ARK has mainstreamed capacity building (CB) into all of its programming, developing a stakeholder-driven methodology that makes beneficiaries the primary agents in their own development. As a result of its extensive Syria programming, ARK has ongoing CB engagement with the political opposition at a number of levels, both strategic and practical. As one concrete example of its capacitation of nascent political organisations to date, throughout 2012 and 2013, ARK carried out 16 Planning for Civil Administration and Transition (PCAT) workshops, working with a total of 330 members of local councils, local coordination committees and other governance actors from eight provinces across Syria. The PCAT model has been adopted by the US government as a delivery template in Syria. ARK situates CB activities, including individual training, both within strategic programming goals (why are we building the capacity of this institution for this specific purpose at this time?) and within an organisation’s overall context and objectives. The capacity self-assessment process described in 2.4.6 provides customised CB plans to enable organisations at different stages of development to benefit equally and advance their individual capacity priorities. Once baseline priority capacity indicators are agreed, ARK works with all project stakeholders to develop individual and joint CB plans, ensuring ownership and buy-in, and to set achievable capacity objectives and measurable outcomes.

ARK’s recent development of CB workshops for the Free Syria Police (FSP) has included station management (including rostering, inventory keeping and basic IT skills) and technical training workshops, developed following needs- and capacity assessments, and specific requests from the organisation’s leadership. The courses were then developed in conjunction with FSP leadership to ensure they met the specific demands of the teams and their current operating context. Specific CB interventions may include seconding ARK SMEs to the organisation to assist with the establishment of systems and processes; coaching and mentoring at the management level; developing tailor-made workshops and training courses; and/or organising ‘shadowing’ of similar positions in more developed political organisations internationally. As one example of ARK’s previous operational support to nascent Syrian institutions, it ran public financial management workshops, designed to establish a practical, transparent and accountable system for the payment of stipends and operational expenses to the Aleppo police and selected Aleppo civil servants. As a result of these workshops, a new financial structure was developed between Dr Khalil Gebara, ARK’s public finance SME from the American University of Beirut, and Aleppo’s Provincial Governor, its Police Chief and members of the Aleppo Free Police finance team. ARK is also able to procure and deliver critical equipment to ensure that, once trained, individuals are fully enabled to implement new skills and operate effectively. ARK has also provided training on dealing with IT security issues in conflict environments to multiple opposition groups. With the Syrian conflict also being waged in cyber-space, IT security is particularly critical to guarding against hacking or leaks, and maintaining political organisations’ credibility.

To the greatest extent possible, ARK provides Arabic speaking SMEs and capacity building material in Arabic. ARK also places significant importance on providing training of trainer sessions whenever it is engaged in ongoing capacity building. This is particularly key in the Syria context to maximise the ability to capacitate the greatest number of beneficiaries possible, with the least amount of risk to both beneficiaries and trainers/SMEs. To ensure that the results of all operational capacity building activities are measurable, ARK develops systematic monitoring of progress and continuous dialogue on results with stakeholders, through capacity indicators and targets. ARK utilises the Kirk-Patrick model for monitoring and evaluation of learning, looking at the spectrum from workshop evaluations (reaction), to changes in learning, behaviour, and ultimately, impact on the ground as a result of changed institutional behaviour (e.g. enhanced governance).