

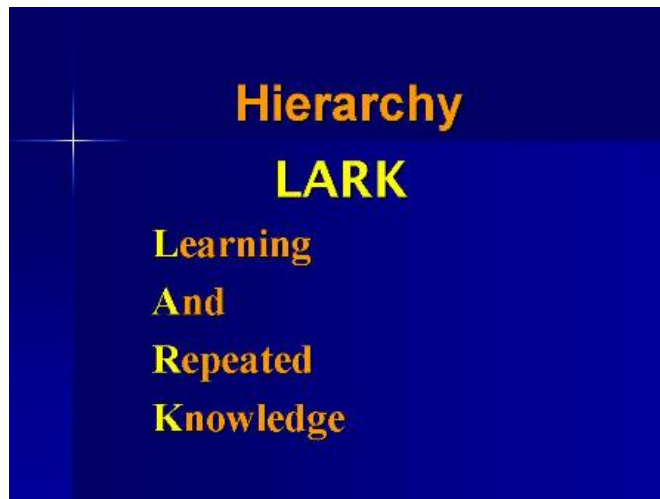
## **Chapter 4: The Technical Assistance Approach**

*Jerry W. Robinson, Jr. and Frank Fear*

### **BEHAVIOR OBJECTIVES**

After studying this chapter and completing the online learning activities, students should be able to

1. Define technical assistance in simple terms.
2. Explain how the technical assistance approach can be used in planned change.
3. Describe the difference between the self-help approach, the technical assistance approach, and the conflict approach.
4. List and explain three approaches to providing technical assistance.
5. List and describe how different institutional actors use power to achieve their objectives in community change.
6. Describe three basic assumptions undergirding technical assistance.
7. Describe the differences between the nondevelopmental and developmental approaches to planned change.
8. Describe how technical assistance can be used to co-opt a community.
9. Prepare a short essay on the appropriate use of technical assistance in democratic society.
10. List and describe at least five criteria advocated for by the U.S. Agency for International Development for leaders of technical assistance teams.
11. Describe how changes in technology may affect the need for and use of technical assistance.



**LARK Activity 4.1**

**Learning When the Technical Assistance Approach is Needed**





- Step 1.** After reading the chapter on technical assistance, prepare a list of criteria that justify the use of the TA approach by a community.
- Step 2.** After reading the chapter on technical assistance, prepare a list of criteria that justify the fact that the use of the TA approach by is not needed in a community.
- Step 3.** Share and discuss your findings with group of your classmates during a class activity.



### **SOAR Activity 4.1**

#### **“The Rifle County Economic Development Case”**

**Objective:** The objective of this activity is to provide practice in identifying the need for technical assistance in Rifle County.

**Instructions:**

Read the scenario and develop a response to each of the questions that follow it. If you are working in a group, select a recorder to make notes on your discussion, and be prepared to give a verbal report. If you are working alone, write out a brief response to each question.

**Scenario:**

A dispute has developed among three groups — the Rifle County Board; the Mayor of Shotgun (the largest municipality in the county); and the four other communities in the county. The issue is the use of local taxes to hire a full-time community developer. The County Board passed a

resolution "to conduct an employment search and hire a qualified professional to work for County Government in community development." The Mayor of Shotgun is a long-time County Board member. None of the elected officials of Stock, Trigger, Bullet or Barrel (the four other communities in the County) is a member on the County Board. The County Board Resolution has raised old, entrenched, historic resentments. Some believe the town of Shotgun always "gets the bacon" while other communities struggle on without assistance from the county.

John Hammer is the Chairman of the County Board and a successful business owner in Shotgun. The Mayors of Stock, Trigger, Bullet and Barrel approached John Hammer with their concerns in person and in writing. They stated: "Our towns will not benefit, but we are expected to help pay the salary of this developer."

John Hammer did not respond to their correspondence. A local reporter quoted Hammer in Shotgun's daily paper, Gunsmoke, as stating: "The complaints of these mayors are more of the same old garbage that has stopped progress in this county for years."

At the latest County Board meeting, the mayors of Stock, Trigger, Bullet and Barrel disrupted the agenda during the discussion of candidates for the developer position. They claimed the County Board Chair and the Mayor of Shotgun were deliberately deceiving county residents regarding the benefits of hiring a developer. The County Board Chair and the Mayor of Shotgun were accused of being "in bed together" to saddle county residents with an unnecessary expenditure. The four mayors presented a proclamation to the County Board stating that they

would "organize an economic boycott of Shotgun by the citizens of their communities and the county at large until a satisfactory resolution is achieved." Then they walked out of the meeting.

**Step 1. Identify actions that are interpreted as power threats to community citizens.**

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**Step 2. List behavior and/or perceptions of participants in the dispute that illustrate each source of community power.**

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**Step 3. List the sources of power that might want to use technical assistance:**

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**Step 4. Describe how Technical Assistance could be used in the situation following outcomes:**

**a. Domination**

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**c. Withdrawal**

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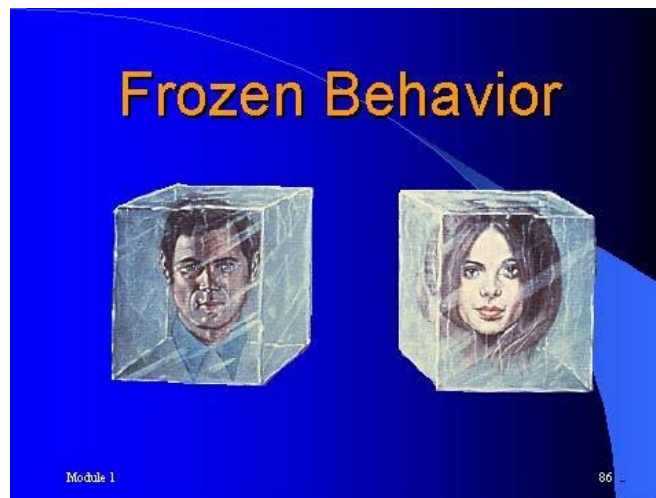
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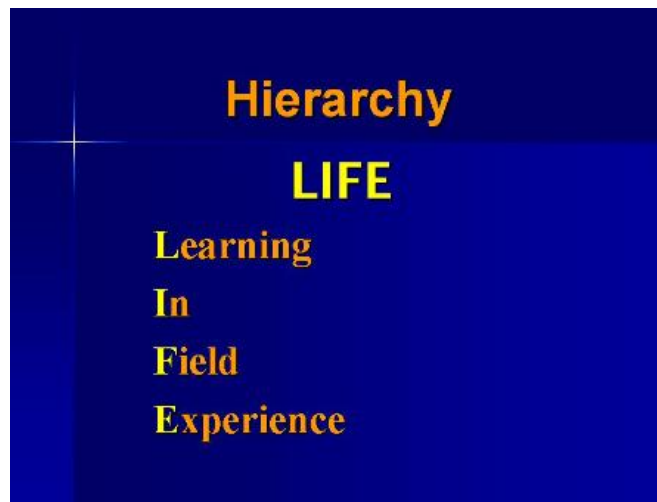
**c. Compromise**

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**Step 5. What can be done to avoid rigid or frozen behavior?**





## **LIFE Activity 4.1**

### **Catamount Island Bridge - An Issue about Reframing a Community**

**By Steven Smutko, Co-Author of Chapter 6 on Conflict**

**Objective:** Catamount Island Bridge is, at first glance, a dispute about the construction of a bridge to an island. The issue is posed as: "Should a new bridge be built to Catamount Island?" But it is really more than that.

- Read the statements of the two of the disputants, Joan Rhodes and Marvin Birdwell as each describes his or her position on the issue.
- Identify the power interests behind each position. Based on the interests of the powers as you understand them, reframe the issue to find a common definition of the issue that is acceptable to all parties.

**Procedures and Instructions:** The scenario has two parts: the setting and statements justifying the power positions of the primary participants.

**Step 1.** Read the setting and each statement.

**Step 2.** As you read the statements, look for two things: the positions of each disputant, and the interests behind those positions.



**Step 3.** Take out two sheets of paper. Label one sheet “Marvin Birdwell” and the other “Joan Rhodes.”

**Step 4.** At the top of sheet labeled “Marvin Birdwell,” write down Marvin’s position on the bridge issue. Next, list his interests, the reasons he has staked out his particular position. Be careful, don’t interpret his perceptions of others as interests, or infer interests that he has not revealed. To help you find and identify Marvin’s interests, seek to answer the question, “Why does Marvin want \_\_\_\_\_?” (fill in the blank with his stated position).

**Step 5.** Follow the same procedures with Joan Rhodes’ statement. Identify her position, and list her interests. What does she want \_\_\_\_\_?

**Step 6.** Review your lists of positions and interests for both Marvin and Joan. Remember, interests are the reasons each stands behind his or her position. Remove any item on either list that does not fit the definition of an interest.

**Step 7.** Now that you have tabulated the interests (power positions) of both disputants, use these interests to reframe the issue from “*Should a new bridge be built to Catamount Island?*”

**Step 8.** Describe how each of the power actors might bring in technical assistance providers to help them “solve” the problem from their point of views.

**a.** The Department of Transportation:

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**b.** Marvin Bidwell, Chair of CIA

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**c.** Sharon Rhodes, The Mayor

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**Step 9.** Now review your reframed statement. Did you mention the bridge in your statements

**a.** Why or why not?

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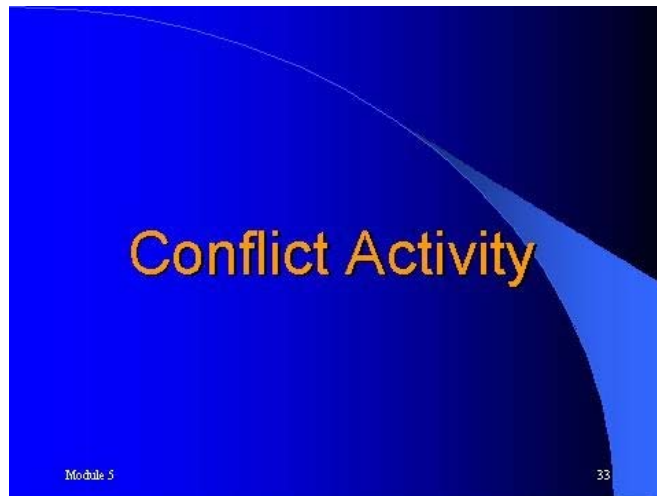
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**d.** Does it matter which side's interests are stated first?

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**Step 10.** If this scenario were real, how could you involve the parties their reframing statements from a developmental technical assistance approach?



### **The Setting**

The Town of Catamount Island is a resort community on the mid-Atlantic coast. Despite its misleading name, the town consists of both an island and a mainland area. Connecting the two parts of the town is a single lane, swing-span "pontoon" bridge. The bridge spans the Intracoastal Waterway, a major route for pleasure craft and small commercial boats that ply

the coast. It also bisects a high quality estuarine wetland, and is the only means available for crossing to and from the island.

The island and much of the mainland property was owned by a developer who purchased the land 40 years ago for less than \$8,000. Since the 1980s, residential development has boomed at Catamount Island. Both the island and mainland sections of town have undergone considerable growth. Ocean-front lots which originally sold for \$600 in the early 1960s now fetch upwards of \$500,000. The developer has since passed away, but his son, Cal Fiore, inherited the undeveloped lots, including the wetland area. The son also serves on the Town Council, and he wants to see the bridge that his father built in the 1950s replaced by a modern structure.

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Catamount Island Bridge is actually a floating barge that swings open to allow traffic on the Intracoastal Waterway to pass. The State acquired the bridge from Cal's father in the 1960's. The State Department of Transportation (DOT) maintains the bridge and staffs it with a bridge operator 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The bridge opens on-demand for commercial traffic, and on the hour for everyone else.

The DOT has sought to replace the bridge with a new structure for the past 20 years, noting concerns over safe and efficient transportation. It takes about ten minutes to open and close the bridge, and it usually handles normal, off-season traffic from the 270 mainland residents and the 250 island residents. However, during peak summer days when the average daily traffic over the bridge is about 10,000 cars and the Town population swells to 8,800, routine openings and closing can cause seemingly endless traffic delays. The bridge has also broken down on occasion, posing long delays for people wishing to leave the island. Although the Town employs both a fire department and an emergency medical service crew, no services exist on the island side of the bridge.

According to DOT engineers, there are two alternatives to the current bridge. The first is a high-rise fixed span structure. The high-rise would require drainage of Blaine Creek, and relocation of Big Narrows Channel. Nine acres of wetlands would be filled. The second option is a mid-level draw bridge. This option involves less environmental damage – only 3 acres of wetlands would be sacrificed, but it requires a bridge operator. DOT's preferred option is the high rise.

The bridge issue has split the town. Many on the mainland, including the mayor, Joan Rhodes, believe that a high-rise bridge is necessary to unite the two areas. Most island residents, represented by Marvin Birdwell of the Catamount Island Citizens Association, like the pontoon bridge and want to keep it. At worst, they'd settle for the mid-rise option.



### **Stakeholders in the Dispute**

#### **Marvin Birdwell, Catamount Island Citizens Association**

Marvin Birdwell, a member of the Catamount Island Citizens Association, a group of island homeowners. He helped create the CICA as a way to respond to many of the threats facing the island, largely as a result of development pressures. He is firmly opposed to the development of a high-rise span.

The biggest problem is that bridge construction would destroy estuarine wetlands on the west side of the island. To build such a massive bridge, DOT will have to drain and fill in over nine acres of wetland. Coastal wetlands are the breeding grounds for shrimp and other fish species that our commercial fishermen depend on for their livelihoods. I am just not willing to sacrifice another acre of wetland for one of DOT's grandiose public works projects!

This island is a special place. The large wetlands on the west end are a refuge for wildlife as well as for the soul. Did you know that this barrier island is unique in that it is actually gaining rather losing its beach? We have too much at stake to allow developers to plunder.

D-O-T has been dishonest in its representation of the facts. We proved that in court eight years ago when we stopped the bridge the first time. The judge agreed with us that their finding of no significant impact from the proposed structure was balderdash. So now they have to undergo a full-fledged environmental impact study. But still, they are playing fast with the facts. Do you think that the impacts will be any less severe than they were a decade ago? Absolutely not!

Right now, the island's west side is largely undeveloped, as it should be. Cal Fiore would love to sell those lots, but they won't perk. They're too wet. He knows as well as we do that those west side lots are part of the overall wetland ecosystem. If they get that bridge, you bet you'll see a sewer line connected to that span. Once sewer is in, this island will be no different from every other barrier island along this coast -- a barren strip of sand stacked end to end with houses, condominiums, and bikini shops.

The mayor and her friends are pushing for development. I've seen a lot of people around here get rich as land prices have spiraled in the past 15 years. But we have too much of a good thing here. Let's not spoil it! We can't keep building and developing without suffering from the damage it is causing. Sure, we can push for strict zoning to protect the "sense of place" that this island provides. But I don't trust the folks in city hall. Any protection policy that can be constructed can just as easily be dismantled.

Look, I'm a realist. I know that we'll eventually have to update the pontoon bridge. The shipping and boating interests are just too strong to hold off forever. But we don't need a high rise span. In fact, the mid-level draw bridge proposal that DOT is touting could be scaled back considerably. The tall-masted sail boats would still have to wait for the bridge opening, but most other craft would be able to get through. In fact, most of those pleasure boaters would be happy to trade an hour-long wait for the preservation of pristine wetlands.

### **Joan Rhodes, Catamount Island Mayor**

Joan Rhodes is the mayor of Catamount Island. She is concerned about the limited access to the island part of town. As mayor, she oversees management of Town services on both island and mainland. The old bridge is a major impediment to the provision of efficient and effective services. We need a new bridge. In fact, of the two bridge options, the only one that makes sense is the high-level span.

The high-level span will save taxpayers money. Can you imagine how expensive it would be to keep someone employed 24 hours a day to continue to operate a draw bridge? No, the state doesn't need to be spending money like that.

The mayor really cares about the safety of our school children. She has two children in the school system. The old bridge structure is a hazard to our school children. School buses have been stranded on the island for long periods while the bridge is open for commercial traffic. What if something happened to a bus loaded with children while the bridge is open and they can't get across? Also, on many, many occasions, children are late for school because the buses are stranded on the island while the bridge is open.

One of my worst fears is that a major catastrophe could occur on the island at a time that fire and ambulance services are blocked from crossing. All we could do in that case would be to wait. Someone could die needlessly. Also, because of our town's growth, we need to buy a larger fire truck. But a larger truck won't be able to get across that bridge! We won't be able to trade in our older truck for a newer one. Without a new bridge, we'll have to own a smaller truck at the expense of our taxpayers.

The mayor feels that a good bridge would unite the community. As a resident of the mainland, she sees the island as an isolated enclave where mainlanders hardly venture; in fact, we are unwelcome. By enabling easier access, she sees opportunities for the island and mainland parts of town to begin to act like one town, not two.

The Catamount Island Citizens Association says they are concerned about the environment. If they are so concerned, why don't they want to do something about the pollution caused by all the boats that have to wait in the channel for the bridge to open? I have seen more than 20 boats at one time backed up waiting to cross. Every one of those boats was running its engines. You could smell the diesel fumes for miles. And you can bet that when their toilets were full, they were dumping those things right in the channel... a mere twenty yards from peoples' front yards!

Most of those people in the Citizens Association are just complainers, really. They have their little piece of heaven and want to deny it to anyone else. Why, Marvin (Marge) Birdwell even fought the development of the Food Town grocery on the west end of town. Before we had the Food Town store, we had to travel 15 miles to buy groceries. And you know what? I saw Marvin buying groceries at the Food Town last week.

