NALAS

Network of Associations of Local
Authorities of South-East Europe

RCDN

Regional Capacity
Development Network
for Water and
Sanitation Services

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Establishing and Running a Training Centre

...and how can RCDN

support you on that journey

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FOREWORD

Dear reader,

Do you work for or represent an association of local governments or an association of public utility companies? Do you wish to set up or further develop the training function of your Association? Do you aim to position your Training Centre at the top of the list of training providers in your country and beyond? If you answer is "Yes", you are at the right place.

This Guide will give you an overview of the necessary steps that you need to perform to establish and run a Training Centre with a portfolio of high-quality capacity development services. The Guide will also share some of the experiences of the Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN). It will offer plenty of examples, models, tools that you can learn from and further adapt, customise and use.

Enjoy reading this Guide, pick up what you need, adjust it to your specific circumstances and implement it in practice.

We will be happy to witness your successes.

RCDN Team

The content of this publication is interactive.
Click on the links to read more.

INTRODUCTION

Both the associations of local governments and the associations of public utility companies exist to bring together and voice the interests of their members, the municipalities and their public utility companies (PUCs), as well as to help them provide better services for their constituencies and clients.

Read more!

*...in the RCDN Capacity Development: **Good2Know!** available **HERE**.*

In doing so, the associations have two main functions:

1) Advocacy function; and

2) Capacity Development function.

This Guide will deal with the later, enabling the interested associations to perform it in the best possible manner.

But, let's start from the basics. When we speak about the Capacity Development (CD) function, we speak about *"a process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time"*.[1]

In this definition, please pay attention to the following:

🔹 **Capacity Development is a process.** Thus, you need to carefully plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate it.

🔹 **There are three intervention levels: person, organisation, and society.** Within the Training Centre you would probably address the first two, but for achieving a long-term change, you would also need to adequately address the society, in particular the framework conditions, legislation, and environment. Here, the advocacy function of the association is key.

🔹 **The capabilities to be strengthened are linked with the development objectives of individuals and organisations** that your Training Centre will be targeting. Thus, it is essential that you know what these development objectives are and then address them adequately.

[1] Note: The Guide will often refer to various RCDN documents that can support you while developing your Training Centre. They are located on the Knowledge Management Platform, Podio, and are accessible to RCDN partner Associations only.

We will be carefully addressing all these issues within this Guide. We will provide practical directions or "do's and don'ts". We will also point out at additional resources that you can use to be able to develop the Training Centre step-by-step. Finally, if you are already running a Training Centre, with the support of this Guide you will be able to further strengthen it to become a top performer.

Here we go. Have an interesting and rewarding learning journey!

ESTABLISHING A TRAINING CENTRE

Capacity Development might be something that you already do, on regular or 'ad hoc' basis. Establishing a Training Centre can help you do this in a more organised way, ensuring quality and membership satisfaction, as well as broader public recognition.

As we said earlier, Capacity Development is a process and therefore you need to carefully plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate it. In other words, you need a strategy, or at least, a plan. The elements elaborated below will give you an idea what you can include in your Training Centre strategy.

Determining the objectives of the Training Centre

As a first step, you need to respond to: "What do we want to achieve with our Training Centre?", in other words, what is the change that you wish to pursue. Make sure that your objectives are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bounded.

In determining the objectives and setting up the strategy for the Training Centre, do not forget that it is part of the overall system for capacity development of civil and public servants, as well as elected officials. Thus, you shall see the overall picture and determine how your Training Centre will complement with the existing training offer or fill in the gaps.

*For illustration, **HERE** you can check out the objectives of the Training Centre of one of the RCDN partners, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM).*

Identifying the target group/s and their needs

Do you plan to train elected officials only? Are you targeting administration, too? Are PUC field employees your focus? All these target groups are different, have diverse needs and would require that your Training Centre shapes different activities and implements various capacity development formats and measures to respond to their needs. When identifying the target groups, be as specific as possible.

Once you have determined the target groups, the next step would be to access their specific capacity development needs. For this, you need to conduct a Training Needs Assessment (TNA). In formulating the TNA and the specific questions it will address, start from analysing the state of the sector and consider the relevant national strategies and other important documents in the areas you plan to cover.

It is recommended that from the very beginning you start developing a database of potential users of the services of your Training Centre, or clients, that will be continuously updated. By doing so, you will be able to easily disseminate the news from your Training Centre to the relevant audiences.

*You might wish to consult, adjust and use the RCDN-developed TNA methodology and templates, available **HERE**. You can also see how other associations have implemented this methodology.*
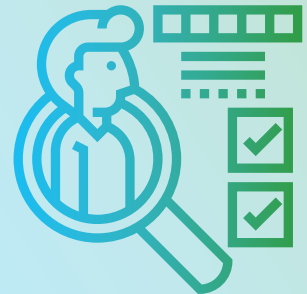
*In the **RCDN Toolbox** you can find database templates for databases which you might wish to use.*

Developing Training Centre's CD offer

Now that you have a clear picture what the needs of your target groups are, it is time to determine how you are going to respond to these needs, by developing the offer of your Training Centre. Of course, it is very probable that you won't be able to address all the needs of your target groups. Thus, you would need to prioritise, based on your objectives and resources available.

Systematic capacity development goes much beyond training. It can come in different formats; training is one of them, but you can also offer advisory services, conferences, peer exchanges, stakeholder dialogue, and much more.

In developing the CD products of your Training Centre, make sure that you have designed appropriate curriculum that responds to the need of the specific target groups, accompanied with relevant materials and manuals.

HERE you can learn more about the different CD formats and their characteristics.

HERE you can find RCDN Product Development Standards, that could guide your work in this phase.

Staffing the Training Centre

The quality of the Training Centre is often determined by the quality of its staff: 1) Those who manage the Training Centre and 2) The trainers (but also other CD staff, like moderators and advisors).

Not always you will be in the position to employ personnel that will solely deal with the training function of the Association. Still, it is very important that you assign at least two team members to perform the following activities:

⬧ *Managing the Training Centre:* development of the Training Centre strategy, setting quality standards, conducting TNA, coordinating CD product development, promoting and selling the training offer, setting up pool of trainers, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Training Centre, etc. This is a potential role for a **Training Centre Manager**.

⬧ *CD product delivery:* implementing CD measures, managing the pool of trainers, monitoring and evaluating different CD measures, reporting, collecting lessons learnt, coordinating improvements and adaptations of the CD measures, client management, logistics, etc. This is a potential role for an **Event Coordinator**.

After identifying the specific staffing structure of your Training Centre, proceed with developing Terms of Reference (ToR) for each of the positions. If you cannot meet these needs by internal resources, then you shall conduct an external recruitment process, that will include: publishing and promoting a call for applications, collection of applications, screening and evaluation of applications, preparing a short list of candidates, conducting tests and interviews, reference check, decision-making and contracting.

CD Staff

The trainers (but also moderators, advisors and resource persons) you will be using are also very important for the success of your Training Centre and the impact of the Association in general. Thus, we recommend that you establish and maintain a **Pool of Trainers** (PoT), by implementing a series of activities as described below:

◆ **Recruitment of trainers:** Develop a ToR for the trainers you are inviting to join your PoT. Be specific about the qualifications and competences you are looking for, about the selection process, but also about what the potential trainers will benefit from by becoming part of your PoT (not only financial compensations for training deliveries, but also additional capacity development opportunities, networking, etc.). Make sure that you do a proper recruitment campaign, both internally (among Association's membership) and externally (experts outside the membership

HERE you can find the ToR for the RCDN Focal Point, that you can use as a model.

HERE you can check out the Concept for the RCDN Pool of Trainers, Moderators and Advisors. In the RCDN Toolbox you can find PoT database template.

For inspiration, HERE you can find the call for RCDN Trainers, Moderators and Advisors.

base) which will ensure that you have reached out to anyone who can potentially become a lead trainer of your Training Centre. In doing so, use the power of networking, reach out to them via your Association's channels and events, but also via other organisations, unions, chambers, etc. It would be great if you could automatise the application process by using online tools, that will save time to both parties and will set the basis for a proper PoT database.
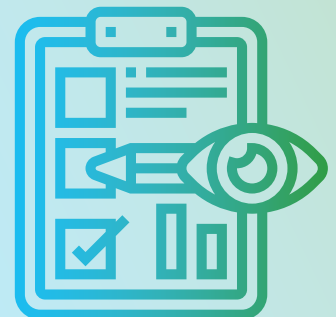
◆ **Contracting:** Once you have decided who are the trainers that you wish to have in your PoT, it is recommended that you officialise the relationship. One of the ways to do so would be via so called "framework contract" or "declaration of intent", in which you would specify the terms of engagement of the trainers in the future. It might help if you develop a remuneration scale for different types of services that you will get from the trainers, such as: fee per day of training, advisory services, moderation, etc.

◆ **Code of Conduct:** It would be beneficial to develop a Code of Conduct that the trainers of your Training Centre will sign when joining the Pool of Trainers. Such Code of Conduct will make clear what are the expectations from the trainers and what are the values, beliefs, culture and standards they need to adhere to.

HERE you can access the Code of Conduct for RCDN Trainers, Moderators and Advisors.

◆ **Orientation:** Although you shall aim to mobilise experienced trainers that will easily get on board to ensure top performance, you still need to provide proper orientation. Such orientation would include content–related topics, such as: informing about the Association and the philosophy of its Training Centre, objectives, priority CD measures, quality standards, etc., as well as administration–related topics, such as: contracting obligations, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, etc.

The look of the Training Centre

When we say a Training Centre, it might lead us to visualise a big, well equipped building, with fancy classrooms and laboratories. But, is it what we really need? Can we afford it? Is it reasonable? Is it cost-effective? Will that facility be easily accessible for all our users? What in times of crisis, like the ongoing Coronavirus pandemics?

These questions only aim to illustrate the discussion that shall take place in your Association when deciding about the look of your Training Centre. There is no single solution to this, there is no right or wrong, do this or do that. A Training Centre might run successfully in a small or big building, without any physical venue (trainings can be organised in a city hall, community centre, a hotel), online, or a combination of all.

We would advise that this is decided based on the objectives you have set for your Training Centre, the preferences of the target group and of course the business plan, which we address in the next lines.

Business plan

Finally, in order to say that we have a plan and we can start running our Training Centre, we need to know how much this will cost and how we are going to finance it. Start by listing all the costs inflicting from the Training Centre's strategy and the plan you have developed. For illustration, what are the costs associated with the establishment of the Training Centre and its one-year operations. Then, think about how you are going to cover these costs. For example, via membership fee, in-kind contribution of the Association, donor support, selling trainings to other organisations, individual participation fee, etc., or a combination of several of these. Don't forget the resources needed for enriching your training offer over time.

RUNNING A TRAINING CENTRE

Quality standards

You probably aim that your Training Centre stands out in the ocean of training providers. To do so, it needs to offer an added value to the potential users. Therefore, it is very important that you set and implement high quality standards for the services of your Training Centre. Such quality standards relate to the way you prepare and design the training and other capacity development measures, which learning approaches you use, how trainers facilitate the learning process, how you organise logistics, what impact do you achieve and much more.

The set of RCDN Quality Standards, along with the relevant templates, might be of a great use in this phase. Find them HERE.

Once you set the quality standards, it is very important that you implement them consistently, monitor their implementation and adjust as needed. Make sure that you allocate adequate human and financial resources for doing so.

Promoting the CD offer

Preparing a training catalogue, with the description of your offer, as well as publishing annual or periodic calendars of events or course schedules are a good way to bring the services of your Training Centre closer to the target audiences.

HERE (TBC) you can see an example of a training catalogue, by the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Republic of Srpska.

The training offer of Aquasan is presented as a prominent part of their website, check it out HERE.

The calendar of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities can be found HERE (in local language)

Then, you can easily follow-up for each specific training measure or event of the Training Centre.

The way you promote the offer of your Training Centre would largely depend on the identified target group, its characteristic and preferences. For a maximum effect you would need to know what promotion channels work best for the specific target groups you have identified. For example, it might be a good idea to present your training offer to Mayors or PUC Directors during Association's General Assembly and then follow up individually. Or, you might reach municipal or PUC employees through Association's Committees and keep them informed via specialised Facebook or Viber groups.

We earlier recommended that you develop a database of potential users of the services of your Training Centre, or clients, that will be continuously updated. Such database enables you to reach out to each and every potential client, send a personalised letter and disseminate the news from your Training Centre.

When designing promotional materials, make sure that they are developed from the perspective of the potential users, providing all relevant information that they are interested in. Also, put efforts to make them look and sound appealing, inviting, and professional.

*For inspiration, check out RCDN Promo Plan, along with the relevant steps and tools, available **HERE**.*

Do not forget about promoting your Training Centre in general, as well as promoting its results. Think about developing a specific promotion strategy that will help you have a maximum effect of your efforts.

Implementing the CD offer

The key advice here would be: develop good quality standards and implement them consistently. In that way you will ensure that you have done everything right and that your training offer stands out in training market.

For illustration, when it comes for training delivery, focus at:

Assessing the current skills and expectations of the participants in the specific training measure;

🔹 Based on the findings, do appropriate adjustments to the training design and approach;

🔹 Ensuring that the trainers you have engaged use trainee-centred and interactive learning throughout the training duration;

🔹 Providing learning environment and logistics that efficiently support the learning process;

🔹 Ensuring comprehensive training evaluation, involving trainees, organisers and trainers;

🔹 Promoting the training and its results;

🔹 Systematising lessons learnt;

🔹 Conducting ex-post evaluation to measure training impact;

🔹 Based on the experience, adjusting future training measures.

*The set of RCDN Quality Standards and the relevant templates will provide you with practical guidelines in preparing and implementing training and other CD measures. Find them **HERE**.*

Working with the Pool of Trainers

If you have developed a proper database of trainers, it will be easy to match them with the specific training measures that your Training Centre will deliver based on the calendar. Make sure that you select the best trainers for each and every specific measure you deliver. It is not a secret that when completing training evaluation forms, participants mostly associate the training with the trainer's competences, skills, and approach. So, if you want to have good evaluations and satisfied users you will have to provide good training organisation and excellent trainers.

You have the task to appropriately orient the trainers before any training measure. As you will see from the RCDN Quality Standards, most of the work when it comes to ensuring quality is on the trainers. But you have the key supervisory role. The trainers must be accountable to you and you have to monitor, supervise, and evaluate their work to safeguard the top quality of the training. In the end, either for good or for bad training, it will be your Training Centre (and Association) to praise or blame and not that much the individual trainer/s. Based on the evaluation of trainers' performance, you will be able to make important decisions for their future engagement as a resource of your Training Centre.

Not always you would have an easy access to top class trainers that you can afford. Thus, try to invest in building your trainers' base over time. There are programs such RCDN that are generously offering to develop the capacities of your trainers by series of Trainings of Trainers, coaching, mentoring, and networking. Make sure that you don't miss such opportunities. Additionally, your Training Centre shall also support the process of capacity development of its trainers' base, via orientation, mentoring and networking.

Measuring the impact of your Training Centre

It is important to measure the impact of the specific training measures, but it is also vital to measure the overall impact of the Training Centre. In other words, we shall see whether we are achieving what we were established for, or whether we are meeting the objectives that we have set for our Training Centre. Finally, the work that we do in performing the training function of the Association will influence how our members see the Association in meeting their needs.

It is recommended that you systematise a periodic collection of feedback from members via a membership satisfaction survey. This will help you measure their satisfaction, collect testimonials for further promoting your work and reshaping your services to better meet their needs.

In the RCDN Toolbox, HERE you can see the questionnaire that UTVSI has used for measuring their membership satisfaction (in Serbian language).

ESTABLISHING A TRAINING CENTRE

- **Objectives of the Training Centre (What? and How?)**
- **Identifying the target group/s and their needs (TNA)**
- **Developing Training Centre's CD offer**
- **Staffing the Training Centre** (Training manager, Event Coordinator, Pool of trainers, moderators, advisors)
- **The Look of the Training Centre**
- **Business Plan**

RUNNING A TRAINING CENTRE

- **Quality Standards**
- **Promoting the CD offer (catalogue and calendar)**
- **Implementing the CD offer**
- **Working with the Pool of Trainers**
- **Measuring the impact of your Training Centre**

FINAL WORDS

When reading the lines above, it might look like this it too complicated, or probably good on paper, but difficult in reality. From a perspective of someone who is dealing with capacity development for some 20 years, I would say that you might be right, but only until you start doing it. Capacity development is not easy, but with these guidelines in hand and the tools that RCDN generously offers, it becomes less of a challenge and much more of an opportunity.

You are not alone in this endeavour. One of the key principles of RCDN is the collaborative approach between the associations of local governments and the associations of public utility companies at national level. Learning from each other, complementing efforts, using each other's strengths and supporting each other can help a lot in what you aim at with your Training Centre. Additionally, the regional peer learning, exchange and support mechanisms set by RCDN can further help you to bring your work to a higher level. Make sure that you use as much as you need and as much as you can.

Finally, being responsible for capacity development is a very noble mission. You will see organisations and individuals developing, growing, achieving more, serving citizens better. At the end of the day, you can say that you are part of that development and go to bed happy and satisfied.

I wish you to enjoy your capacity development journey and pick up your fruits soon!

HERE *you can see what other RCDN partners have done with the support of RCDN to strengthen their institutional capacities and use it as a basis for exchange.*