

A Study on the Development of Community Worker Teams in Modern Grassroots Governance

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Received 26 March 2026

Revised 30 April 2026

Accepted 19 May 2026

Published 31 May 2026



ISSN 2759-7830 (Online)
ISSN 2760-2508 (Print)

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Abstract: Modern grassroots governance is grounded in problem-oriented approaches, responsive to needs, rich in contextual scenarios, and characterized by diverse participation. Among these elements, the development of the community worker workforce has become a key factor in enhancing community governance capabilities and service quality. This paper focuses on the community worker workforce, analyzing the current status and existing issues in talent development. It proposes the following policy recommendations: strengthening Party leadership to establish a model-based training mechanism for grassroots workers; constructing a talent development system that fully integrates Chinese theoretical frameworks with local practices; prioritizing talent cultivation by establishing an evaluation system for community workers; and enhancing guidance and incentives by leveraging performance-based training mechanisms. These measures aim to provide a solid foundation for the modernization of community governance.

Keywords: Modern grassroots governance; Community workers; Workforce development

Introduction

Grassroots governance serves as the “nerve endings” of national governance, and the advancement of modern grassroots governance is inseparable from a high-quality workforce of community workers [1]. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly proposed “building a community of social governance where everyone shares responsibility, fulfills their duties, and benefits from the outcomes,” highlighting the foundational role of grassroots governance within the national governance system [2]. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: “The focus of social governance must be placed on urban and rural communities; when community service and management capabilities are strengthened, the foundation of social governance becomes solid,” thereby charting the course for the development of the community worker force. The “Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Strengthening the Development of the Community Worker Force” further clarified that strengthening the community worker force is crucial to ensuring the people’s peace of mind and livelihood, social stability and order, and the foundation of the Party’s

long-term governance; it is a key measure for advancing the modernization of the grassroots governance system and governance capabilities [3]. The “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Comprehensively Deepening Reform and Advancing Chinese-Style Modernization,” issued at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, also calls for “improving the institutional mechanisms for social work, strengthening Party leadership in grassroots governance, and strengthening the development of the social worker workforce” [4].

These policy guidelines constitute the institutional framework for the development of the community worker force, with an underlying logic manifested in a progressive relationship of “Party leadership—institutional safeguard—capacity building—enhanced governance effectiveness”: Party leadership clarifies the political direction of force development, institutional safeguards solidify the foundational environment for the force’s growth, capacity building is the core objective of force development, and the ultimate goal is the comprehensive enhancement of grassroots governance effectiveness. Against this backdrop, the Zhejiang Provincial

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Party Committee, at its “First Meeting of the New Year,” proposed strengthening the development of the “three teams” and advocated for building a vast army of builders for Chinese-style modernization through a “broad talent perspective,” thereby providing local practical guidance for the development of the community worker workforce.

At the same time, the author’s field research revealed that the community worker force in District S of Hangzhou lacks a clear system for cultivating professional competence. Communities lack practical and systematic standards for developing the professional competence of community workers; the training that community workers encounter in their daily work is merely intended to fulfill the requirements of relevant policy documents, and has not played a substantive role in enhancing their own capabilities or job satisfaction. How to enhance the professional competence of community workers and ensure that the advancement of the modernization of the national governance system is effectively implemented at the smallest unit of grassroots governance has become an urgent issue in improving the effectiveness of grassroots governance.

Based on this, this study adopts modern grassroots governance as its core perspective. Drawing on survey data collected in November 2023 from 51 communities across 6 subdistricts in District S of Hangzhou, it systematically analyzes the structural characteristics and development challenges of the community worker workforce. By integrating human resource management theory, the study constructs targeted optimization pathways, aiming to provide practical models and theoretical support for the development of community worker teams nationwide.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

Literature review

The modernization of grassroots governance is a core issue in the improvement of the national governance system in the new era, and academic circles have explored it from multiple dimensions. Wang Sibin traces the evolution of grassroots social governance models over the 70 years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, highlighting the foundational role of social governance within the national governance system and emphasizing that grassroots governance models must adapt to shifts in social structure [5]. He Degui defines the theoretical essence of modernizing grassroots governance in the new era, arguing that it represents the organic unity of the ruling party’s active governance and grassroots social self-governance, characterized by the people-centered nature of governance concepts and the stability of governance structures [6].

As a key lever for the modernization of grassroots governance, the development of the community worker workforce has been the focus of research on diagnosing current conditions and optimizing pathways. Liu Lijuan analyzed existing issues in workforce development, such as a lack of profes-

sionalization and imperfect incentive mechanisms, and proposed the need to establish a workforce development system tailored to the demands of governance modernization [7]. Li Qundi, drawing on the threefold logic of Chinese-style grassroots governance modernization, emphasized the systematic and forward-looking nature of community worker workforce development [8]. Xu Yamin addressed the challenges faced by certified community workers, such as being overwhelmed by administrative tasks and the disconnect between training and practical work, and proposed countermeasures including reducing the administrative burden on communities and strengthening professional development [9]. At the case study level, Guo Gen et al. examined Z Subdistrict in P District, Shanghai, to explore the professional challenges faced by community workers in megacities [10]; Jia Zhike et al., based on a survey of 54 communities in Nanjing, analyzed structural issues within the workforce and proposed optimization recommendations [11]. These studies provide practical references for this paper.

In research on optimization pathways for the modernization of grassroots governance, He Degui proposes resolving governance dilemmas through two-way interactive governance and the coordinated transformation of state will and public will; Chen Youhua et al. emphasize a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach featuring Party leadership, market-driven initiatives, and support from social organizations [12]; Zhang Wenxian et al. regard the “integration of self-governance, rule of law, and moral governance” as the ideal model for the modernization of grassroots governance [13]; Sun Bo et al. focus on the professionalization of the community worker workforce, proposing measures such as institutionalizing full-time positions and providing specialized training for current staff [14].

In summary, while existing research has established a certain theoretical foundation and accumulated practical experience, significant shortcomings remain: From a research perspective, there is a scarcity of studies that systematically explore the development of the community worker workforce from the core perspective of modernized grassroots governance; most studies have failed to adequately align the substantive requirements of governance modernization with the practical logic of workforce development; In terms of theoretical support, existing research often piecemeal applies fragments of theories such as human resource management and public administration, lacking a systematic theoretical framework centered on career development. Consequently, it fails to fully reveal the intrinsic connection between the patterns of professional growth among community workers and workforce development, making it difficult to provide precise theoretical guidance for the long-term development of the workforce. Based on this, this study adopts the perspective of modernized grassroots governance, with career development theory as its core foundation. Drawing on survey data from District S in Hangzhou, it constructs a workforce development pathway that combines theoretical depth with practical feasibility through a logical chain of “current status—problems—causes—countermeasures.”

Theoretical foundation

Career development theory focuses on the full-cycle patterns of individual career development. Its core premise is that an individual's career development is a continuously evolving dynamic process that progresses through distinct stages, each characterized by unique developmental tasks, needs, and growth bottlenecks. Furthermore, career development is influenced by the interaction of multiple factors, including individual traits, organizational environments, and social contexts [15]. The core framework of this theory includes key branches such as career development stage theory and career anchor theory, providing a systematic analytical perspective and practical guidance for the development of the community worker workforce: From the perspective of career development stages, the professional growth of community workers can be divided into key phases such as the exploration phase (1–3 years after joining), the establishment phase (4–9 years), and the maintenance phase (10 years or more). Workers in different stages exhibit significant differences in terms of competency requirements, career perceptions, and developmental aspirations; From the perspective of career anchor theory, the career anchors of community workers typically manifest as service-oriented, security-oriented, and autonomy-oriented. Their career choices and development are deeply influenced by their value alignment with community service, their need for job stability, and their expectations regarding work autonomy.

Applying career development theory to the development of the community worker workforce requires localization tailored to the practical context of modern grassroots governance. The core lies in establishing a workforce development system aligned with the laws of career progression: First, implement targeted training based on the characteristics of career development stages. For workers in the exploration phase, prioritize strengthening foundational professional skills and career awareness training to help them quickly adapt to job requirements; for workers in the establishment phase, the focus should be on enhancing professional capabilities and clarifying career positioning to support the development of core professional expertise; for workers in the maintenance phase, emphasis should be placed on knowledge transfer and fostering innovation to leverage their leadership role within the workforce. Second, incentive and support mechanisms are optimized to align with career anchor types. For service-oriented workers, emphasis is placed on providing psychological incentives related to social recognition and self-actualization; for security-oriented workers, compensation, benefits, and job stability are enhanced; and for autonomy-oriented workers, appropriate autonomy is granted to encourage personalized service innovation in community governance. Third, align organizational and individual career development goals by integrating the developmental needs of modernized community governance with the professional growth aspirations of community workers. By establishing clear career advancement pathways and optimizing the organizational support environment, we can achieve the synergistic enhancement

of individual professional value and organizational governance effectiveness. This theoretical framework provides the core theoretical foundation for this paper to accurately identify issues in workforce development and design phased, differentiated optimization pathways.

Current Status and Developmental Characteristics of the Community Social Work Workforce: A Case Study of a Sampling Survey in District S, Hangzhou

This study focuses on the current training status and development needs of community workers. It is based on a survey of 1,939 questionnaires conducted across all sub-districts under the jurisdiction of District S in Hangzhou, supplemented by 63 in-depth interviews with frontline community workers from more than ten sub-districts, including KX Sub-district in District S. Guided by the principles of full coverage, highlighting key areas, and implementing tiered and categorized approaches, this study aims to establish a standardized, professional, forward-looking, and exemplary system for the development and cultivation of community worker teams nationwide.

Using SPSS statistical methods combined with case studies, the research analyzes the career development pathways of community workers, including their gender, age, years of service, job titles, tenure, educational background, professional qualifications, and job competency requirements.

Descriptive analysis of the community worker population

As shown in [Table 1](#), a total of 1,939 community workers were selected as the survey sample for this study. Statistical analysis of their basic personal information reveals the following group characteristics.

In terms of gender composition, there were 1,161 female practitioners, accounting for 59.88%; and 778 male practitioners, accounting for 40.10%. The sample group exhibits a gender distribution where women constitute the majority. In terms of age distribution, young and middle-aged individuals form the core of the workforce. The 36–45 age group had the highest proportion at 48.43%, while the 22–35 age group accounted for 37.75%, together comprising 86.18% of the total. The 46–55 and 56+ age groups accounted for 13.00% and 0.83%, respectively, indicating an overall youthful age structure dominated by young and middle-aged individuals.

In terms of years of service and tenure, the distribution of total years in community work is relatively balanced, with practitioners having 1–15 years of experience accounting for over 70% of the total. Specifically, those with 1–3 years, 4–6 years, 10–12 years, and 13–15 years of experience account for 21.14%, 16.61%, 16.19%, and 14.34%, respectively; The proportions of newcomers with less than one year of experience and senior practitioners with 20 or more years of experience are relatively low, at 5.67% and 5.05% respectively,

Table 1 | Descriptive Statistics of Sample Structure (N=1939)

Variable Name	Category	Frequency/Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	778	40.10
	Female	1161	59.88
Age	22–35	732	37.75
	36–45	939	48.43
	46–55	252	13.00
	56 and older	16	0.83
Years of community service	Less than 1 year	110	5.67
	1–3 years	410	21.14
	4–6 years	322	16.61
	7–9 years	244	12.58
	10 years or more	853	43.99
Current Position	Community Worker	1,131	58.33
	Member of the Two Committees	335	17.28
	Community Deputy Director	329	16.97
	Community Director	144	7.43
Years of service in this role/position	Less than 1 year	225	11.60
	1–3 years	772	39.81
	4–6 years	431	22.23
	7–9 years	191	9.85
	10–12 years	152	7.84
	13–15 years	90	4.64
	16–19 years	44	2.27
	20 years and older	34	1.75
Educational Attainment	Associate degree or below	252	12.99
	Bachelor's degree	1,639	84.53
	Master's Degree	48	2.48
Academic Background	Philosophy	10	0.52
	Economics	253	13.05
	Law	126	6.50
	Political Science	18	0.93
	Sociology	153	7.89
	Management	605	31.20
	Literature	114	5.88
	History	6	0.31
	Science	78	4.02
	Engineering	174	8.97
	Agricultural Sciences	14	0.72
	Education	41	2.11
	Other	347	17.90
Professional Qualifications	Assistant Social Worker	845	43.58
	Intermediate Social Worker	579	29.86
	Senior Social Worker	1	0.05
	Other	514	26.51

forming a tiered structure of service tenure within the workforce. In terms of tenure in current positions, there is a concentration in the short-to-medium term: 39.81% have held their positions for 1–3 years, 11.60% for less than 1 year, and 22.23% for 4–6 years; the proportion of those in their positions for 7 years or more decreases gradually with increasing tenure, with those in their positions for 20 years or more accounting for only 1.75%.

In terms of position composition, frontline staff constitute the overwhelming majority, with community workers accounting for 58.33%; members of the two committees and deputy community directors account for 17.28% and 16.97%, respectively; community directors have the lowest

proportion at 7.43%, reflecting a distribution pattern where frontline staff form the core and managerial positions account for a smaller proportion.

In terms of educational attainment and academic background, the sample group's overall educational level is relatively high, with 87.01% holding a bachelor's degree or higher—of which 84.53% hold a bachelor's degree and 2.48% hold a master's degree; those with an associate degree or lower account for only 12.99%. The professional backgrounds were diverse, with management studies having the highest proportion at 31.20%; economics (13.05%), engineering (8.97%), and sociology (7.89%) followed; disciplines such as philosophy and history accounted for less than 1%,

while 17.90% of practitioners had other professional backgrounds, reflecting a professional distribution characterized by the strong suitability of management-related disciplines and the integration of multidisciplinary backgrounds.

Regarding professional qualifications, the coverage of specialized certifications is high: practitioners holding social work-related certifications accounted for 73.49% of the total, with Assistant Social Workers comprising 43.58%, Intermediate Social Workers 29.86%, and Senior Social Workers only 1 person, representing 0.05%; Practitioners holding other professional qualifications accounted for 26.51%. This indicates that the sample group possesses a high degree of professional specialization, but there is a shortage of senior-level professionals.

Descriptive analysis of the current state of competency perception among community workers

As shown in [Table 2](#), the competency perceptions of community workers in different positions can be clearly illustrated from three dimensions: perception of core job competencies, urgent needs for competency enhancement, and expectations regarding training content. The specifics are as follows:

Perceptions of core job competencies exhibit distinct hierarchical and categorical characteristics. Management positions (deputy directors and directors) place greater emphasis on coordination and planning competencies, with organizational coordination (85.4%), problem-solving (83.3%), and team-building (63.0%) ranking as the top three in terms of recognition. In contrast, recognition of specialized competencies such as platform management (23.0%) and project administration (28.8%) is relatively low. Frontline positions (community workers, members of the two committees) place greater emphasis on practical application skills. The highest recognition rates were for problem-solving skills (75.0%), team collaboration skills (67.5%), and conflict analysis and mediation skills (46.9%), while recognition of theoretical learning and application skills was the lowest, at only 29.1%.

The urgent need for skill enhancement aligns closely with the perceived core competencies of each position, while skill gaps are also evident. For management positions, the top three most urgently needed competencies are problem-solving skills (64.3%), organizational and coordination skills (60.3%), and strategic planning skills (49.9%), which align closely with the perceived core competencies for these roles; however, the demand for improving competencies such as platform management (16.5%), project administration (16.9%), and policy implementation (22.8%) is relatively low, highlighting these as key competency gaps for management positions. For frontline positions, the most urgent need is to improve problem-solving skills, accounting for 61.7%, followed by conflict analysis and mediation skills (43.4%) and

project management skills (40.5%). The demand for improving theoretical learning and application skills remains the lowest, at only 22.2%.

Regarding training content expectations, all survey respondents demonstrated a preference for a balanced focus on both theory and practical application. Among these, expectations for community governance theory (54.7%), professional social work theory and methods (48.6%), and crisis management principles and methods (37.9%) ranked in the top three; while expectations for knowledge in digital technology and software applications (24.8%), project management principles and methods (22.9%), and applied writing (18.3%) were relatively lower. This reflects that community workers are more eager to use training to solidify their theoretical foundation in governance and enhance their practical response capabilities.

In summary, community workers in different positions exhibit differences in their perceptions of core competencies and their needs for improvement, and their expectations regarding training content demonstrate a balanced emphasis on both theoretical knowledge and practical methods. These findings provide valuable reference for the design of community worker training systems, career development planning, and the optimization of community work. By designing training content, career advancement pathways, and adjusting work assignments in a targeted manner based on these needs, the overall quality of community workers and the quality and efficiency of community work can be enhanced.

Overall, establishing a systematic and professionalized team development and training system is of significant importance to community workers. First, systematic training can enhance the professional competence and skill levels of grassroots community personnel, improve their work capabilities, and better meet the needs of community residents. Second, professional training helps strengthen the professional ethics and qualities of grassroots community staff, improve their service attitude and professionalism, and elevate the level of community governance. Systematic training can also promote the career development of grassroots community personnel, provide opportunities for promotion and advancement, and motivate them in their work. Strengthening the development of the grassroots community workforce requires a comprehensive consideration of various factors. For instance, training content should encompass knowledge and skills in policy and regulations, community service techniques, communication skills, and crisis management; training formats can include in-person classroom sessions, online learning, and practical activities to meet the needs of diverse groups; and training should emphasize the integration of theory and practice, providing opportunities for hands-on exercises and scenario simulations to ensure that the training content is closely aligned with actual work and meets the needs of community workers.

Table 2 | Descriptive Statistics of Sample Perceptions of Competencies

Variable Name	Category	Frequency/Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	
Perception of Core Competencies (Deputy Directors, Directors)	Strategic Planning Competency	215	45.5	
	Organizational and coordination skills	404	85.4	
	Problem-Solving Skills	394	83.3	
	Social Research Skills	148	31.3	
	Policy Implementation Capabilities	208	44.0	
	Ability to innovate models	180	38.1	
	Platform Management Capabilities	109	23.0	
	Team-building skills	298	63.0	
	Project Administration Skills	136	28.8	
	Perception of Core Competencies (Community Workers, Members of the Two Committees)	989	67.5	
	Teamwork Skills			
	Problem-Solving Skills	1100	75.0	
	Project Management Skills	563	38.4	
	Social Research and Needs Analysis Skills	494	33.7	
	Policy Learning and Application Skills	509	34.7	
	Theoretical Learning and Application Skills	426	29.1	
	Resource Exploration and Linking Skills	537	36.6	
	Conflict Analysis and Resolution Skills	687	46.9	
	Emergency Management Skills	561	38.3	
Capacity Development Needs (Deputy Directors, Directors)	Strategic Planning Capabilities	236	49.9	
	Organizational and Coordination Skills	285	60.3	
	Problem-solving skills	304	64.3	
	Social Research Skills	109	23.0	
	Policy Implementation Skills	108	22.8	
	Ability to Innovate Models	206	43.6	
	Platform Management Capabilities	78	16.5	
	Team-building skills	228	48.2	
	Project Administration Skills	80	16.9	
	Teamwork Skills	610	41.6	
	Problem-Solving Skills	904	61.7	
	Project Management Skills	593	40.5	
	Capacity Building Needs (Community Workers, Members of the Two Committees)	Social Research and Needs Analysis Skills	455	31.0
Policy Learning and Application Skills		444	30.3	
Theoretical Learning and Application Skills		326	22.2	
Resource Exploration and Linking Skills		541	36.9	
Conflict Analysis and Resolution Skills		636	43.4	
Emergency Management Skills		448	30.6	
Training Knowledge Needs		Theories Related to Community Governance	1,060	54.7
		Theories and Methods in Social Work	943	48.6
		Principles and Methods of Social Research	683	35.2
		Principles and Methods of Policy Practice	629	32.4
	Digital Technology and Software Applications	480	24.8	
	Principles and Methods of Project Management	445	22.9	
	Principles and Methods of Crisis Management	735	37.9	
	Principles and Methods of Team Building	542	28.0	
	Principles and Techniques of Stress Management	656	33.8	
	Applied Writing	354	18.3	
Other	32	1.7		

Note: Core competencies and most urgently needed competencies: N=473, 1466; Knowledge most anticipated to be learned in training: N=1939

Core Issues in Community Worker Workforce Development and Analysis of Their Causes

Through field research and a review of the literature, it has been found that the development of the community

worker workforce currently faces numerous challenges, which severely hinder the advancement of modern grassroots governance. Specifically, these challenges primarily fall into the following two categories.

Core issues

The development of the community worker workforce is out of sync with the modernization of grassroots governance

First, there is a gap between the professional skills of community workers and the pace of development in grassroots governance. The modernization of grassroots governance is a comprehensive and systematic process aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of social governance to better meet the needs and expectations of the people. In this process, the adaptability of community workers' professional capabilities is a key factor that directly impacts the speed and effectiveness of grassroots governance. Community workers must keep pace with the times and quickly adjust to and adapt to new governance concepts and methods. For example, the shift from a "task-oriented" to a "mission-oriented" approach, and from an "isolated" to an "integrated" model, requires community workers to possess not only solid professional skills but also keen insight and rapid learning abilities to promptly understand and implement innovative strategies. However, during the actual research process, it was found that the professional backgrounds and educational levels of most community workers vary significantly, with relatively few holding degrees directly related to community work. In a sample survey of District S in Hangzhou, it was found that community workers with a bachelor's degree accounted for the highest proportion of total participants at 84.53%, followed by those with an associate degree at 12.53%. Among community workers, 73.49% hold a Certified Social Worker professional qualification certificate. Those with a background in management accounted for the highest proportion of the total participants, at 31.2%. The professional backgrounds of most respondents were in the humanities. Upon analyzing the data under the "Other" category, it was found that the vast majority had backgrounds in finance or the arts, while a small number could be classified under other disciplines such as sociology; however, the sample size was too small to be significant. Clearly, nearly 90% of community workers lack systematic education and training in fields such as community governance and social work, and there is a severe shortage of community social work professionals with backgrounds in science and engineering. Second, there is a mismatch between the professional competencies of community workers and the content of grassroots social governance. The scope of grassroots social governance is gradually expanding and deepening to the micro-level. For example, the scope of governance has expanded from traditional areas such as public security and public health to broader domains including environmental protection, community services, and resident self-governance. At the same time, governance methods are evolving, placing greater emphasis on the rule of law, smart governance, and precision management, while highlighting the use of modern information technology—such as big data and cloud computing—to enhance governance efficiency and standards. This places higher demands on the professional competence of community workers. The current workforce may face certain

capability gaps in areas such as strategic planning, team collaboration, and conflict resolution. Among the 473 deputy and principal community officials in District S, the most urgently needed capabilities identified were "problem-solving skills," "organizational and coordination skills," and "strategic planning skills." Meanwhile, among the 1,466 ordinary community workers and members of the two committees, the most urgently needed capabilities were deemed to be "problem-solving skills," "conflict analysis and mediation skills," and "team collaboration skills." Third, there is still room for improvement in the professional competence and capacity of community workers to address grassroots governance issues. Modern governance emphasizes the organic integration of rule of law and moral governance, which is a key manifestation of building a grassroots social governance system. In this process, disparities in the professional competence of community workers are particularly significant, as they are the specific implementers and promoters of the concepts of rule of law and moral governance at the grassroots level. Regarding the rule of law, modern governance requires community workers not only to possess basic legal knowledge but also to be able to apply legal reasoning and methods to resolve community issues. Regarding moral governance, modern governance emphasizes guiding residents to consciously adhere to social ethics, professional ethics, and family virtues through the cultivation of moral norms and core socialist values. During my research, I found that some community workers may have a deep understanding of legal knowledge but lack competence in moral education and cultural event planning; others may be skilled at planning and organizing activities but lack knowledge in legal practice and legal risk prevention and control.

Lack of a full-cycle immersive training system for community workers

First, the course structure is monotonous, and the content is outdated. Currently, training for community workers remains primarily lecture-based, with a focus on theoretical knowledge. There is a lack of diverse and engaging course formats such as online classes, interactive sessions, mentorship programs, and roundtable discussions. Additionally, the training content needs to be updated to include a variety of courses, such as professional social work knowledge and new media operations and promotion. In terms of course structure, there is only a rough classification based on different job levels, resulting in unclear and inconsistent categorization of participants. Furthermore, training content remains overly institutionalized and fragmented, preventing community workers from developing a deep and comprehensive understanding of their roles within the community. Second, training lacks precision. Research indicates that community workers with varying years of service and job levels have different expectations regarding the core competencies they wish to develop, and the core competencies they should possess also differ. Under the current training landscape, there is no clear, tiered training standard for community workers, which is an urgent issue that must be addressed for the development of the community worker workforce. Third, the practicality of train-

ing topics is weak. Current training courses lack overarching interpretations and summaries of the latest policies. Community workers are typically the implementers and enforcers of these policies. Social policies cover multiple areas such as social welfare, public safety, and employment security. Community workers should use the latest policies as guidance to integrate the implementation of social policies into their community work, making service delivery more scientific and effective. Fourth, performance evaluation standards are unclear. While community worker training generally focuses on the learning process, the evaluation and assessment of training outcomes remain inadequate, primarily due to the absence of a formal assessment system. This lack of an assessment system can lead to a situation where “training makes no difference, and whether one performs well or poorly in training makes no difference.” Without proper evaluation and oversight of training outcomes, there is no guarantee that training planning, theoretical research, and the standardization, relevance, and practicality of training content will be ensured. Furthermore, the full implementation of incentive mechanisms cannot be guaranteed. As a result, full-time community workers lack clear objectives during the learning process, making it difficult for training to achieve its intended goals.

Analysis of causes

Lack of Theoretical Support and Cognitive Biases. Insufficient theoretical empowerment is the core bottleneck constraining the standardized development of the community worker workforce. Currently, the practice of building grassroots community worker teams generally lacks guidance from a systematic theoretical framework, and a suitable theoretical application system tailored to the characteristics of community workers’ career development has yet to be established. In particular, there are significant shortcomings in the practical application of core theories such as career development theory. Key elements—such as the patterns of career development stages and the characteristics of career anchors—have not been integrated into critical aspects of workforce cultivation, evaluation, and incentives. This has resulted in training content that is disconnected from the competency needs of workers at different career stages, and performance evaluation metrics that fail to align precisely with career growth objectives. Consequently, overall workforce development efforts exhibit fragmented and haphazard characteristics, lacking internal logical consistency. At the same time, some regions exhibit a fundamental misunderstanding of workforce development, simplistically equating it with the fulfillment of administrative tasks. They have failed to grasp the core requirements of modern grassroots governance—namely, the need for a professional, refined, and sustainable community worker workforce—and have overlooked the intrinsic link between workforce development and the enhancement of governance effectiveness. Consequently, the direction of development has deviated from the practical needs of grassroots governance, making it

difficult to establish a virtuous cycle of “theoretical guidance—practical optimization—effectiveness enhancement.”

Inadequate institutional design and insufficient resource allocation. The systemic gaps in the institutional framework and structural deficiencies in resource support collectively constitute practical obstacles to workforce development. At the institutional design level, the top-level planning of training systems has significant shortcomings, and a full-chain closed-loop mechanism encompassing “needs assessment—curriculum design—implementation evaluation—outcome feedback” has yet to be established: the needs assessment phase lacks precise analysis of competency gaps among workers at different career stages and in different job roles; the curriculum design phase has failed to establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism, making it difficult to adapt to the evolving dynamics of grassroots governance scenarios; the implementation, assessment, and feedback stages are largely perfunctory, with no scientific evaluation metrics in place to effectively verify training outcomes or optimize content based on feedback. In terms of resource allocation, there is a significant gap between the level of support provided and the actual needs of workforce development: the development of digital training platforms lags behind, with a lack of interactive and targeted online learning resources, making it difficult to meet workers’ needs for fragmented learning; there is an insufficient pool of high-quality instructors, with a shortage of versatile trainers who possess both theoretical depth and practical experience, making it difficult to ensure training quality; The development of localized practical training materials is lagging; failure to integrate regional governance characteristics into training content makes it difficult to support diverse and personalized training needs. Furthermore, there is insufficient linkage between incentive mechanisms and training outcomes; training achievements are not effectively tied to core benefits such as salary increases and career advancement, resulting in a lack of intrinsic motivation among practitioners to participate in training and hindering the creation of a positive atmosphere of proactive learning and continuous improvement.

Insufficient practical coordination and lack of collaborative mechanisms. The absence of a collaborative mechanism among diverse stakeholders has left workforce development stuck in a “go-it-alone” predicament, making it difficult to generate a collective effort for capacity building. On the one hand, the integration of theory and practice is insufficient. Training curricula are detached from real-world grassroots governance scenarios, focusing primarily on theoretical instruction. There is a lack of simulated exercises for practical scenarios such as community conflict resolution, services for vulnerable groups, and digital governance. This results in a disconnect between learning and application, making it difficult for practitioners to translate training knowledge into practical governance skills and effectively address complex issues in grassroots governance. On the

other hand, interdepartmental coordination mechanisms are underdeveloped. The division of responsibilities among relevant functional departments—such as civil affairs, organization, and human resources and social security—in workforce development remains unclear, resulting in overlapping authority and responsibilities as well as buck-passing. This failure to establish a coordinated framework for planning and collaboration has led to fragmented policy implementation and inefficient resource allocation. At the same time, a collaborative education mechanism between government and civil society has yet to be established. The professional strengths of third-party entities—such as universities, social organizations, and professional social work agencies—have not been fully leveraged. Cooperation in areas such as training curriculum development, practical skills guidance, and career development planning lacks sufficient depth and breadth. Consequently, it is difficult to utilize social resources to enhance the professional standards of the workforce, which constrains the comprehensive improvement of the workforce's overall competence.

The Path to Building a Community Worker Workforce in Modern Grassroots Governance

Based on the requirements of modern grassroots governance, and combining career development theory with practical experience from District S in Hangzhou, this paper constructs a path for workforce development across four dimensions—Party leadership, training systems, evaluation mechanisms, and incentive measures—to achieve a precise alignment between the workforce's professional growth and governance needs.

First, strengthen Party leadership and establish a model training mechanism for grassroots workers. Against the backdrop of a complex and ever-changing domestic and international environment, as well as the new landscape of urbanization driven by economic transformation—where opportunities and challenges coexist—we will construct a training system for grassroots community workers based on a Chinese-style autonomous knowledge system. This will strengthen the Party's comprehensive leadership over grassroots community work, promote the integrated development of Party building and professional operations, and coordinate cadre training. We will firmly establish community workers' collective consciousness, sense of the bigger picture, holistic perspective, and innovative spirit, continuously cultivating their ability to navigate the complexities of the market economy and oversee the overall situation.

Second, we must establish a workforce development and training system that fully integrates Chinese-style theory with local practices. Based on the career development stages outlined in career theory, we will construct a diversified training system that covers the entire career cycle, adapts to stage-specific needs, and integrates online and offline learning. First, we will optimize the design of the phased curriculum system by establishing a dynamic model of “core foundational courses +

stage-specific courses”: core foundational courses will focus on modern grassroots governance theory, policies and regulations, and the enhancement of professional competence, covering the entire career cycle; stage-specific courses precisely match the needs of different developmental stages: during the exploration phase, courses on practical job operations and career awareness are offered to facilitate rapid integration into the role; during the establishment phase, courses on advanced professional skills, project management, and problem-solving strategies are provided to help develop core competencies; during the maintenance phase, courses on experience distillation and succession, governance model innovation, and interpretation of cutting-edge policies are offered to foster leadership and drive progress. At the same time, drawing on practical experiences from Hangzhou's S District—such as the “Five-Community Collaboration” and “Community-Enterprise Synergy”—we have developed localized practical teaching materials to strengthen the integration of theory and practice. Second, we implement tiered and categorized training. In addition to differentiated training based on job types, we prioritize targeted development according to career stages: For new hires in the exploration phase, we conduct integrated pre-employment training combining “mentor-apprentice programs, centralized training, and on-the-job practice”; for staff in the establishment phase, we offer capability-enhancement programs combining “specialized training, project experience, and peer learning”; and for senior staff in the maintenance phase, we provide leadership-oriented programs featuring “experience-sharing workshops and innovative research projects,” thereby establishing a “full-cycle, tiered” training framework. Third, we innovate training formats by establishing a multi-track model combining “online, offline, and field visits”: online, we build a digital teaching platform to provide bite-sized, phased learning resources; offline, we conduct interactive training such as scenario simulations, case studies, and cross-stage experience-sharing sessions; and we organize field visits to advanced regions for community workers at different development stages to learn from exemplary governance practices and team development models.

Third, establish a scientific evaluation system for community work talent that considers both process and results. Based on performance evaluation theories in human resource management, construct an evaluation system that balances process and results, as well as quantitative and qualitative assessments. First, establish a “dual-track” evaluation standard that combines training credits with performance assessments: training credits cover course completion, examinations, and practical application; performance assessments include indicators such as task completion rates, resident satisfaction, and innovative achievements, with resident satisfaction accounting for no less than 30% of the total weight. Second, improve the evaluation implementation mechanism by adopting a combined approach of “daily assessments + annual evaluations + special assessments.” Daily assessments are conducted by community Party organizations, focusing on tracking workers' daily performance; annual assessments are led by civil affairs departments, which organize third-party agencies to con-

duct resident satisfaction surveys; special assessments target key governance projects, emergency response, and other tasks to ensure comprehensive and objective evaluation. Third, strengthen the application of evaluation results by directly linking them to compensation, career development, and awards and honors; establish a feedback mechanism for evaluation results to develop personalized competency enhancement plans for workers, forming a closed-loop of “evaluation–feedback–improvement.”

Fourth, improve incentive and support mechanisms to stimulate the team’s intrinsic motivation. Guided by career development theory and centered on the core needs of different career stages, we will establish an incentive and support mechanism that balances material and non-material incentives and integrates security with development, thereby fostering the team’s intrinsic motivation and sense of professional belonging. First, optimize the phased compensation system by establishing a dynamic salary growth mechanism linked to career development stages, job responsibilities, work performance, and professional qualifications: During the exploration phase, ensure a basic salary and establish a position adaptation bonus; during the establishment phase, increase the proportion of performance-based pay and provide special subsidies for those who obtain professional certifications or achieve outstanding results; during the maintenance phase, introduce experience-sharing allowances and innovation achievement rewards to enhance the sense of value among senior staff. At the same time, implement comprehensive welfare policies—including social insurance, housing provident funds, and paid leave—to solidify the foundation for career stability. Second, we will streamline the full-cycle career development pathway by establishing a dual-track promotion system comprising “management roles” and “professional roles,” with the two tracks interconnected: management roles follow a step-by-step progression from “community worker” to “member of the Community Party Committee and Residents’ Committee” to “community director” to relevant positions at the subdistrict level; while professional roles follow a technical grading progression of “Assistant-level Social Worker – Intermediate Social Worker – Senior Social Worker – Chief Social Worker,” with clear eligibility criteria and salary standards defined for each stage and grade. We will promote two-way mobility between community workers and positions in public institutions and state-owned enterprises to broaden career development opportunities. Third, we will strengthen targeted motivational incentives tailored to the needs of different career stages: for workers in the exploration phase, we will prioritize recognition of growth and provide guidance and support; for those in the establishment phase, emphasize performance recognition and professional validation; and for those in the maintenance phase, focus on incentives related to industry reputation and social recognition. Regularly organize selection activities such as “Outstanding Community Workers,” “Governance Pioneers,” and “Heritage Vanguard,” and publicize exemplary deeds through commendation ceremonies and media coverage; establish a mechanism for tolerating and correcting errors to encourage work-

ers at all stages to boldly explore governance innovations, fostering a work environment that is proactive and conducive to continuous growth.

Conclusion

The advancement of modern grassroots governance cannot be separated from the support of a high-quality community worker force. Team building must precisely align with governance needs and the laws of workers’ professional growth, guided by Party building, supported by career development theory, centered on diversified cultivation, and secured by evaluation and incentives, to achieve the synergistic enhancement of political literacy, professional competence, and career growth. Based on survey data from District S in Hangzhou and using career development theory as its core framework, this study reveals the current characteristics and development challenges of the community worker workforce. It constructs a four-pronged development pathway of “Party-building leadership—diversified cultivation—scientific evaluation—incentive guarantees,” providing practical references and theoretical guidance for the long-term development of the community worker workforce in the context of modernizing grassroots governance.

The study still has certain limitations: the survey area covers only District S in Hangzhou, and the representativeness of the sample needs to be further expanded; the depth of empirical analysis on factors influencing workforce development is insufficient. In the future, the scope of the survey could be expanded, and methods such as regression analysis could be employed to thoroughly explore the mechanisms by which various factors influence workforce development; by integrating the context of the new era—including digital governance and common prosperity—further research into new pathways and methods for workforce development could be conducted to provide more targeted theoretical and practical support for advancing the modernization of grassroots governance.

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