

# Training Needs Assessment of Barangay Officials and Employees: Office Management Skills as a Basis for the Development of a BSOA Extension Program

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the office management training needs of elected barangay officials and personnel in a city in Central Philippines as basis for designing a competency-based extension program. Modern local governance requires officials to possess technical, operational, and communication competencies to deliver efficient and effective service; however, findings revealed that most frontline personnel have not received adequate formal training to develop the competencies necessary for office management. A descriptive survey design was used to gather data from 140 participants selected through cluster sampling. Barangays were categorized as either urban or rural following standards set by the Philippine Statistical Authority. The majority of respondents were middle-aged to elderly, predominantly female, and mostly

married. While many were college-educated, a large number had only reached high school level. Participants acknowledged difficulties in documentation and records management, yet did not identify these as top priorities — a result consistent with the low ranking given to basic digital skills. The priority training needs identified were: (a) structured meeting procedures, efficient office routines and systems, and administrative management; (b) effective communication skills covering memo writing and handling official correspondence and information flow; and (c) leadership and team-related competencies including decision-making and collaboration. Although training on basic digital literacy ranked lowest, clear gaps were noted and will still be integrated into the proposed Bachelor of Science in Office Administration extension program. It is recommended that training be practice-oriented and hands-on to ensure mastery, and that younger individuals be engaged to build a pipeline of future community leaders.

**Keywords:** *training needs assessment, office management competencies, public service, extension program, barangay governance*

## INTRODUCTION

State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines have the unique obligation as centers of extension to achieve sustainable development and socioeconomic advancement of the people through the promotion of human development while safeguarding the environment as mandated in CMO No. 32, s. 2005, MC No. 3, s. 1993, MC No. 9, s. 1993 and MC No. 12, s. 1993. Integral to the implementation of these extension initiatives is the participation of the people, which, through active involvement, will enhance the engagement and participation of citizens in public affairs so that those who benefit from government initiatives and services have a fair claim to them.

Additionally, Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), as a higher education institution, is mandated to provide community extension programs wherein students and faculty collaborate to conduct programs as an essential component of community service that involves active participation of the public in the realization of community development. This is a bridge of connection between the institution and society, taking their respective knowledge and ideas and blending them together to address the challenges of the local community in question and thus improve the quality of life in the community.

The development of a needs assessment questionnaire is integral to the planning of an extension program as part of a community development program. Barangays, being the grassroots of local and national government in the Philippines, act as a conduit between the local and national governments. However, it is essential that these barangay workers develop continuously in their skills so that other elements of society can visibly impact the development of the barangay. The most important skill they require is office management. This is because technology has become an inseparable part of modern governance.

Cornacchione (2012) states that office skills are integral and embedded into almost every workplace, thereby they can be used as a standard of conduct, performance, and competence for all people. These same people also need to exercise their communication and organizational skills, which provides a professional image. Hence, this study evaluates the needs of barangay officials and employees within the research locale in terms of the office management skills.

The findings of this study will be used in the development of an extension program to be provided to barangay officials and employees in the city in order to develop efficient and effective public servants. This study will be crucial in improving the functioning of barangay offices in carrying out their mandate. It will identify the skill gaps of the barangay personnel thereby enabling the planning of customized training programs that will enhance the personnel's capability to work efficiently and effectively while implementing the appropriate systems and technology to render quality services to clients in a timely manner.

For the local government unit concerned, this study will identify priority areas to carry out capacity-building initiatives. Proper training and development of barangay personnel will contribute to improving services to clients through smooth and efficient governance processes as well as better management of public records. The higher education institution in partnership will ensure that it develops extension programs that are responsive to the requirements of the community, as this is what the community wants to address.

In addition, the study will serve as a basis in planning and implementation of extension services aligned to the university's mandate of community service and production through gainful utilization of its academic capacity while at the same time providing the learning/interaction platform for its students to hone their skills in addressing community development problems.

This study might also serve as a guide for other local government units as well as researchers and extension workers in devising strategies for improving administrative management at the grassroots level. Moreover, it will equip barangay workers with the necessary skills in office management, which enhances the quality of public service, strengthens relationships with the community, and contributes to building more responsive, capable, and resilient communities for the needs of their constituents.

## **Literature Review**

As the most fundamental and essential unit of government in the Philippines (based on the 1991 Local Government Code), the barangay plays a significant role in the socioeconomic development of the nation. Serving as the frontline implementer of various services essential for an economic development plan, the barangay has much to do for the progress of the Philippines, as evident through the study of Capuno (2005) which clearly states that the nation develops with the development of the barangay. Moreover, human resource is another factor in realizing the success of barangay development.

It entails the importance of competencies such as necessary knowledge and skills as well as the attitude towards public service for barangay workers to optimize their roles in community development. To achieve the full utilization of the capabilities, training plays an integral role (Morales et al., 2020; DILG, 2023). It is stated in Section

384, RA 7160 (Local Government Code) that a barangay is the fundamental plan and implementation unit of the government in executing government plans.

A Local Governance Forum is a space where discussions occur with community members and conflicts are addressed. Henceforth, a high level of competence should be expected for barangay workers at either the official or the personnel level (Cabardo, 2022). The minimum requirements for a barangay worker's administrative skills, leadership capacity, and technical proficiency include that one must possess the foundational elements of strong administrative, leadership, and technical skills.

Other crucial and competencies for local governance workforce capacity development under new initiatives includes communications skill set (Garcia et al., 2021), ability to produce various type of outputs such as documents writing and documentation (Santos & Lim, 2022), enhanced knowledge of digital technology (UNESCO, 2020). Thus, under new form of capacity building framework in local governance, it emphasizes on competency-based approaches, as suggested by Asian Development Bank (2022) and Civil Service Commission (2023).

### **Knowledge and Skills of Barangay Officials and Employees**

Barangay officials and workers need knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to fulfill governmental burdens effectively. Officials hold a maximum of three consecutive terms (9 years total if re-elected) under the Local Government Code; yet, their shortened term of office makes it essential for them to acquire practical experience and training to build barangay leaders (Fernandez & Cruz, 2022).

Studies indicate that new governments are using competency-based approaches to improve their performance. In their study, Boyle and O'Riordan (2013) discovered that most governments now have competency management systems to specify the required skills and competencies for each role. As explained by the OECD (2011), competency-based approaches make the government more responsive and efficient in practice.

Globalization has posed a challenge for barangays to go above and beyond the basics. Instead, local governments need to create a conducive environment for the socio-economic development of their communities (Legaspi, 2001). This paradigm shifts of transforming local officials from simply service providers into catalysts in communities brings challenges, as new skills are required among leaders and attitudinal shifts are necessary in order to become effective leaders of their community (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021; Majee et al., 2020).

Considering the shifting perspectives of good governance, barangay officials need to continuously learn and improve their competencies in order to manage an effective and efficient local governance system. A proper kind of learning must be conducted by any organization to facilitate this transformation, like organizing task-oriented learning involving organizational analysis, task analysis, and personal analysis as pointed out by McGehee and Thayer (as cited in Ramos et al., 2017).

Local studies conducted of late highlighted various crucial factors to develop and build a capable local government: these include, among others, leadership competencies (Fernandez & Cruz, 2022), interpersonal and participatory skills (Dela Paz et al., 2020), and the active implementation of participatory decision-making processes (World Bank, 2021).

### **Current State of Research on Community Extension Services**

In every field, researchers have pointed out that information cannot simply be provided without community consultation (Perez, n.d.; World Bank, 2021). For instance, an eight-year-long study by Llenares and Deocariz (2018) shows a positive result in community welfare participation through engagement in extension programs. According to Ahari et al. (2012), to improve social outcomes and to get the community buy-in, the use of community engagement activities, specifically participative action research (PAR) and teamwork, has been recognized as key to community development because it encourages empowerment among the participants.

Matthew (2016) states, "For CBPR to succeed, all stakeholders should form an egalitarian partnership," while communication challenges (Garcia et al., 2021) and issues with poor resource management practices (Reyes & Lopez, 2021) continue to pose a challenge for effective local governance that can be mitigated with the establishment of proper training.

Further, studies made by Rosenthal (2015) and Corneau et al. (2018) have reiterated that with effective community engagement and evaluation, we can have far more successful programs and interventions. Accordingly, the application of a standardized need assessment tool along with a competency framework (Civil Service Commission, 2023) and a capacity development program (Asian Development Bank, 2022; DILG, 2023) can support them in filling a lot of needs and gaps of the barangay personnel.

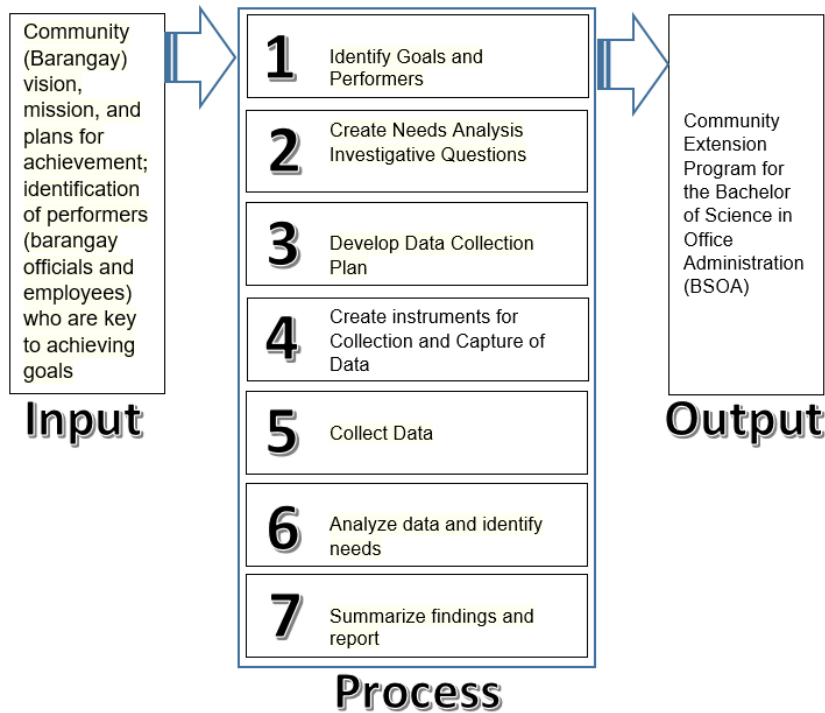
### Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Needs Analysis Framework, which describes a process for identifying gaps between individual or organizational performance goals and the reality of current performance delivery. This framework follows a seven-step process for conducting a needs assessment on any group (The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative, n.d.).

Figure 1 illustrates the framework that the researchers used in this study to assess the needs of barangay officials and employees in creating an extension program for the Bachelor of Science in Office Administration (BSOA).

**Figure 1**

*Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical/Conceptual Framework (Based on Needs Analysis Framework)*



### METHODS

Considering the descriptive nature of this study, the survey method was used for data gathering with the barangay officials and employees as the respondents who were selected using cluster sampling. In this scheme, the 35 barangays of the research locale were clustered into urban and rural based on the classification of the Philippine Statistical Authority (<https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/barangays/0704604000>). In each cluster, representative barangays were chosen randomly, and the barangay officials and employees of the selected barangays (a total of 140) were then chosen as respondents.

The survey instrument used is a questionnaire consisting of four sections. Section A is designed to collect data on the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, designation/position, and length of service. Section B deals with the needs of the respondents apropos of organizational planning and management. Section C is to determine the needs apropos to information and communication, while Section D is about the perceptions apropos to human relations. To establish the face validity of the questionnaire, five barangay officials and employees were invited to review all items. Each reviewer assessed the clarity and relevance of every item by completing a structured face validity form (Annex C). The feedback of the reviewers was summarized, and items that the reviewers considered to be unclear or inappropriate were accordingly either rephrased or discarded. The steps were also taken so that the questionnaire item is comprehensible, meaningful, and relevant in connection with the research question. The questionnaires were also checked regarding internal consistency and reliability. With a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.891, the questionnaire demonstrated good reliability, exceeding the threshold of  $\alpha \geq 0.7$ .

To gather data, the researchers secured permission from the city mayor of the research locale regarding the conduct of the survey through a letter of request. With the official approval, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to minimize non-responses and arrange the date of the retrieval of the completed questionnaires. After the retrieval of the questionnaires, tables were prepared for factual examinations and understanding with the aid of statistical software. In particular, the analytical tools utilized in this investigation are the frequency distribution for the profiling of the respondents, the weighted mean, and the standard deviation for the extent of the respondents' needs germane to office management skills previously listed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of 140 respondents categorized by age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, designation, and length of service.

Looking at the age of the people that responded to this study, it can be said that most fall within the older age categories. Four respondents (2.86%) stated their ages as being between 15 and 20, and eight people (5.71%) said their ages as between 21 and 26. Between the ages of 27 and 32, there were 16 (11.43%) responses; between the ages of 33 and 38, there were 12 (8.57%) responses. People between the ages of 39 and 44 comprised the most, at 24 people (17.14%); 45 and 50 years old comprised twenty people (14.29%); and 51 to 56 years old was the largest response group, at thirty-six people (25.71%). Twenty people (14.29%) were aged 57 or above. Contrary to assumptions, this shows that many respondents were not young adults, but middle-aged or older. This contrasts the findings of a study by Majee et al (2020)., which found that communities engage mostly young people. This may be related to the different areas of this research or migration into the communities of origin for the data.

With regard to gender, there were more female participants than male participants (57.14%,  $n = 80$ ; 42.86%,  $n = 60$ ; respectively). The majority of participants were married, while others were single or widowed (77.14%,  $n=108$ ; 20.00%,  $n=28$ ; 2.86%,  $n=4$ , respectively).

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15 - 20	4	2.86
	21 - 26	8	5.71
	27 - 32	16	11.43
	33 - 38	12	8.57
	39 - 44	24	17.14
	45 - 50	20	14.29

	51 - 56	36	25.71
	57 and above	20	14.29
Gender	Total	140	100.00
	Male	60	42.86
	Female	80	57.14
Civil Status	Total	140	100.00
	Single	28	20.00
	Married	108	77.14
	Legally separated		-
Educational attainment	Widow/er	4	2.86
	Total	140	100.00
	Elementary	32	22.86
	High school	28	20.00
	College	24	17.14
Designation/position	Graduate	56	40.00
	Total	140	100.00
	Punong Barangay	8	5.71
	Sanggunian Barangay member	56	40.00
	Kabataang Barangay Chairman	8	5.71
	Barangay Secretary	8	5.71
	Barangay Treasurer	8	5.71
	Lupong Tagapamayapa member	16	11.43
Length of service (years)	Barangay Health Workers and Tanod	36	25.71
	Total	140	100.00
	0 - 5	84	60.00
	6-10	16	11.43
	11-15	24	17.14
	16-20	16	11.43
	Total	140	100.00

The respondents indicated their different educational attainment, such as 22.86% (n=32) obtaining their education up to elementary education. Meanwhile, 20.00% (n=28) of respondents finished their education up to the high school level. About 17.14% (n=24) have already partially completed a college degree, while 40.00% (n=56) are graduates of a degree college. Such distribution of respondents indicated the educational inequality; that despite getting a higher education, others are having only basic schooling. A similar report was also found in the indigenous communities in the Philippines, where 56.67% of respondents are graduates of elementary education (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021).

Most (40.00%, n=56) of the respondents were members of Sanggunian Barangay, followed by (25.71%, n=36) who were health workers and barangay tanods. 5.71% (n=8) was a Punong barangay, 5.71% (n=8) was a youth chairman, 5.71% (n=8) was a barangay secretary, 5.71% (n=8) was a barangay treasurer, while 11.43% (n=16) were Lupong Tagapamayapa members.

With regard to length of service, the majority of respondents have rendered service for five years and below (60.00%, n=84). On the other hand, 11.43% of respondents had 6-10 years of service, 17.14% had 11-15 years of

service, and another 11.43% have 16-20 years of service. The data indicates that the turnover in barangay service is high and fewer individuals have served for more than a decade.

According to the demographic profile, the majority of the respondents were middle-aged (ranging from 30 to 40), married, and with different levels of education, wherein most of them had only completed secondary education. Most of them were females and had less than 5 years of experience holding a position at the barangay. This reflects the findings of the literature relating to patterns of participation in the community (Majee et al., 2020; Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021), except that this has differences in age and education.

### **Organizational Planning and Management**

The organizational planning and management needs in a barangay are enumerated in Table 2 with weighted means showing that all areas listed have been “Highly Needed.” It appears from the data collected that all identified areas have been rated “Highly Needed,” with two areas of administrative functions having been identified as most crucial. The management of the barangay office (4.54) and proper conduct of office meetings (4.54) are perceived to be of vital importance, which reflects the strong perceptions of needs, as indicated by the need for proper management/organization.

Cabardo (2022) recommended the necessity of a requisite process for office meetings due to the fact that those with procedures have more responses, fewer problems, and more trust from the members of the barangay as opposed to those without procedures just for the fact that they have conflicts with each other. Resource management (4.43) was also indicated as needed, which could be associated with the personnel and budget of the barangay as well as its physical assets. A similar study conducted by Reyes and Lopez (2021) reported that efficient use of resources and money in the barangay has also been an issue.

Table 2. *Needs Related to Organizational Planning and Management*

Needs	Weighted Mean	Description
Proper conduct of office meetings.	4.54	Highly Needed
Barangay office management.	4.54	Highly Needed
Management of barangay resources.	4.43	Highly Needed
All	4.50	Highly Needed

With the average overall weighted mean of 4.50 for the organizational management items, it becomes clear that the local government needs attention, especially when planning activities related to administrative functions of their barangays. Interventions that are necessary are those that will help strengthen leadership capacity in their respective administrative endeavors. Capacity-building initiatives on administrating office management, budget and resource management, and meeting procedures are highly beneficial in the areas identified.

Morales et al. (2020) had found similar positive effects of the interventions conducted as to how they increased administrative skills and knowledge, which significantly improved the barangay’s overall productivity.

### **Information and Communication**

Table 3 data present the information and communications needs, including specific communication skills. The overall weighted mean is 4.24, which is to be considered ‘Highly Needed.’ Table 3 showed that there was a great concern among barangay officials regarding information & communications needs that they expressed with overall weighted means of 4.24, and it may be seen as the greatest need for skills in producing an office memo and office communication, which are writing memorandums for internal correspondences and producing office memos for outgoing and incoming correspondence, writing office memos which gained weighted means of 4.31 to 4.49.

The writing of minutes of meetings, creation and submission of reports to executives and stakeholders, and writing of reply letters to business correspondence are some of the main jobs that were asked for. It is the main job for creating administrative reports and conducting business in the workplace, which the respondents said is of significance and the highest concern (Santos & Lim, 2022). In knowing how to respond thoroughly and how responses in office organization would impact the way of doing barangay (Garcia et al., 2021), they say that clarity

of organizations' communication yields higher decision-making and also better service in local governments that makes respondents agree that it matters most that the respondents would be aware of the channel flow in the organizations, with a mean of 4.49, which is the main part. The skills of using the internet and texting and having readable written letters are found to be the least important among respondents, having a mean of 3.83, 3.69, and 3.89, respectively.

Table 3. *Needs Related to Information and Communication*

Needs	Weighted Mean	Description
Ability to write office memos.	4.46	Highly Needed
Ability to interview guests in the office.	4.31	Highly Needed
Ability to write replies to correspondence.	4.43	Highly Needed
Ability to prepare minutes of the meeting.	4.46	Highly Needed
Ability to write draft reports.	4.40	Highly Needed
Ability to channel calls appropriately.	4.31	Highly Needed
Ability to edit official documents.	4.29	Highly Needed
Ability to transmit printed materials.	4.31	Highly Needed
Ability to send text messages.	3.69	Needed
Ability to browse the internet for information.	3.83	Needed
Ability to write legibly.	3.89	Needed
Ability to be accurate in communication.	3.97	Needed
Ability to apply harmony in sentence construction.	4.34	Highly Needed
Ability to comprehend the flow of organizational communication.	4.49	Highly Needed
Ability to write direct requests.	4.43	Highly Needed
All	4.24	Highly Needed

These could imply that these skills are considered normal or routine skills with very little effect on productivity (UNESCO, 2020). The truth is it does not score that highly with a weighted mean of 3.97, where the respondents are not prioritizing it as much. It means to create a focused program or training on making formal documents (i.e., office memorandum, reporting, office document reporting, and administration reports) that will help administrative offices to report using the different report-reporting systems and the memo-writing system, which will enable memorization and meeting documentation (Department of the Interior & Local Government, 2023).

Existing training programs or initiatives of various agencies to LGU local government in local government units in the Philippines such as DILG, training programs on capacity building to LGU officials are good enough.

### **Human Relations**

The data in Table 4 show that the respondents believe that human relations skills are needed in their workplace. The overall weighted mean of 4.13 indicates that they believe these skills are needed.

The significance of specific human relations competencies for the effective governance of the barangay was investigated in this study. Four competencies, namely recommending changes in correspondences (4.40, SD = 0.55), discussing developmental programs with colleagues (4.46, SD = 0.42), handling difficult issues (4.46, SD = 0.44), and delegating responsibilities (4.31, SD = 0.59), received high mean scores by the respondents. This observation is complementary to Fernandez and Cruz's (2022) research findings in local government leadership, which report that decision-making skills and conflict resolution skills are crucial for sustainable development.

Table 4. *Related to Human Relations*

Needs	Weighted Mean	Description
Ability to maintain cordial relations with the public.	3.86	Needed
Ability to maintain cordial relations with fellow officials/employees.	3.83	Needed
Ability to make referral duties with tact.	4.17	Needed
Ability to recommend changes in correspondences.	4.40	Highly Needed
Ability to discuss developmental programs with colleagues.	4.46	Highly Needed
Ability to have a cordial relationship with visitors.	3.91	Needed
Ability to handle difficult issues.	4.46	Highly Needed
Ability to delegate responsibilities to subordinates.	4.31	Highly Needed
Ability to know the likes and dislikes of peers.	4.09	Needed
Ability to accord respect to everybody in the office.	3.83	Needed
All	4.13	Needed

Likewise, the competence in discussing development programs with the colleagues is consistent with the World Bank's (2021) emphasis on the importance of collaboration. The study also reports six other competencies that are rated as not as urgent but just as essential. These include public relations (3.86), colleague relations (3.83), tactful referrals (4.17), visitor relations (3.91), preferences of the peers (4.09), regulation of subordinates (3.83), and respect for the workplace (3.83). These are contributions of Dela Paz et al. (2020), who in a study of local government units in the Philippines indicated that psychosocial skills are desirable but not the priority need in an environment of limited resources.

The current study investigated the influence of organizational leadership, interpersonal skills, and training on competency perceptions of local government officials in the Southern Philippines. The results revealed the participants had a moderate perception of their competency. Respondents had a high perception of their interpersonal skills but a low perception of leadership skills. Additionally, the participants' perception of their competency was positively influenced by interpersonal skills, leadership, and training. Hence, local government officials' training programs had to be improved, especially for the most important concepts and principles, which are leadership, decision-making, and conflict management.

In this vein, the study recommends that human relations training programs for local officials should not only maintain their interpersonal skills but also emphasize the development of leadership, collaborative decision-making, and conflict management. Consistent with the findings, the Civil Service Commission (2023) competency framework to be used by local officials, implemented with training programs, should therefore be oriented to the development of leadership, collaborative decision-making, and conflict management. This is consistent with the recommendation by the Asian Development Bank's (2022) review of local governance initiatives of the need for scenario-based training that would involve participatory approaches in leadership and conflict management.

## CONCLUSION

A majority of service personnel serving in barangays are middle-aged and older women, and although most of them are at the tertiary education level, a number are only at the elementary and secondary levels, which can restrict their capacity to handle intricate tasks required by an efficient administration. The level of turnover is also moderately high (with the average personnel serving at most for only five years), which is an indication of the necessity to invest in enhanced trainings and benefits and to harness greater community engagement, especially of the youth, in various leadership initiatives.

From the assessment, it is evident that the most important needs perceived and identified by the respondents are those pertaining to office organization. Namely, it was pointed out as an urgent need by the personnel to be

trained in the systematic conduct of meetings and in proper utilization of office resources and the office process. It is also particularly essential to improve on their professional communication, that is, in preparing reports, memoranda, and meeting minutes and knowing the flow of information.

It is worth noting that while the training concerning basic computer skills and digital skills was ranked lower in priority than other areas, the results demonstrate the perceived inadequacy in current document and record handling and management practices. Thus, the personnel, irrespective of their priority of digital skills, indicate the lack of competence in this area, which could be a barrier to proper documenting and information management. Leadership skills were also found to be in high demand, especially in decision-making, team building, and conflict resolution. Conversely, the skills related to maintaining personal relations and for public engagement were considered important but not to an extent to be considered in the short-term training needs assessment.

Considering the general observation that competencies in the areas of administration, leadership, and human relations need to be strengthened, it is recommended that training programs and interventions should be devised to strengthen these aspects. Capacity-building activities should be directed not only at maintaining good human relations but also at giving an impetus to leadership, collaborative decision-making, and problem-solving.

Moreover, training should focus on application. A clear practice requirement identified was for staff to be taught how to do proper administrative procedures, resource management, and standards for writing and documentation. Guidelines and written material should also be provided to staff members as resources for use in everyday, daily work. Since it is apparent that meetings are held but not really run efficiently or well documented, the resulting BSOA extension program will contain modules to standardize these processes.

Finally, in order to assure continued progress, it is suggested that training methods ought to be hands-on and practice-based so that participants of the training can apply what they learn as they learn. Also, efforts ought to be made at attracting younger people to participate in the activities so that they, too, can lead in the future as the barangay service continues to remain flexible, competent, and ready to respond to the evolving needs of their community.

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