset Mapping and Gap Prioritisation Grid

Day 4: Power Analysis and Capacity Development Strategy Design

- Political Economy Analysis for Capacity Change: Incentives, Interests and Informal Rules
- Stakeholder Power and Influence Map for Reform Champions and Blockers
- Capacity Development Response Options: Institutional Arrangements, Leadership, Knowledge and Accountability
- Capacity Development Strategy Structure: Priorities, Sequencing and Entry Points
- Capacity Development Action Plan with Activities, Owners, Resources and Milestones

Day 5: Week-One Case: Assessing a Public Agency and Drafting Its Strategy

- Case Public Revenue Agency Evidence Pack: Mandate, Structure and Performance Data
- Case Capacity Assessment Matrix Completion Across the Three Levels
- Case Gap Prioritisation and Root Cause Discussion
- Case Capacity Development Strategy Outline and Sequencing Choices
- Peer Critique of Case Findings Against the Principles Scorecard

Day 6: Change Pathways and Theory of Change for Capacity

- Capacity Theory of Change Outcomes Pathway: Preconditions for Institutional Performance
- Assumptions Register with Plausibility, Feasibility and Testability Checks
- Accountability Ceiling: Separating Capacity Outputs From Performance Outcomes
- Problem-Driven Iterative Cycles for Complex Institutional Reform
- Linking Institutional Capacity Gaps to Sustainable Development Goal Targets

Day 7: Institutional Strengthening: Systems, Processes, Leadership and Governance

- Institutional Mandate and Functional Review: Overlaps, Gaps and Redundant Functions
- Business Process Mapping and Standard Operating Procedure Redesign
- Leadership Capacity and Management Accountability Arrangements
- Internal Governance Design: Decision Rights, Committees and Delegation Schedules
- Capacity Risk Register: Staff Turnover, Leadership Change and Adviser Dependency

Day 8: Learning Approaches Beyond Training and Change Engagement

- Coaching and Mentoring Arrangements for Institutional Leaders
- Twinning Arrangements and Peer-to-Peer Institutional Exchange
- Communities of Practice Design: Membership, Facilitation and Knowledge Products
- Secondments, On-the-Job Learning and Action Learning Sets
- Change Communication Plan for Capacity Programmes Across Staff, Leadership and Partners

Day 9: Measuring Capacity Outcomes, Partner Coordination and Sustainability

- Capacity Results Framework: Output, Capacity Outcome and Performance Impact Levels
- Capacity Indicators: Scored Rubrics, Maturity Scales and Process Performance Measures
- Repeat Capacity Assessment Against Baseline and Change Stories Collection
- Donor and Partner Coordination: Joint Capacity Programmes, Pooled Support and Division of Labour
- Sustainability and Exit Plan: Institutionalisation, Recurrent Resourcing and Handover of Advisory Roles

Day 10: Capstone: Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development Plan

- Capstone Case Public Institution Brief and Assessment Team Roles
- Capstone Three-Level Capacity Assessment Report Drafting
- Capstone Capacity Development Plan with Theory of Change and Results Framework
- Capstone Sustainability, Exit and Partner Coordination Section
- Capstone Plan Presentation and Review Panel Challenge

Skills You Will Gain:

- Three-Level Capacity Diagnosis
- Capacity Assessment Facilitation
- Political Economy Analysis
- Capacity Theory of Change Design
- Functional Review
- Twinning and Peer Exchange Design
- Capacity Results Measurement
- Exit and Institutionalisation Planning

Why Attend This Course:

- Leave with a Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development Plan for a case public institution, challenged by a review panel
- Replace workshop-count reporting with scored capacity baselines and repeat assessments that show institutional change
- Reduce dependence on external advisers by planning handover, recurrent resourcing and internal ownership from the start
- Compare capacity programme practice with advisers, reform units and partner staff from several sectors and institutions

Conclusion:

Institutions keep new capacity when support starts from their own assets, targets systems as well as people and is measured by performance rather than attendance. Week one moves from capacity concepts and the three levels through assessment, self-assessment, power analysis and strategy design to a guided case. Week two adds change pathways, institutional strengthening, learning methods beyond training, results measurement, partner coordination and exit. The capstone turns this material into a Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development Plan ready for discussion with leadership and partners.