

Every leader comes with their own set of skills and their own areas of expertise. There are some important skill areas however, that clearly support leadership capacity. These include:

- Communication,
- Facilitation
- Problem Solving
- Goal setting
- Conflict resolution
- Delegation

Just as a CARS Operational Leader has a responsibility to support the work of the group, the group has a responsibility to support the ongoing skill development and the capacity of their Operational Leader. There has always been an interest in supporting leadership development. Over the years many resources have been created to build capacity and skill in these areas. During the CARS training we will share some of these resources with you.

Regardless of the skill set or training needs of Operational Leaders, facilitating the CARS process is in many ways a leap of faith. CARS is often about doing what we say we believe is right – even when the rest of the service sector or community may not see the same possibilities. There is an anonymous saying that goes like this; “*Consider the turtle, he only makes progress when he sticks out his neck!* “. Such is the case with the CARS process. Learning by doing is critical in the CARS process and the concept of “many lessons learned by the many mistakes that are made” is a well accepted fact in CARS. If both the participants and the leadership understand this relationship, a community group can go far in its collective efforts to effect sustainable change in their community. Let’s take the key leadership capacities one at a time.

Communication

A CARS leader must be able to understand and communicate on many different levels. CARS leaders will deal with one on one relationships, group relationships, internal relationships, external relationships, government relationships, relationships with users of services, relationships with providers of services, etc... All of these different people have different wants, needs and wishes. A CARS leader must be sensitive to the wants, needs and wishes of others. They must exhibit a genuine interest in what other people are saying, and most importantly, they must believe that everyone has something to contribute to the CARS process.

A leader must be a good speaker, but he/she must be a **great** listener. Skills must include the use of paraphrasing or saying back what the speaker has just said. Such skills keep conversations and relationships on track making progress more positive and possible.

Facilitation

A good facilitator is one who can bring out the best in the group. CARS leaders guide, not rule the group allowing the participation, thoughts and ideas of others to shine. At the same time a good facilitator keeps actions on task, ensuring participant’s leave gatherings and meetings feeling a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Problem Solving

Providing services in rural remote and northern communities takes a great deal of creativity. Many communities are on the right track working towards creating innovative solutions to problems in service delivery, only to run right into;

- Community conflicts
- Government, local organization and/or service provider rules
- Lack of human and/or financial resources
- A “we have always done it this way” attitude
- Lack of, or changes in, political will

Communities need to keep going despite these challenges, - to be active participants in the change process. CARS leaders must guide the way when it comes to creative problem solving.

Goal Setting

CARS leaders need an intense sense of outcome – a clear focus on looking ahead to the end of the journey and keeping this in the forefront, even when the journey hits a very bumpy road. Not only do they need to have this sense of the end goal, they must rally and support others to focus on that same end. For this to work, a CARS leader must be able to facilitate the development of achievable and measurable steps or objectives that move the group closer to their goals.

Conflict Resolution

Oh, a life without conflict. Not likely! CARS leaders must understand the inherent nature of conflict and develop effective skills in negotiation so they can successfully transform conflict into positive outcomes and progress. The CARS process does not require:

- Agreement on everything
- That all dysfunctional community relationships be mended before the process begins

The CARS process accepts conflict and focuses instead on giving communities the opportunity to:

- move forward on what can be agreed upon
- Development of a safe environment where participants and organizations can focus on the future rather than the challenges of the past



Delegation

Effective delegation – giving opportunity for others to participate- is an important skill for CARS leaders to hold. Delegation is critical as well to any leadership succession planning process.

The steps to effective delegation are:

- Defining the task
- Selecting the participant
- Providing necessary resources
- Providing feedback and support

CARS Leaders learn to utilize delegation to promote community ownership and participation and ensure the CARS process is not focused on the skills of an individual but on the skills of the group.

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