

## An Examination of Capacity Elements within the Volunteers Division of a Major Games Host Society

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The Canadian Sport Policy (2002) outlines a number of areas through which sport impacts Canadian society, including social and personal development, health, culture, education, economic development, and entertainment. However, the objective of the policy is based upon four key goals related to system-wide improvement of the amateur sport network: enhanced participation, enhanced interaction, enhanced excellence, and enhanced capacity. The four goals are outlined to assist both governments and the sport community in achieving an accessible and high quality sport environment. While each goal compliments the others, 'enhanced capacity' is the most applicable and useful in discussing the role of organizational capacity within the voluntary sport sector. The goal of enhanced capacity is intended to provide "an ethically based, athlete/participant-centred development system" (Canada, 2002, p.18) and the policy identifies capacity as a function of coaching, technology, research, hosting and fairness. However, policy statements fail to provide a clear understanding capacity and as a result, the term remains indistinct and elusive.

Within the nonprofit literature, one definition explains organizational capacity as the "assets, strengths, qualities or characteristics that enable a voluntary organization or the sector as a whole to survive while addressing ongoing challenges and to grow and thrive while meeting new opportunities" (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1999, p.14). The enhancement of organizational capacity expands this definition to include the importance of building and sustaining specific elements of capacity over time. Elements of capacity are those tangible and intangible components of an organization. Generally speaking, six types of capacity elements play a key role within a nonprofit organization - financial, human resources, aspiration, structural, cultural and technological (Guthrie, Preston & Bernholz, 2003, Hall et. al, 2003, and McKinsey & Company, 2001).

Despite the generation of capacity definitions and policy goals, very little is understood about the nature of organizational capacity within a voluntary sport entity. Consequently, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the concept of organizational capacity within a temporary voluntary sport organization. Specifically, the nature of organizational capacity was examined within the case of the Volunteers Division of the 2005 Canada Summer Games Host Society (CSGHS). The Volunteers Division provided a rich context in which to examine the six elements of organizational capacity due to its multi-faceted role developing tangible and intangible components throughout the Games host society.

Data were collected from Volunteers Division executive planning volunteers, such as Vice-President and Associate Vice-President, and middle management volunteers, such as Unit Chair, Unit Team member and Volunteers Division Venue Liaison. Research methods included pre-Games verbal journals (n=6), during-Games semi-structured interviews (n=19) and focus group (n=9), and post-Games semi-structured interviews with the pre-Games sample (n=6). In addition, during-Games observations were conducted on-site while the event was staged. Documents were also collected from the Host Society and the Canada Games Council, the national multi-sport federation that governs the Canada Games. Verbal journal, interview and focus group data were transcribed verbatim while observation data were recorded daily during the Games. Data analysis, including textual analysis of the interviews, verbal journals and focus group, and content analysis of documents, followed coding strategies as outlined by Creswell (1998) where a priori themes based upon the six elements of capacity directed inquiry and emergent themes related to the nature, importance and interrelations of each element of capacity expanded inquiry. This data management strategy involved an iterative deductive-inductive process in order to facilitate as much conceptual breadth as possible to emerge from the data (Patton, 2002).

The data indicated three key findings. First, results demonstrated that within the Volunteers Division of the 2005 CSGHS, human resources, structural and technological elements played an important role in generating capacity while culture, aspiration, and finance were less vital. Second, an analysis of the interrelations among the six capacity elements revealed various ways in which the elements complemented and contradicted each other. As a result, there were instances when the overall capacity within the Volunteers Division specifically, and the Host Society more generally was both enhanced and inhibited. In particular, results demonstrated the importance of the human resources capacity element in augmenting the other five elements.

Finally, the data indicated structural capacity, in the form of internal networking and communication channels, and human

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resources capacity, in the form of knowledge, served a critical purpose in developing organizational capacity within the 2005 CSGHS. When this finding is considered within the unique context of this case study, primarily the temporary nature of the organization and Host-to-Host knowledge transfer challenges facing the host society, the need to utilize a learning as opposed to a bureaucratic organizational form is evident. In other words, in order to build organizational capacity within a major Games host society, it is important to think in terms of Morgan's (1997) 'brain' as opposed to 'machine' metaphor.

The results of this study can be used by sport managers, executive volunteers, and middle management volunteers within a sport event host society to establish effective capacity building strategies. In this way, managers and volunteers involved in the early planning stage of a host committee may consider the critical role organizational form will play in creating and enhancing organizational capacity. Finally, this study provides a foundation upon which future researchers may advance our understanding of organizational capacity within sport entities.