



Constituting Effective Teams for Rural Development in the Program for the Rural Carolinas

Introduction

One of the two main goals of the Program for the Rural Carolinas (PRC) is to “build the leadership, assets, and structures that support long-term economic renewal for the community.” Toward that end, PRC designers charged locally constituted teams with the task of planning and implementing strategies for increasing the employment, income, and wealth of people left behind by the economy. Representing diverse sectors and interests in the community, these teams are intended to be a “critical first step in building cadres of leaders to support the process of community change.”¹

Since mid-2002, the Option 1 sites have assembled groups of people who share a commitment to local economic renewal and are willing to spend considerable time translating that commitment to plans and actions on the ground. These teams have worked to build trust and effective working relationships among their diverse members. They have developed structures for making decisions about how to allocate their resources and for getting the work done. Six months into PRC’s implementation, these newly constituted teams are faced with two important questions:

- **Have we included the “right” people as members? Are there changes that make sense as we go forward?**
- **Have we structured ourselves and are we operating in a way that accomplishes our goals and engages an ever-widening circle of people and institutions in the community’s economic renewal?**

The Central Role of Teams in PRC

Lasting community change happens neither top-down nor bottom-up, but rather from the inside out, when people representing a wide range of interests commit to work together on a few shared goals. For a community to be successful, the process of change must involve a coming together of . . . ‘the movers and the shakers and the moved and the shaken.’

We believe that truly changing a community involves committing to truly changing the way a community comes together.²

In this working memorandum, we take an early look at how the teams are addressing these two questions and what they are learning about building team capacity to implement the PRC agenda.

¹ MDC’s “Strengthening the Rural Carolinas: A Conceptual Framework for the Program for the Rural Carolinas,” June 2002, p. 18.

² Ibid., p. 11.

Team Composition

MDC encourages the sites to form teams that “look like their community” in terms of their demographic background and the different sectors and interests they represent. This diversity can help to ensure that the approach that is being developed is responsive to community needs. Diverse membership is also required to build the “bridging social capital” or networks that link people and organizations across the social divides of race, class, or religion.³ PRC’s assumption is that these networks can help foster a unified community vision and provide access to the people and resources needed to implement that vision.

Besides representatives of The Duke Endowment (TDE) eligible hospitals and churches, MDC suggests the importance of three different categories of people:

- ◆ **Employers (those who offer jobs)**
- ◆ **Helpers (those organizations and individuals who can help people find and prepare for jobs)**
- ◆ **Those left behind by the economy**

Option 1 sites went about the process of constituting diverse teams in somewhat different ways. In some cases, an individual or small group handpicked a core group of team members, which then expanded itself based on the need to fill in gaps in expertise and connections to certain community constituencies. In other cases, a small group held open community meetings to invite interested parties to participate. In several cases, TDE and MDC encouraged “shotgun marriages” among two or more groups of people involved in preparing competing proposals for the same or neighboring areas, so representatives from different groups came together to form a team.

An analysis of current team membership suggests that most teams succeeded in becoming relatively diverse by race, geography (for the multi-county teams), and sector but less so by economic background or age.

As indicated in the table, Option 1 Team Profiles, teams varied considerably in the sectors their members represented. For example, teams ranged from 0-40% in their private sector business representation, from 0-25% in their representation from government, and from 7-50% in their nonprofit representation. Sometimes the variations make sense to the teams; in other cases, teams are continuing to add new members to extend their reach. For example, the **Beaufort County Program for the Rural Carolinas (BCPRC)** team recently dedicated parts of two team meetings to assessing team composition and identifying potential new team members to create more balance geographically and to include more people from the business/financial sectors.

³ Ibid., p. 5.

Table I: Option I Team Profiles¹

	BCPRC	Far West²	LO/UD - Shady Grove PRC	MCCAN	NAPRC	RPRC	Team VANCE
Total # of Members	12	20	35	15	14	21	20
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION							
White	50.0%	90.0%	34.3%	46.7%	85.8%	76.2%	70.0%
African-American	50.0%	0.0%	65.7%	53.3%	7.1%	19.1%	30.0%
American-Indian	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hispanic	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	4.7%	0.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Male	58.3%	35.0%	42.9%	66.7%	64.3%	61.9%	55.0%
Female	41.7%	65.0%	57.1%	33.3%	35.7%	38.1%	45.0%
EMPLOYMENT SECTOR							
CHURCH OFFICIALS	33.4%	10.0%	17.1%	6.7%	21.4%	9.5%	5.0%
PRIVATE SECTOR	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	21.4%	23.8%	35.0%
Workers/Entrepreneurs ³	0.0%	30.0%	17.1%	33.3%	21.4%	4.8%	25.0%
Financial Institutions	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	6.7%	0.0%	9.5%	0.0%
Chambers/Agencies	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	10.0%
EDUCATION	8.3%	15.0%	25.7%	33.3%	14.3%	19.0%	10.0%
Universities/Community Colleges	8.3%	5.0%	17.1%	20.0%	14.3%	9.5%	10.0%
Primary/Secondary Education	0.0%	10.0%	8.6%	13.3%	0.0%	9.5%	0.0%
Skills Training	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
GOVERNMENT	8.3%	5.0%	14.3%	13.4%	7.1%	19.0%	30.0%
Local, State, Federal Agencies	8.3%	5.0%	8.6%	6.7%	0.0%	14.3%	20.0%
Elected/Appointed Officials	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%	6.7%	7.1%	4.8%	10.0%
NONPROFITS	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	6.7%	35.7%	28.6%	20.0%
Social /Community Services	8.3%	5.0%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	19.0%	0.0%
Arts	0.0%	15.0%	2.9%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Economic Development/CDC	33.3%	5.0%	11.4%	0.0%	21.4%	4.8%	10.0%
Youth Development	8.3%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	7.1%	4.8%	10.0%
FARMERS	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

¹ The membership of each team has been analyzed with regards to the sectors in which they are employed. It is not a perfect analysis because some people represent more than one sector. However, the table provides a rough approximation of how different teams are constituted as of July 2003.

² Because the core leadership team is an open group of community members, we have, for the purposes of this table, defined the team as the 5 members of the Executive Finance Team plus 15 community leaders who have attended the most core team meetings.

³ Includes retirees.

* Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100.

Some teams have substantial representation of nonprofits and others connected to “people left behind” but none have engaged this group to any significant extent on the teams, and only a few teams have done so on any of their subcommittees or implementation teams. Some team members do not see participation of people left behind on the team as necessarily the best way to represent the interests of this group. Others report that they think it is a good idea, but that it is too soon to expect that participation because it will take team energy away from other pressing issues at hand. Teams that have fewer connections among its membership to “people left behind” and racial and economic profiles that do not mirror that of the county seem to be less well positioned to develop a program strategy that will both engage and respond to this group’s needs.

Given the historical context of many of the Option 1 counties, it is not surprising that some team members struggle with the issue of racial division and what this means for authentic implementation of PRC’s agenda. Several interviewees wondered if their teams would ever be able to deal with the racial dynamics that seemed to them to impede progress both on their teams and in the larger community. From their perspective, trust, will, and capacity would need to be enhanced significantly over time in order to address issues related to race directly. It is very challenging work.

As is the case in other collaborative community efforts, teams tend to experience an initial “shake-down” period in which members drop off the team for various reasons: they don’t have the time required to devote to the team, they do not see the relevance of the team’s work for their own agendas, and/or they become frustrated with the process and immediate lack of progress. Although most teams have experienced 15-30% turnover in membership since the very beginning of the planning process, this turnover has been quite modest once the teams received their TDE support early in January 2003.

Despite their relative stability, all teams are challenged with the possibility of burnout among their volunteer base: how to keep its members—who have their own busy lives, jobs and families—engaged and at the table. Long-term sustainability depends on maintaining a core group of community leaders, as well as bringing in new people to refresh the ranks and to contribute particular assets needed at any point in time. As described in the next section, one way that teams have tried to engage an ever-widening circle of community members is through their implementation teams or program committees.

In sum, the teams report being reasonably satisfied with the mix of people that constitutes their membership. Most of the teams’ original founders are still involved but there is some worry about burnout. Some teams have experienced a drop-off in attendance at monthly meetings. A couple of teams have either recently had retreats or have plans to do so for team-building as well as for program planning and implementation purposes.

Team Structure and Governance

To design and implement their agendas in an effective and efficient manner as possible, teams need to develop a structure and a way to make decisions, allocate resources, carry out the work, and monitor progress toward goals. As described in the team charts at the end of this memorandum, the ways in which the teams have structured themselves vary somewhat.

- All the teams have structured program committees around the teams' major lines of work. In most sites, at least some of these team committees also include community members who are not on the core team but who extend the committee's reach and capacity. For example, the **Far West Mountain Economic Partners (Far West)** team has engaged over 100 people in its program teams. Some get involved through an interest in a particular area, such as heritage tourism, and then expand their interest and join the core leadership team. One benefit of this strategy is that it has enabled Far West to engage a group that is more economically diverse than the original core team. The **Northwest Alliance Program for the Rural Carolinas (NAPRC)** team has found that when it needed to fill a departing board member's slot, it could invite someone from its regional marketing implementation team who already knew about and was committed to NAPRC's goals and approach. **Marion County Collaborative Action Network (MCCAN)** is hoping to identify potential team members through its Connecting with Communities process.
- All seven teams have established an executive committee charged with overseeing and coordinating the team's work and making decisions and providing guidance and support to staff between team meetings. Interviews in **Beaufort** indicate that it wasn't until the executive committee was composed that the team felt it became functional. **Team VANCE** recently decided that its work would proceed more expeditiously with such a committee and established it in August 2003.
- Five of the seven teams have designated chairs and in some cases other team officers.

Teams tend to make decisions either by vote or by "I can live with this" consensus. While a transparent and inclusive process is central to the PRC approach, there is also a natural tendency, sometimes based on experience, for people who are just learning to work together to worry that the "real" decisions are being made in back rooms without them. To combat this perception, many teams have spent considerable time in such activities as writing up meeting notes for wide distribution, convening ad hoc team sessions when misunderstandings need to be addressed, and expanding the team when it appears that one sector or another is underrepresented. Although internal communications within and among the program committees require a substantial time commitment, **those teams that have devised ways of keeping everyone informed, often through group e-mails, have felt that the time invested had a substantial payoff in terms of group trust and coordination of activities.** One staff member reported that lively email exchanges among team members, even if occasionally contentious, served to build group trust and identity. At another site, team members reported not being in the loop and feeling excluded until a staff person who devoted more time to

internal team communications was hired. At still another site, several team members on one committee talked about not having any idea what the other committees were doing, noting that this lack of communication was clearly working to the detriment of the overall effort.

At this stage, all teams have hired an individual to coordinate the team and its meetings, identify resources and partners, keep information flowing, and follow up on the team's decisions between meetings. As they move into full-scale implementation, team members are increasingly voicing the need for two kinds of staff support: support for program committees to help follow up on plans and produce results in a timely fashion, and support for the team as a whole so that various activities are coordinated and a transparent process maintained, including ongoing communication within the team and between the team and the community. Although wary of displacing volunteer team members' efforts with additional paid staff, some team members question how long they will be able to sustain their high level of involvement. What does emerge fairly clearly from interviews with both team members and staff is the **essential role of experienced staff in sustaining the pace and momentum of the team's work**. Sites that have only recently hired a program coordinator or that have defined their staff role as part-time or primarily in terms of administrative support have tended to move into implementation more slowly.

Because dedicated staff seems to play such an important role, some sites have found creative ways to stretch the resources they can devote to staffing. One example is the partnership between **NAPRC** and an economic development organization in the region whereby NAPRC covers a portion of the salary of the nonprofit's staff member because the goals and strategies outlined by the PRC overlap substantially with the nonprofit's. Another example is the staff person working on housing with the **Far West** team. While his salary is not covered by The Duke Endowment's PRC grant, his program work is integrated into and supported in part by the grant, and he participates as a full member of the PRC team. These two examples illustrate relationships that create win-win situations for both the PRC team and the nonprofit that employs the staff: both get a bigger bang for their buck. According to those involved, these relationships work in part because the partners trust each other and have little concern about issues of credit and ownership.

Some teams have hired or plan to hire two staff people to share the administrative coordination and implementation coordination responsibilities. For example, the **LO/UD-Shady Grove Program for the Rural Carolinas (LO/UD-Shady Grove PRC)** team has both a project administrator, who works 30% on this project, and a full time Operations Coordinator. The **BCPRC** has a full time team coordinator and a part time administrator. The **Far West** team has recently hired a part-time administrative support person. **MCCAN** has just brought on another part-time coordinator. And several teams are hoping to hire Americorps volunteers or interns.

Developing a Strategy to Support Long-Term Change

One of PRC's challenges is how to **institutionalize the change process** so that it continues after TDE's investment. Growing businesses, developing the workforce, promoting affordable housing, building financial infrastructure, and strengthening the community's civic leadership are ongoing enterprises. Aware of the long-term nature of their goals as compared with PRC's relatively short life, teams have struggled with the question of where to lay the groundwork for sustainability. As is discussed in the "Doing Development Differently" memorandum, they have looked for ways to identify and to build on existing community assets, to work in partnership with others, and generally to avoid starting many new, especially freestanding, enterprises that will have trouble sustaining themselves when PRC is over.

As part of the dialogue regarding institutionalization, most of the sites have considered the need and the wisdom of starting a nonprofit organization, such as a community development corporation (CDC), through which to implement the PRC agenda on a long-term basis. Some sites—**Randolph County Program for the Rural Carolinas (RPRC)**, **Team VANCE**, **LO/UD-Shady Grove PRC**, and **BCPRC**—have either rejected this alternative or put it on a back burner. **Far West** has tentatively decided to establish a CDC, and **MCCAN** is moving to take over an existing but defunct CDC. The **NAPRC** team has decided not to start anything new, but is currently exploring the possibility of institutionalizing some of its work when PRC ends in a CDC that the United Methodist Church recently established for an eight-county area that includes NAPRC's three counties. All the sites considering CDCs are viewing these organizations as potentially having broad economic and social development agendas rather than a sole focus on housing.

The Pros and Cons of Incorporation

- *"Institutions are there to serve themselves. It's clear that our job is to get something started. We are planting the trees that will grow into the forest. We are not hired to manage the forest."*
- *"We need to show 'what is ours' so that we have a track record that allows us to raise funds more easily."*
- *"We don't want to duplicate or compete with existing organizations, we want to help the good ones do new things or do what they are doing better in a more coordinated way and at a greater scale. But we need an identity for the group that will create a buzz, stimulate people to get involved, give us more visibility and credibility, and help the county commissioners know who we are, give people a unique face to recognize us by. Whether we can do this without being a separate 501(c)3 is a question."*
- *"Our goal is plain and simple: a CDC will allow us to receive Community Development Block Grant and other funds that must go to a CDC. It will also allow us to partner with some smaller organizations and give them access to new resources. Such an organization does not exist in this region so it will build the entire community's capacity to draw in new resources."*
- *"It was and will be essential to have the 501(c)3 status. You can't run a new business without the structure, you can't just have an ad-hoc organization."*

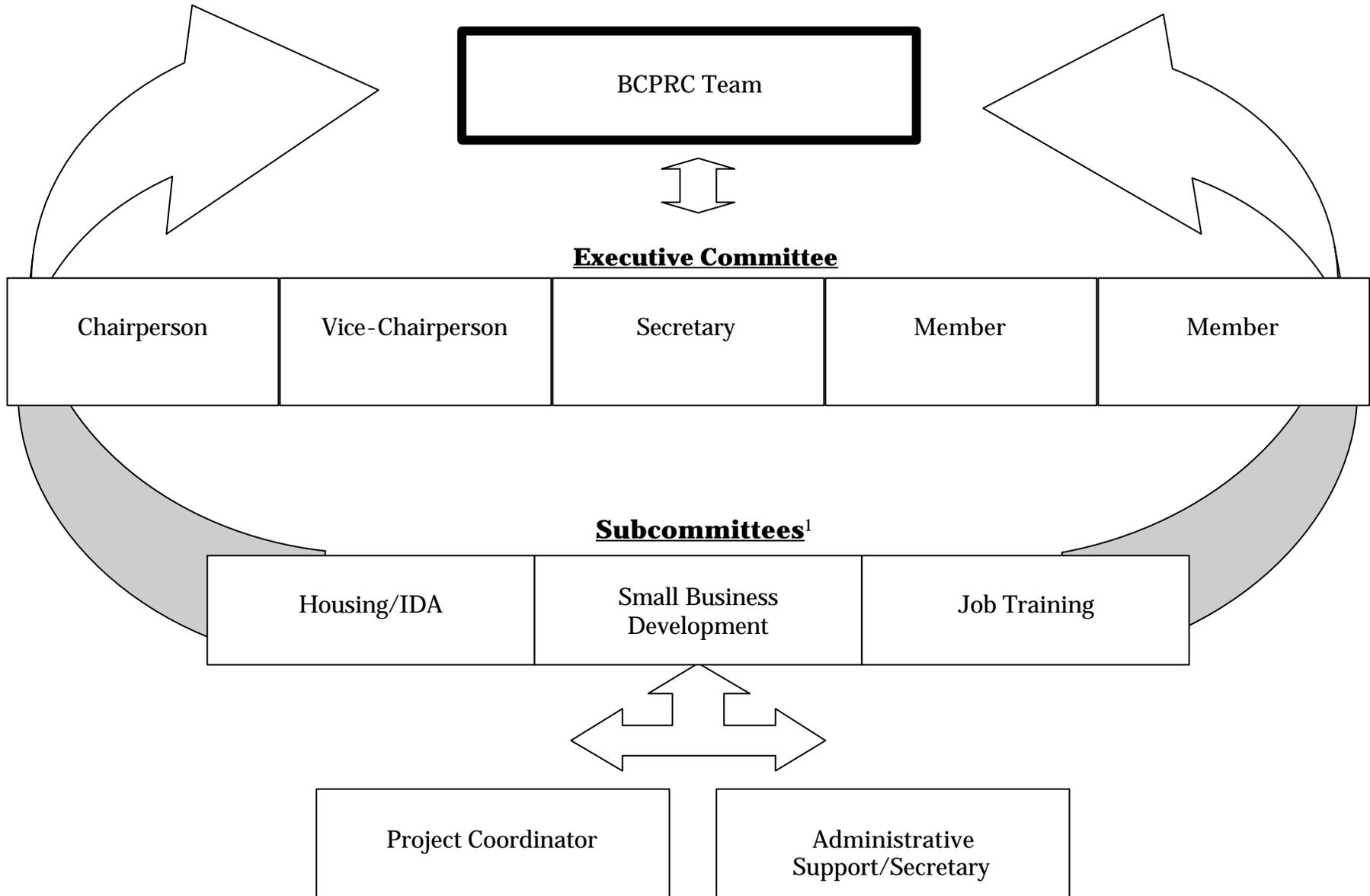
Looking Forward

Each site has recruited a group of people, hired staff, and created a governance structure to guide PRC's work as it moves into full-scale implementation. Three of the challenges that appear most critical for effective team functioning at this stage of PRC's evolution include:

- Deploying staff effectively so that team members neither burn out nor reduce their much-needed engagement *and* the work moves forward expeditiously
- Building trust within the teams and their program committees across lines of race
- Identifying creative and multiple strategies for engaging people left behind in the ongoing design, implementation, and assessment of the team's agenda

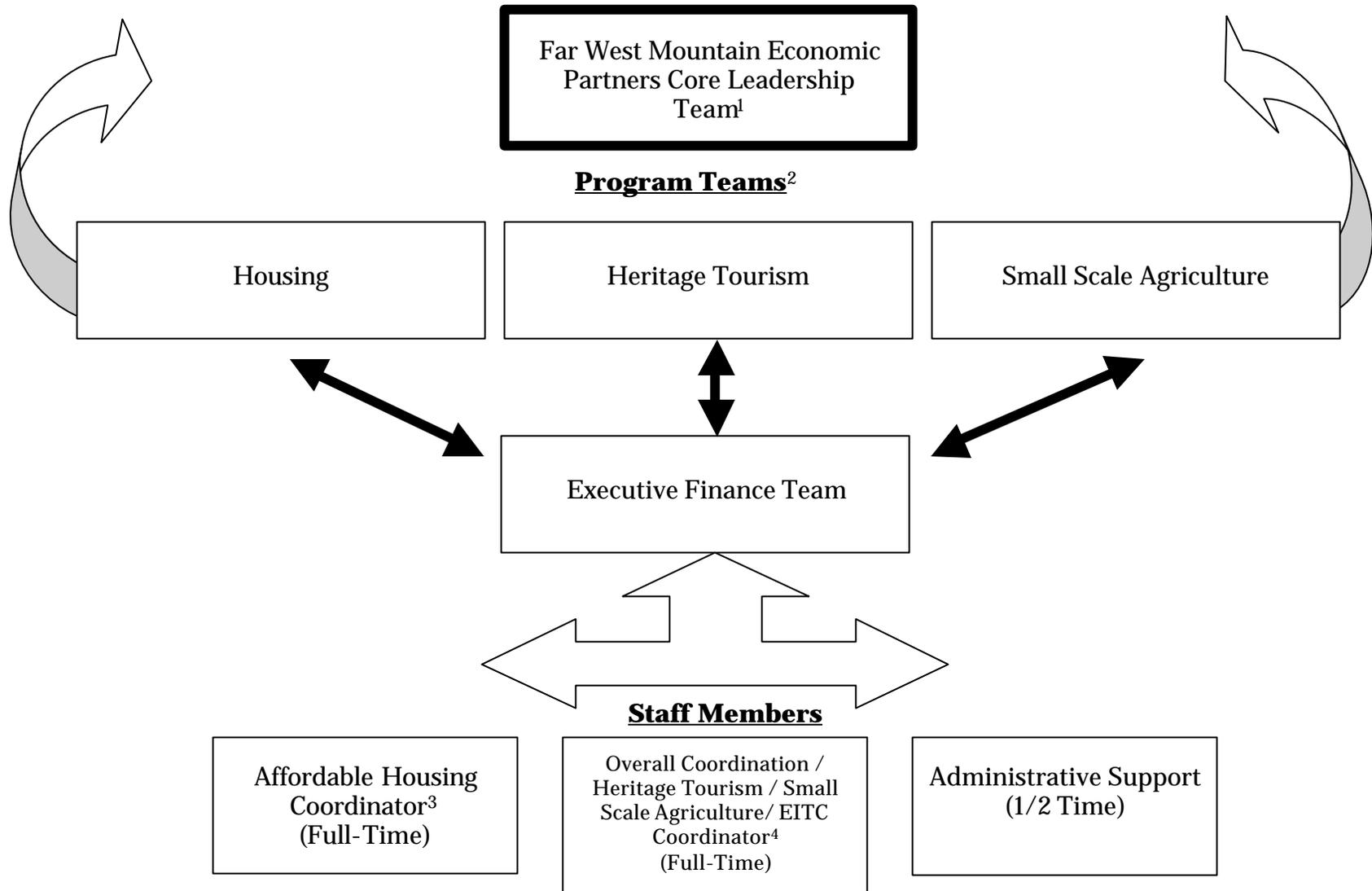
Eligible Institution: Greenville District Office of the United Methodist Church

Beaufort County Program for the Rural Carolinas (BCPRC)



¹The intent is that the subcommittees will include community members who are not necessarily formally on the team.

Far West Mountain Economic Partners (Far West)



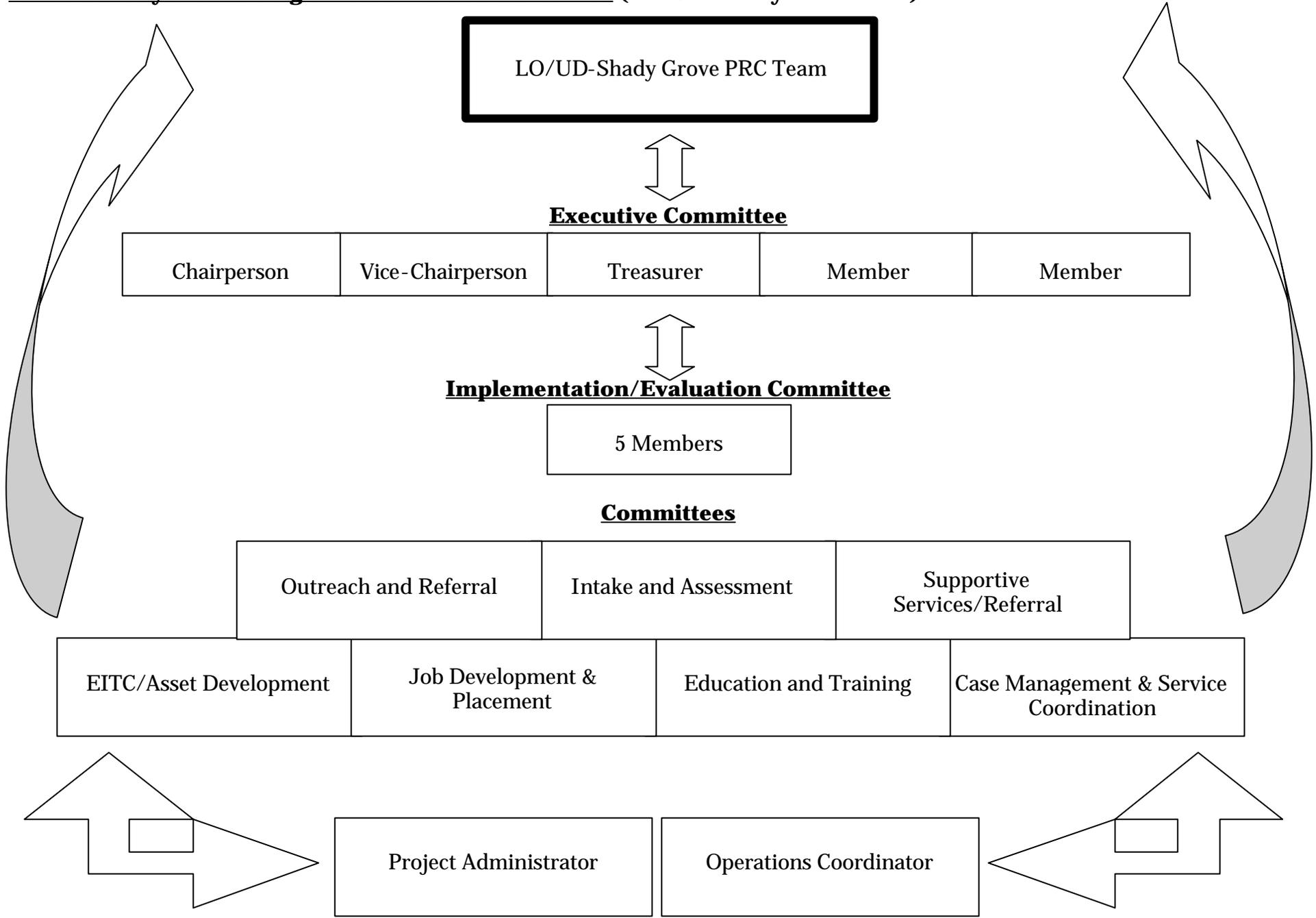
¹ The Core Leadership Team consists of the 5 members of the Executive Finance Team plus an open and evolving group of community members. About 15-20 members of this larger group attend any one monthly meeting.

² These teams are made up of members of the Core Leadership Team plus community representatives.

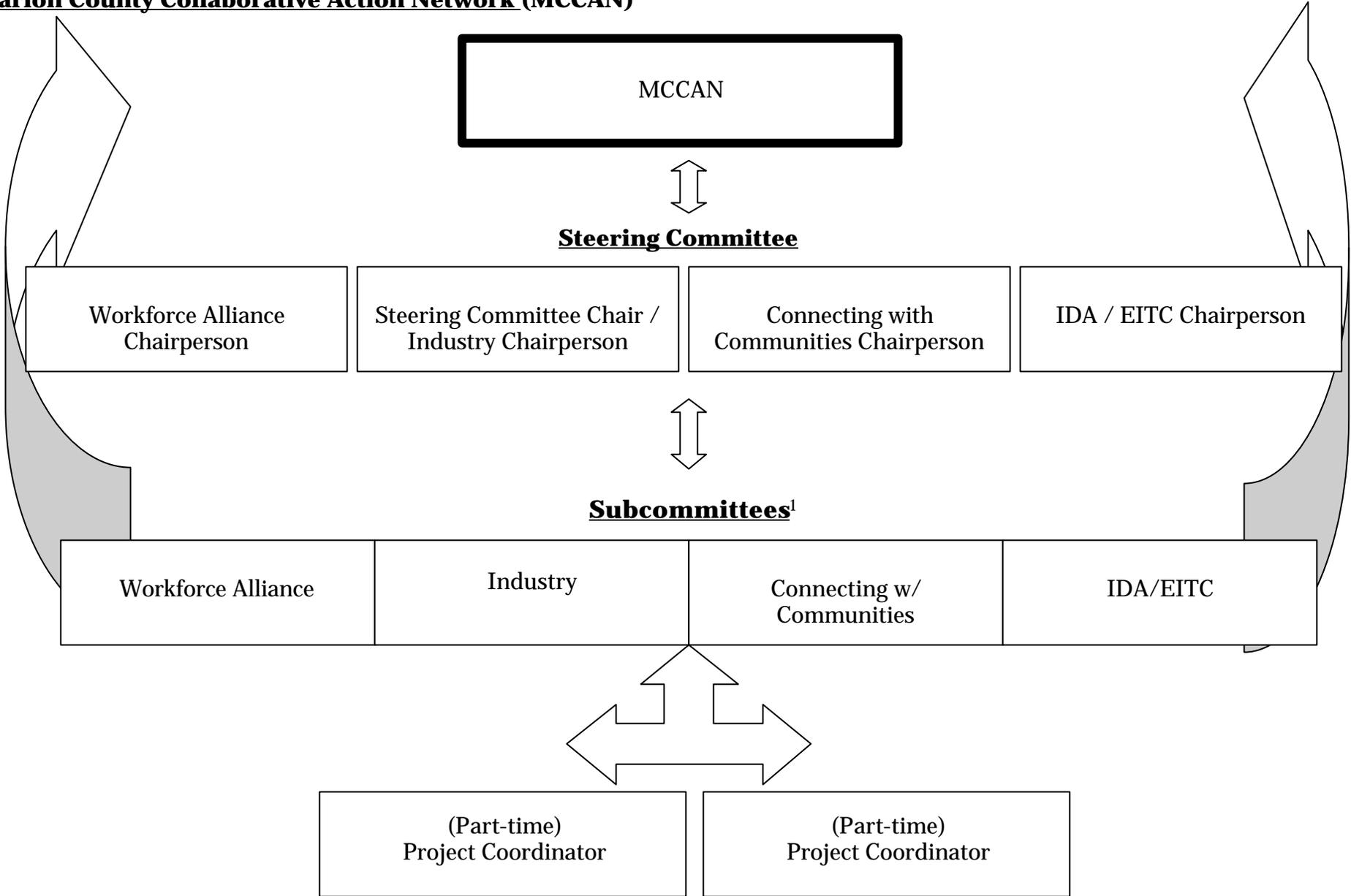
³ This position is supported by non-TDE funds.

⁴ Coordination of the Small Scale Agriculture Team is shared with staff from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

LO/UD-Shady Grove Program for the Rural Carolinas (LO/UD-Shady Grove PRC)

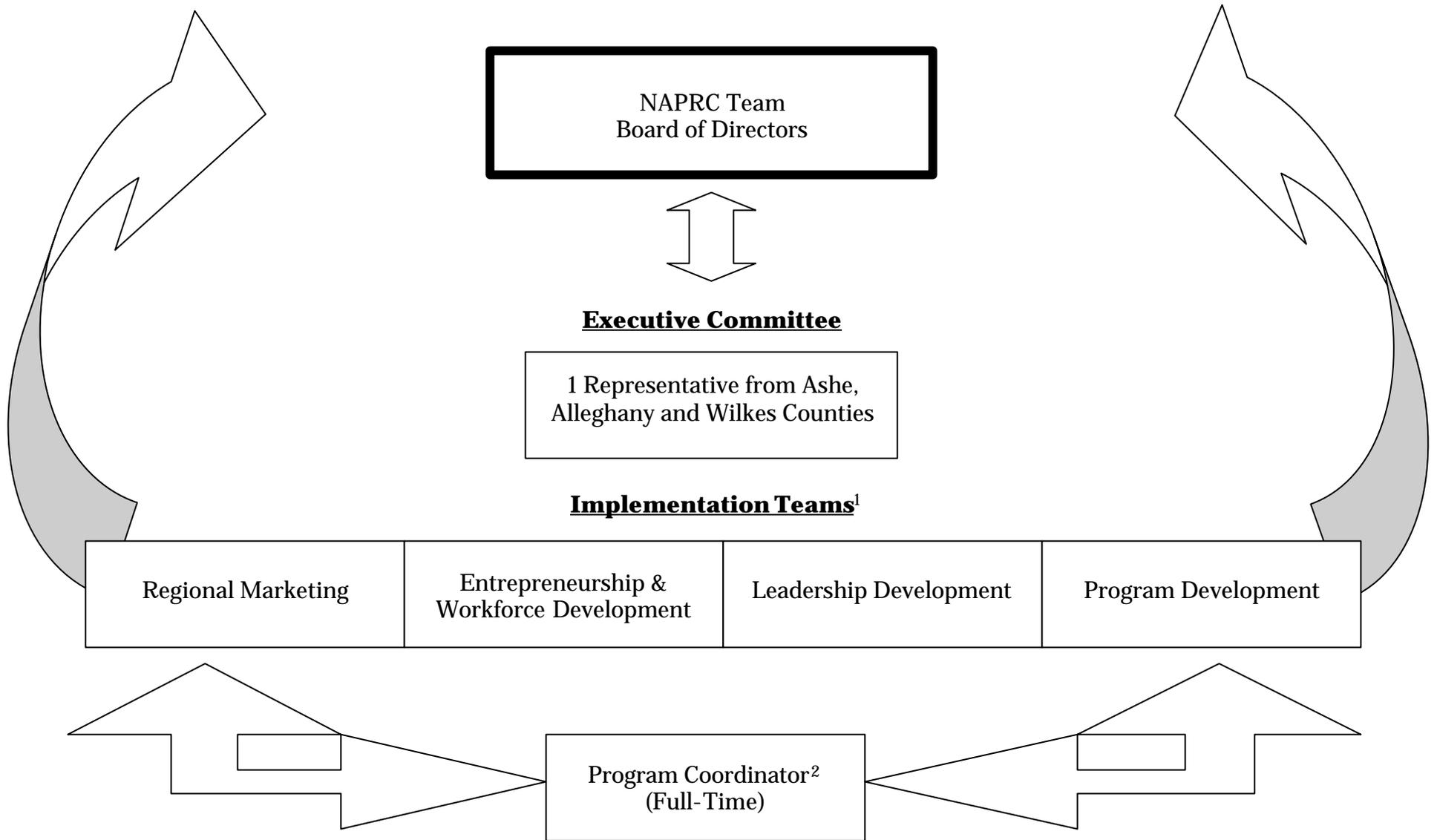


Marion County Collaborative Action Network (MCCAN)



¹The intent is that the subcommittees will include community members who are not necessarily formally on the team.

Northwest Alliance Program for the Rural Carolinas (NAPRC)

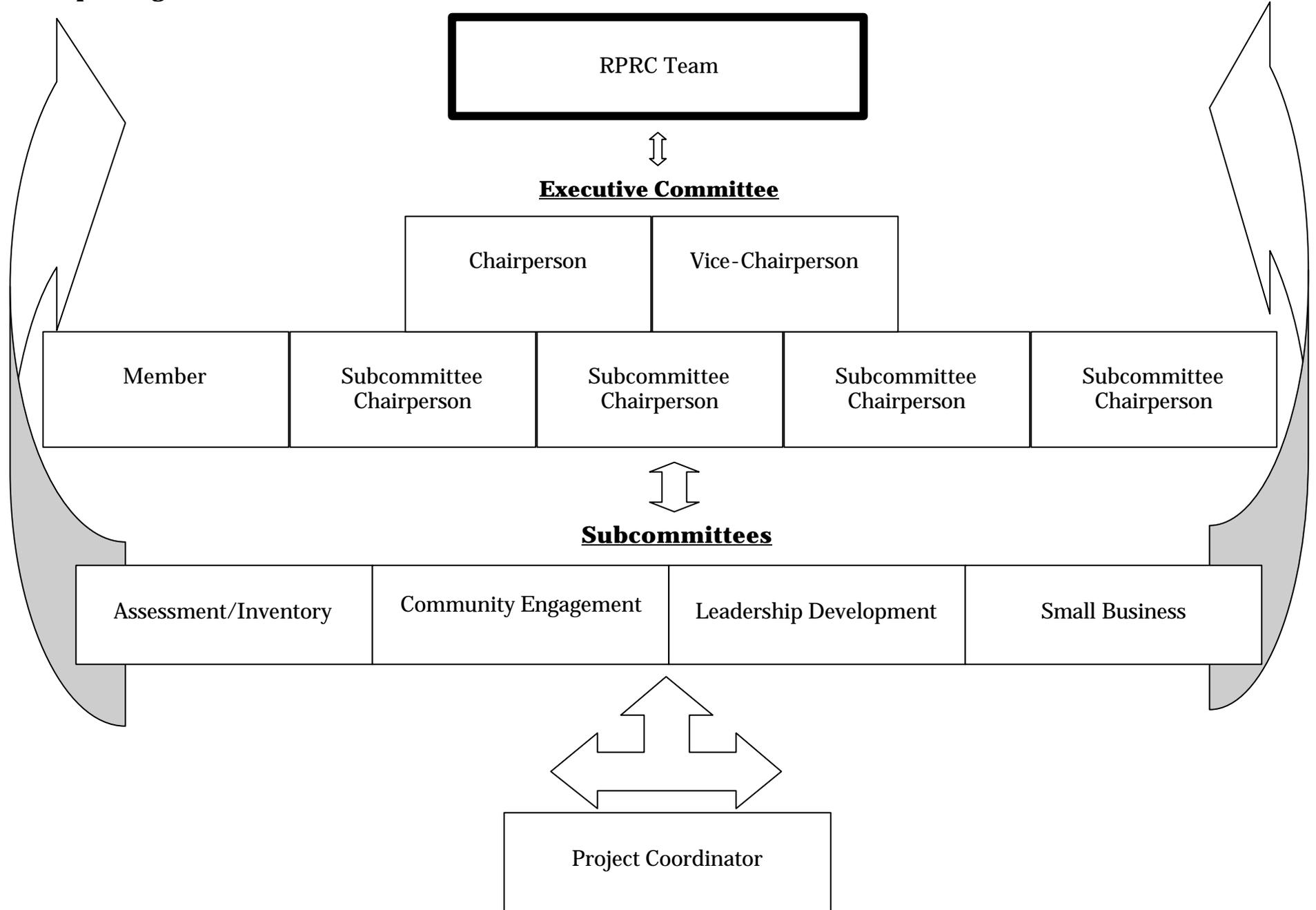


¹ These teams are made up of NAPRC board members and community representatives.

² TDE funds cover 25 hours, New Rivers Community Partners covers remaining costs of this position.

Randolph Program for the Rural Carolinas (RPRC)

Eligible Institution: Randolph Hospital



Team VANCE

Team VANCE



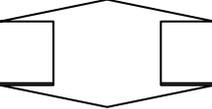
Executive Committee¹

Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer
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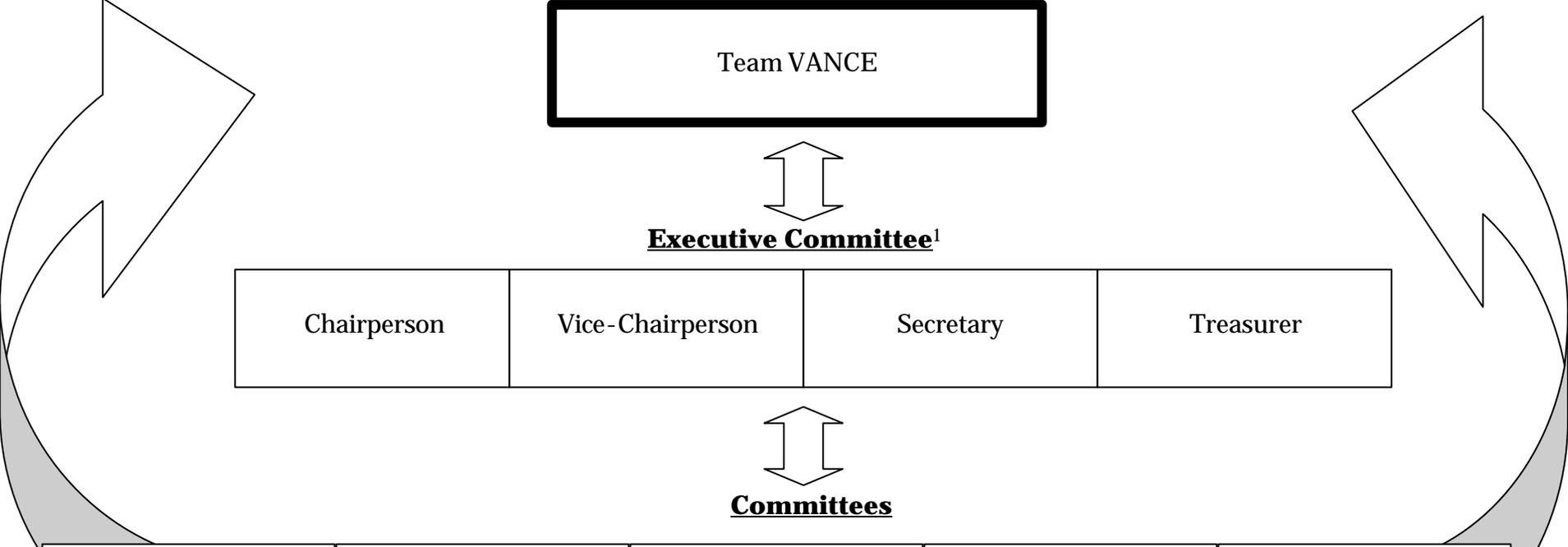


Committees

Community Relations	Jobs vs. Skillset Mismatch	Probable Growth Sector Identification	Affordable Housing	Sectoral Strategy for Unskilled/Unemployed
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Project Coordinator²



¹Established 8/03.

