CoCreate

A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Planning

Les Robinson

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For information on existing NEIP projects, including their plans, see www.epa.vic.gov.au/projects/NEIPS

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"In this time of shifting and consolidating power, with millions of others we co-create history one step at a time."

- Fran Peavey, *Heart Politics Revisited*

"I traveled around Australia last year and visited a lot of Bushcare style programs. It was so clear that when the community group had a bit of real support from a government agency, they were doing wonders. When they were alone it was a battle and burn out situation. Conversely, when government agencies try and do an environmental project without community support - they inevitably failed as well. It's the value of the symbiotic relationship that we need to realise."

- Bushcare coordinator

Welcome

This guide aims to ensure smooth, effective and enjoyable running of your collaborative planning and management project.

It sets out a clear, structured process. It provides ready-to-use tools. It offers tips and advice for facilitation.

The core of the guide is the process developed by the Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Program (NEIP) [1] and refined through practice. The NEIP developed a remarkable process that changed participants, changed institutions, and 'changed the world' through collaborative decision-making and action.

These processes and tools are not limited to the environmental field - they will be just as useful in tackling community development, health promotion, injury prevention, economic development, and emergency management challenges. In fact many of the tools were borrowed from those sectors in the first place.

The guide is divided into four sections:

1) The nature of a CoCreate project

2) The collaborative process: a step-by-step guide

3) Being a facilitator: a guide to facilitation skills

4) Just-in-time tools: facilitation tools and methods.

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[1] NEIP is a program of the Victorian Environment Protection Authority.

The guide should provide clarity, advice, inspiration for both facilitators and participants. But remember - it's only a book. It's up to you to bring the essential human ingredients to make your project work: good will, optimism, perseverance, and seat-of-pants creativity. With these things practically anything is possible!

Complex problems need many hands

Many environmental problems seem intractable. They are often long standing, have multiple causes, and have defeated past efforts.

Such 'complex' problems often feature:

- multiple, diffuse causes;
- a disempowered community;
- fragmented management responsibilities;
- uncertainty (the causes are difficult to define and measure).

A collaborative project is one way to tackle such problems. It brings together two kinds of people and organisations: those who are affected by a problem, and those who can make a difference. Together these collaborators carry out research to understand the problem, develop a plan, implement it, and learn from the results.

The approach is 'participative', which means that it is designed collaboratively by the participants themselves, valuing their diverse knowledge, experiences and values. It's based on the principle that 'people respect what they help create': because all have a share in creating the plan, there is greater likelihood that each will act on it.

The collaborative process is important because it builds trust between individuals from different sectors who would not normally find themselves working on a common project.

The process uses an ‘action learning’ approach, which means that a perfect solution is not expected first time. Rather each effort becomes a learning opportunity to better understand the problem and craft new solutions which could make a difference. A range of solutions may be tried over time with participants growing in their capabilities and understanding.

A vital feature of the model is the formal commitment to specific action by the partners, especially government and business players. These commitments define their roles and responsibilities in working towards a solution.

The facilitator is the lynchpin in the process. He or she ensures that the collaborative process works smoothly, is satisfying for the participants, and achieves its objectives.

PART 1: THE NATURE OF A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

The aim of a CoCreate project to tackle complex environmental problems by facilitated collaboration between players who can make a difference. The process uses a structured approach that aims to build high levels of ownership.

A successful project depends upon the players finding a common purpose and developing a respectful partnership based on understanding each other’s strengths, constraints, interests and situations.

How do you know if a collaborative project is suited to your situation? Consider the six criteria in the box on the next page.

Six criteria for a collaborative project *

- [ ] Test 1: The issue impacts on a specific neighbourhood, catchment, or sub-catchment.
- [ ] Test 2: The issue is the result of multiple causes.
- [ ] Test 3: There is a high level of community concern and support for addressing the issue.
- [ ] Test 4: The neighbourhood will be improved if action is taken through collaborative action of potential participants.
- [ ] Test 5: The plan is likely to empower the community as a whole to join in finding and acting on a solution.
- [ ] Test 6: Existing programs to address the issue are ineffective or there are no programs.

* These criteria are based on those of the NEIP program.

Pros & cons of doing a collaborative project

It's important to realise that this is one of many tools available for communities to improve their environment. It's important to make sure you choose the right tool. Here are some pros and cons to be aware of when considering a collaborative project.

Pros

Collaborative projects:

- encourage strong ownership of local environmental issues and their solutions by local communities;
- involve the development of long term structures for addressing local environment problems;
- increased networks, interactions and communications in communities;
- can be flexible and hence developed and implemented in whatever style suits the local community. They can therefore be more enjoyable, sociable activities, rather than just a government planning process;
- are good to leverage funding;
- are good for reaching consensus;
- bring together all the relevant stakeholders at one table and facilitate concrete actions happening.

Cons

Collaborative projects:

- take a long time to develop (at least 12-18 months) due to the emphasis on extensive community engagement and formal approval processes involved;
- require resources, particularly for a project officer. EPA is not in a position to fund these projects, although it will assist communities to leverage funding from other sources;
- may not be suited to a community that has already been ‘over-consulted’ on the issue;
- require a really active and committed local community and sponsor.

Principles of a collaborative project

Once you decide to facilitate a collaborative project you should consider adopting some guiding principles.

Ideally, your project will aim to be:

1) Visionary, inspiring, enjoyable and rewarding

This can be a wonderful opportunity for a community to imagine a different future and take practical steps towards achieving it.

The spirit of your project should be positive, inspiring and rewarding because we want to engage people’s imaginations and energy. We want people to stick with the project from beginning to end.

Meetings and events should always be satisfying. There should be a sense of progress and genuine participation. There should be food or refreshments. Group achievements should be celebrated and individual efforts acknowledged.

Good person-to-person relationships are vital to the success of the project.– The participants should be made to feel like members of a special family. New members should be introduced. People should have name tags.

Interaction is vital - wherever possible workshops should include pair or small group activities where individuals have a chance to tell their own stories.

Angelsea NEIP, for instance, makes sure their meetings have a feeling of optimism and celebration. Community meetings are held at a club. There is always food, live music from a local band – even a bar!

2) Achievable

The project should be about making real change. Objectives, actions and targets should be realistic. The primary aim should be to get runs on the board. Small wins create confidence and increase people's capacity to devise more ambitious projects in future.

Collaborative projects should be ruled by an attitude of 'suck and see' (learning by doing). Data collection and analysis should not consume more of the group's time than is absolutely necessary. The most important lessons will be learnt from acting, discussing results, and taking lessons forward.

3) Driven by all partners

Your project should be a reflection of the desires of a community. The contributions of lay citizens are as valid as those of technical experts. All the partners should drive decisions and the broader community should have creative input at key stages.

4) Open and participatory

At no time should it become a closed process. Although a discrete working group will meet regularly its membership should remain open unless there is a strong reason to set membership criteria.

Broad, open community engagement is a vital success factor. This engagement should not be passive – there should be opportunities for in-depth workshops, wide-ranging discussion, and creative input by the neighbouring community.

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The wider the ownership of the process, the greater the chance of making long-term changes to behaviour. All participants – whether partners or not – should be able to say 'we made that'.

5) Flexible

Although the participants make a plan, it should never be a dead, 'set in stone' document. On-going review, evaluation and adaption are vital so partners can learn from their experiences, develop better responses, and take advantage of opportunities.

6) Locally relevant

Your project should reflect the unique character and hopes of your neighbourhood. It should also fit into existing strategies which cover the neighbourhood.

Roles in a collaborative project

There are a number of distinct roles in a collaborative project. You should clearly define these roles, with the group's consent.

The sponsor

The sponsor agrees to host the project by providing the facilitator/coordinator and holding any funds obtained.

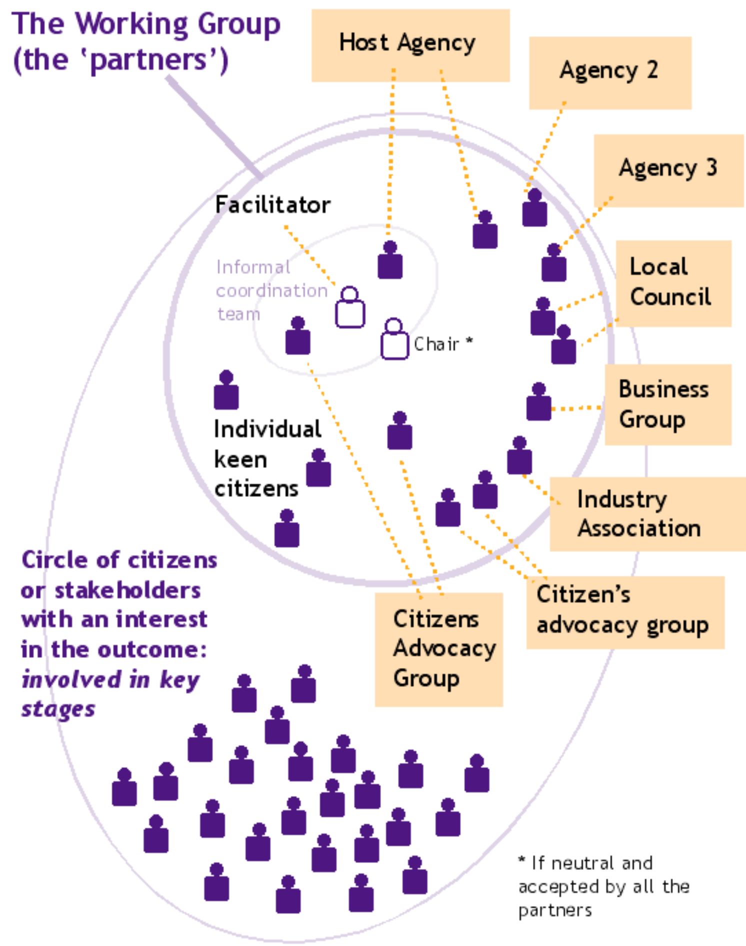
The sponsor could be a public agency such as a council, catchment management authority, water authority or government agency. It may also be a community organisation.

The partners

Most of the thinking and planning is carried out by a working group, steering committee, or round table that consists of representatives of:

- the sponsor(s);
- the neighbourhood community; and
- institutional stakeholders such as government agencies and local businesses or industries.

These are the project partners. Note that they include both institutional representatives and concerned citizens.



Here is a typical structure for a collaborative project. As the shape of the project is up to the partners, many different arrangements are possible.

Residents or landholders are important members of a collaborative project. If possible a number of residents or landholders groups should be represented as well as independent citizens with something to offer. They bring a more personal perspective than agency reps. They often have great depths of knowledge and good connections. Residents and landholders can often be more credible in the media as they may be perceived to have less institutional bias.

Remember an important principle is that the working group should consist of all the partners who may be called upon to take action under the plan.

Partners are expected to formally commit to developing the plan together, including participation in discussions, workshops, meetings and negotiations to develop the plan.

If partners sign on to the resulting plan they will be expected to implement their undertakings and participate in on-going review.

This means that agency representatives have considerable responsibility to keep their agencies well informed about the progress and objectives of the plan.

The chair

It can be good for the working group to have a chair separate from the facilitator/coordinator. A chair can manage the order of business on behalf of the group. They can act as the spokesperson for the group. They should remain neutral while they are in this role.

In the beginning a facilitator may perform these roles. However as the group becomes more established a separate position of chair should be created. The facilitator's role can then gradually

be reduced to advising the chair and running certain sessions where a higher level of facilitation is required.

The chair should be a person acceptable to all the members of the working group. The position of chair can be rotated.

The facilitator/coordinator

Group activities, processes and workshops should be carefully facilitated to get the best out of the working group and public participants.

The group's facilitator is usually the coordinator unless there is a guest facilitator or a member of the group is acting as facilitator for a particular session.

At the start of a project the facilitator/coordinator organises meetings, venues, agendas and activities. They also organise promotional activities and communications. As the group becomes more mature, these activities should be shared with group members.

A collaborative project involves a significant amount of leg work and organisation. You will therefore require a dedicated coordinator/facilitator for 3-4 days per week. Resourcing this position is an important issue that needs to be resolved before a project can proceed.

The coordination team

Some facilitators decide to establish a small team of 2-3 keenly supportive partners to act as an informal coordination team. They can provide guidance, help plan meetings, and share the organising tasks.

The public

It's vital that the working group engages the broader community during the planning process and during the implementation of the plan. This engagement should include active workshops as well as more passive methods such as information events, newsletters, stalls and media. (See the section on Engaging the broader community.)

PART 2: THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Here is a step-by-step guide for getting the most out of your project.

As you read you'll see references to 'TOOLS'. The TOOLS section has detailed descriptions of various facilitation methods which will make the group sessions easier and more enjoyable. Some of these tools, such as Five Whys, are powerful analytic methods.

They are called 'Just-in-time Tools' because they can be called upon quickly in many different situations to solve group challenges or deadlocks as they occur.

Summary of the process

The model in this guide has four stages:

1) Laying the groundwork
These are preliminary steps before calling the partners together.

↓

2) Creating the vision and objectives
Here the community and institutional stakeholders come together as a working group, understand each other's perspectives, analyse the causes of the problem, obtain input from the broader community, agree on a vision and objectives, and commit to developing the action plan together.

↓

3) Action planning
Here the working group devises a detailed action plan with formal commitments from the players, and a strategy for measuring progress. This plan must be submitted to the neighbourhood community for approval.

↓

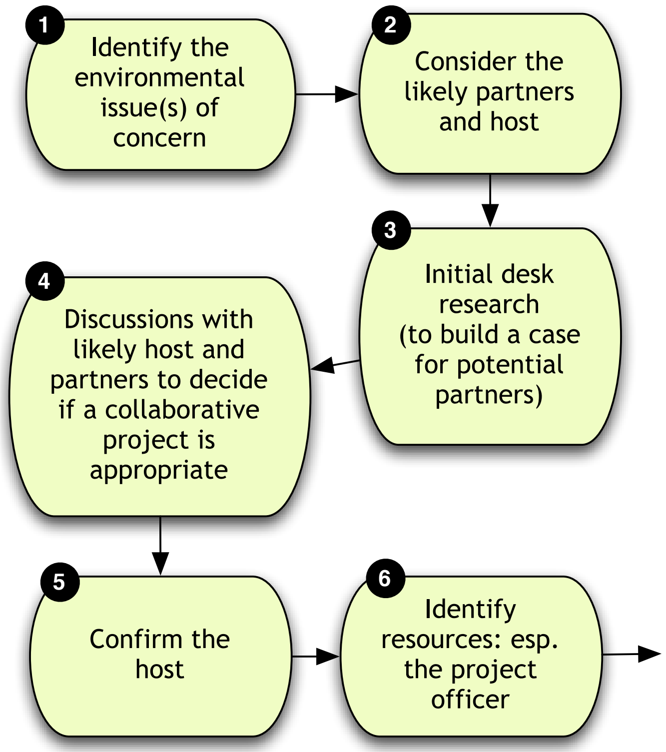
4) Acting and monitoring
The working group continues to meet, plan and implement activities, critically evaluate and monitor the plan against

its targets. The group communicates with the neighbourhood and stakeholders. It celebrates progress.

After the term of the plan (usually 3 years) the plan is reviewed and amendments made so that the approved plan can be kept up to date.

Stage 1: Laying the groundwork.

This stage has preliminary steps to help you decide whether a collaborative project is the right tool for the situation, to identify a sponsor, potential partners, and resources.



Stage 1: Preparation always pays off!

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1) Identify the environmental issue(s) of concern

The issue(s) should meet the six project criteria (see box on page 11).

2) Scan for potential sponsor and partners

Aim for a diverse membership.

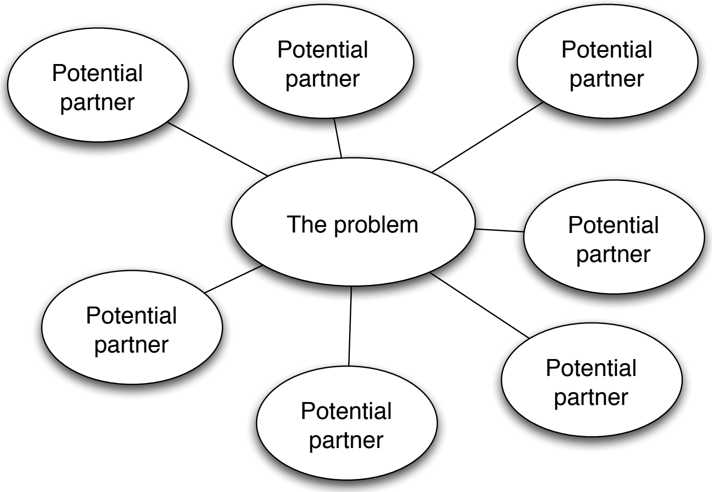
Ideally, the sponsor will be a agency or council with a strong interest in the outcome, driven by core internal strategies and priorities.

You can easily identify potential partners with a BRAINSTORM based on a number of focus questions.

Try these questions:

- Whose 'turf' is the problem?
  What organisations have responsibility for tackling the problem or managing the site of the problem? What citizen advocacy or activist groups are working on the problem?
- Who is contributing to the problem?
  Whose action or inaction may be causing the problem?
- Who can make a difference?
  Who has powers or mandate to act? Who is influential? Who is already supportive?
- Who is impacted by the problem?
  Who has an interest at stake? Whose interests are being damaged by the problem?

The results can be captured in a mud map like that below.



If you end up with a large number of potential partners, you could use a Prioritisation Matrix to sort them into a smaller number (see TOOLS).

Choosing the right people

Think about who would make the best representatives for different organisations. Who would be the most productive, interested, influential or skilled people?

Organisations are not monolithic. It may be appropriate to invite people from different parts of an organisation to maximise the potential for organisational change.

And don't be afraid of involving a few senior people. Their clout and political savvy are valuable. Even though they may miss a lot of meetings they may be better able to influence their organisation's policies and decisions.

It's also valuable to have some people who are sociable, diplomatic and good mediators. They can be the vital glue that bonds disparate individuals into a team. Groups that consist only of technical experts and advocates can be very difficult to bond into a whole.

3) Gather background information

Initial research is vital to develop the strong case you will need to win over the sponsor and partners.

Get on the phone and find out who else has studied the problem eg. councils, catchment bodies and state agencies.

You should start collecting a set of data and statements that lets you present a credible picture of the severity of the symptoms to the community, to government authorities and to funding bodies. This will be vital in getting their 'buy-in'.

Also aim to research the policies, strategies and intentions of potential partners. Try to get a clear picture of how the project could complement or add value to their work. Try to spot gaps where the partner is having trouble achieving some of its goals. For instance, a Catchment Management Authority may recognise that it is unable to reach urban residents, or a council may wish to develop relationships with rural residents. All parties are likely to value the chance to involve the wider circle of the public in environmental activities.

Here is a possible preliminary research agenda:

- [ ] Data about the seriousness of the problem.
- [ ] Evidence that the community are concerned and passionate.
- [ ] Similar projects elsewhere and what they achieved.
- [ ] How could the facilitator position be funded? What grants are available?
- [ ] Policies, strategies and concerns of potential partners: what are the gaps in their performance that your project could help with?

4) Have discussions with the the sponsor and partners to decide if a collaborative project is appropriate

These discussions should aim to decide if a collaborative project is appropriate and whether people are willing to be part of it.

Care needs to be taken here. Many communities are over-consulted nowadays. If recent consultation processes have covered the same ground people may be hungry for action and a planning project may be inappropriate.

Consider the pros and cons listed on page 12.

5) Confirm the sponsor

Obtain a formal agreement from the sponsor to support the project (see the sponsor's obligations under Roles above).

6) Identify the likely resources

The facilitator/coordinator is the project's number one resource.

A collaborative project involves a lot of leg work which the partners cannot be expected to perform: including preparing for meetings, research, media work, obtaining grants, correspondence, on-going contact with partners, drafting the plan, and coordinating community activities.

Experience has shown that a precondition for a successful project is a dedicated project officer position for 3 or 4 days per week for at least 12 months - with potential for extension to 24 months to allow for the start of implementation. The sooner they can start the better to avoid the danger of the process getting stalled.

Generally the sponsor may be reluctant to employ the coordinator without the whole or part of the funds coming from an external grant.

Stage 2: Creating the vision and objectives

This phase begins when you have appointed a facilitator.

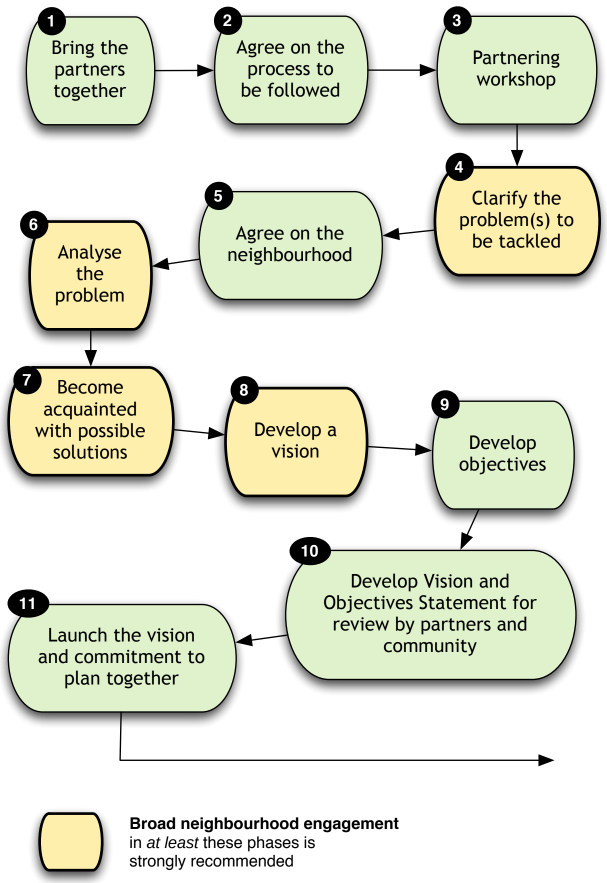
It's the most important phase of the project. Here the partners come together, understand each others' points of view and work with the public to develop a common position on vital questions:

- ☐ the environmental problem to be tackled;
- ☐ the 'neighbourhood' to be covered;
- ☐ the likely causes of the problem;
- ☐ the 'best bet' solutions to be considered;
- ☐ a vision for the future; and
- ☐ objectives.

Perhaps the most important aim of this phase is to facilitate the players to become a 'joined up' collaborative group where the capacities and constraints of each partner are mutually understood.

This process requires time and patience, especially where several government agencies are involved. It's a bit like a Big Brother house where mutual understanding and respect arises from having work to do together – in this case exploring the

causes of the problem and devising a plan that incorporates realistic commitments from each player. [2]



Stage 2: Creating the vision and objectives.

[2] Thanks to John Milkins of Edwardes Creek NEIP for the Big Brother analogy.

1) Bring the partners and neighbourhood together

The project should begin with an open public meeting. The aim is to gauge public interest and obtain endorsement for the project.

The first meeting sets the style and expectations for future meetings:

- [ ] Have a clear, well-structured agenda.
- [ ] Make it a nice event with nice food and an attractive venue.
- [ ] Identify each member with name tags and arrange introductions.
- [ ] Introduce the sponsor.
- [ ] Clearly describe the purpose of the meeting.
- [ ] Vividly present the problem and the level of community concern (for example: a slide show, presentations by articulate members of the public and independent experts).
- [ ] Ask those present to share their expectations and perceptions of the problem.
- [ ] Clearly explain the nature of the collaborative project.
- [ ] Ask the potential partners to offer ideas on the project.
- [ ] Present a firm proposal for the project (but be prepared to negotiate the details).

- [ ] Determine levels of interest of participants.
- [ ] Ask whether there should be a collaborative project.
- [ ] If so, seek members for the Working Group.
- [ ] Agree on the next steps.
- [ ] Leave people with some written information on the project project and the problem to be tackled.

2) Agree on the process to be followed

At the second meeting, discuss the proposed planning process in detail.

Ensure all partners clearly understand the nature of the collaboration and the commitments they may be called upon to make.

Agree on the process to be followed, including frequency of meetings, time and locations.

3) The partnering workshop

> *"Bear in mind that what keeps a coalition going is the commitment of the individual representatives and the support of the organisations they represent. Generally, the more directly coalition activities relate to the specific objectives of the participating organisations, and the more each member is able to enjoy and be proud of their individual participation and contributions, the more the coalition will accomplish and the more it will flourish."*
>
> - Prevention Institute, Developing Effective Coalitions: an Eight Step Guide

The effectiveness of a group depends on how well the members bond as a partnership. This will take time and patience. At the start there may be misconceptions and widely varying agendas. The partnering workshop is designed to speed up the process, but facilitating the sense of genuine common purpose will be an on-going task.

It's easy to believe that different groups think the same way or mean the same thing when they speak – they don't.

Often partners have been used to operating in relatively isolated 'bubbles' with a strong focus on internal agendas and are not used to working collaboratively.

It's important to make explicit the goals, roles, policies, vested interests, strengths, and needs of each partner - and ensure these are mutually understood by all.

This may require one or more workshops.

Using the Partnering Matrix

Ask partners to come along with prepared answers to the questions in the Partnering Matrix. Each partner then comes to the front and completes their row in the matrix. Open discussion is encouraged, allowing clarification as the matrix is completed.

When it is complete, summarise the commonalities, especially hidden commonalities which have emerged during the exercise.

Ground rules for handing conflict in this session

This exercise can easily bring out conflict over the past actions of different players, so ground rules are important. Make it clear that this session is about developing mutual understanding, not judging past actions. Seek the group's permission to ban further discussion of any point where aggressive language is used or personal attacks are made.

Keep in mind that, as facilitator, your neutrality is vital. The sponsor and the chair should also aim for neutrality.

Good partnering resources

An excellent source of advice and tools to build partnerships is The Prevention Institute: www.preventioninstitute.org/tools.html

A good partnerships checklist from VicHealth is available at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/default.asp?artid=538&tmid=406

An alternative partnering workshop method, where partners identify mutual expectations, can be found at: www.change-management-toolbook.com/tools/EM.html

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Partnering matrix	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3	Partner 4	Partner 5
How do they define the problem? What kinds of symptoms does the partner focus on? Ensure the language is understood by all and there are no misconceptions.					
Priority How important is the issue for the partner?					
Desired outcomes What results would they like to see?					
Data What data sources do they have about the problem?					
Resources What in-kind resources or funds could they potentially provide?					
Expertise What expertise do they bring? What training could they provide to the other members?					
Networks Who are they linked to? What community networks do they have?					
Add your own additional criteria					

Adapted from *Collaborative Math*, The Prevention Institute, www.injuryprevention.org

Turf contests and what to do about them

There is a good chance that your project may be seen, at least initially, as invading the established turf of one or more players. You should make sure that the project always presents itself as an answer to the problems an organisation faces in achieving its goals, rather than as a competitor. For instance, you might be seen as trespassing on the turf of an existing Water Management Committee. Your contact with members of this committee may alert you to the fact that the organisation has an unfulfilled need to reach out to community groups and hence you can structure the objectives to ensure that the project helps this partner meet its own objectives.

In some cases it may not be possible to avoid conflict over turf. In that case you should not try to hide the conflict. Arrange a special delegation, meeting or sub-committee to discuss the issue with the affected partners. Make the assumptions behind the conflict explicit. Clarify exactly what is at stake. Usually conflict is based on misconceptions or fears of lost control. If necessary alter the objectives to ensure that the project genuinely adds value or complements the work of the other agency.

TIP: If there are potential turf issues with a major player it's a good idea to get yourself on the agenda of its meetings so you can reassure the agency by providing regular updates on the project's work.

4) Clarifying the problem to be tackled

Your project should responds to the collective passions and concerns of a wide community - not just those of a few players. The initial team members may want to focus on restoring a lake, but this desire must also be shared with the local community. It's important that your project achieve a focus on issues that people are passionate about. These will usually be matters which are creating dissatisfaction or concern – where people are keen to see change.

Collaborative projects work best when they focus on environmental problems which:

- can be seen, smelt, touched;
- affect the day-to-day lives of people;
- cause concern, disgust or dissatisfaction;
- have economic or social impacts.

Examples include polluted creeks or lakes, blighted or neglected neighbourhoods or degraded urban bushland.

Your project could also occur in parallel with major agency projects such as catchment restoration, urban renewal, stormwater management or main street programs.

The problem should also be 'attackable' in that there is a reasonable chance of bringing together the key players and a reasonable chance of progress.

The 'Attackable Problem' test

- ☐ Does the problem affect a significant number of people?
- ☐ Does the issue raise public passions?
- ☐ Is there a compelling case to act?
- ☐ Are you able to involve all or most of the players who may be called upon to act?
- ☐ Is there a reasonable chance of making an impact on the problem?

This step in the process is here to test whether the initial focus of the initiators is shared by the community. If necessary the project can be refocused on different or related issues at this stage.

Clarifying the problem can be done by inviting both the partners and broader community to a THINK TANK session based on these focus questions:

> *"What is the single issue which, if tackled, would make the biggest difference to the quality of life (or sustainability) in your neighbourhood?"*
>
> OR

> *"Thinking about the quality of living in the neighbourhood, what are some of the things you are most dissatisfied about and would like to change?"*

See CONSENSUS THINK TANK (in TOOLS).

If a significant 'community' shares your concern for cleaning up the lake as a priority local activity, then you have the basis for a successful project. If not you should vary the purpose to include the community's concerns.

It's important that the focus of such a workshop is broad enough to link to economic and social dimensions ie. don't just talk about 'pollution' - broaden the workshop to focus on things affecting 'quality of life' and local employment. Although the aim is to eventually identify one or more 'see and smell' problems, starting with a wide focus ensures that the project includes matters which people are passionate about.

Tip: Starting a project out of a general desire for 'sustainability' may lead to confusion and loss of energy down the track. It really is best if you aim to tackle a specific 'touch and feel' problem of concern. Once a group develops more confidence it may then decide to broaden its agenda.

5) Agree on the neighbourhood

There is no general rule for what should be the ‘neighbourhood’ for your project. Factors to consider include:

a) ensuring the key causal factors are within the scope of the project (e.g. if litter from a shopping strip is a key causal factor, then the neighbourhood should include the shopping strip);

b) ensuring that key players or institutions have overlapping interests or turf;

b) remaining realistically within your likely resources; and

c) choosing an area that’s recognised by the community as a social neighbourhood.

Generally it’s wise to err on the small side (eg. a sub-catchment, rather than a whole catchment). Large neighbourhoods can simply be unworkable. It’s more important that the plan leads to pragmatic action and observable results rather than aiming to be a comprehensive solution. Action builds confidence and allows learning to occur, and the scope of the project can always be widened in future.

Make this session as visual as possible. Provide tables with aerial photographs, topographic maps and butchers paper. Consider starting with a brainstorm using post-it notes to indicate the location of different interests and causes.

Tip: Look up ‘community mapping’ or ‘participative mapping’ on the internet for ideas on running a mapping session.

CoCreate The Facilitator's Guide

6) Problem analysis

Now it’s time to carry out an analysis of the problem, aiming to identify causal factors.

Often players will bring easy assumptions about whose ‘fault’ a problem is (e.g. “it’s all the upstream farmers’ fault”).

The partners, as a group, therefore need to re-examine the problem: through first hand field exploration, reviewing research and, if necessary, commissioning new research (e.g. interviews with landholders). The discussions during this analysis will help clarify the problem to be tackled and best boundaries of the ‘neighbourhood’.

The outcome of the problem analysis will be a set of project objectives, which you carry through to the Action Planning phase.

Problem analysis should include a participative workshop open to a wide community. The workshop may be a single day-long event, or a number of shorter events. Ideally, it should be preceded by field walks and shorter workshops using some of the approaches in Rapid Participative Appraisal (see TOOLS). The Five Whys process (see TOOLS) should be a central component of the main event.

Start by clarifying the symptoms

You will already have made an initial scope of the symptoms in the ‘Getting started’ phase. Now it’s time to make a detailed assessment in collaboration with the broader community.

Aim to commence the workshop by establishing consensus on a set of symptoms you can see, touch, feel or experience (don’t let people fuzzify the issue with vague abstractions like “loss of biodiversity”).

Also beware of participants’ natural tendencies to jump to an end product. You may need to remind them “not to jump to conclusions about tactics or solutions yet, just follow the logical process and we’ll get our answers with a lot more confidence”.

Aim to quantify the symptoms, decide if they are getting worse or better, find out who is affected, what the impact is on the community. Also include ‘qualitative’ information such as a statements from people who are suffering as a result of the problem.

Here is a matrix you could use to record this information:

Symptom	Current level	Getting worse or better?	Who is affected?	What are the impacts?
Litter in estuary	• Plastics very visible at all times; • 4,000 items collected on Clean Up Day	Appears to be gradually worsening	• Locals and visitors wanting safe family swimming spots; • Tourist-related businesses.	• Loss of safe, treasured swimming spots; • Loss of local pride; • Fewer visitors = reduced tourism income.

If you lack data on the scope of the symptoms, consider carrying out your own on-site research e.g. a community survey, Waterwatch testing, litter counts, riparian assessment, soil testing, interviews with neighbours and community leaders.

Rapid Participative Appraisal is a set of collaborative methods for quickly collecting a lot of data on the scope of a problem and its possible causes (see TOOLS).

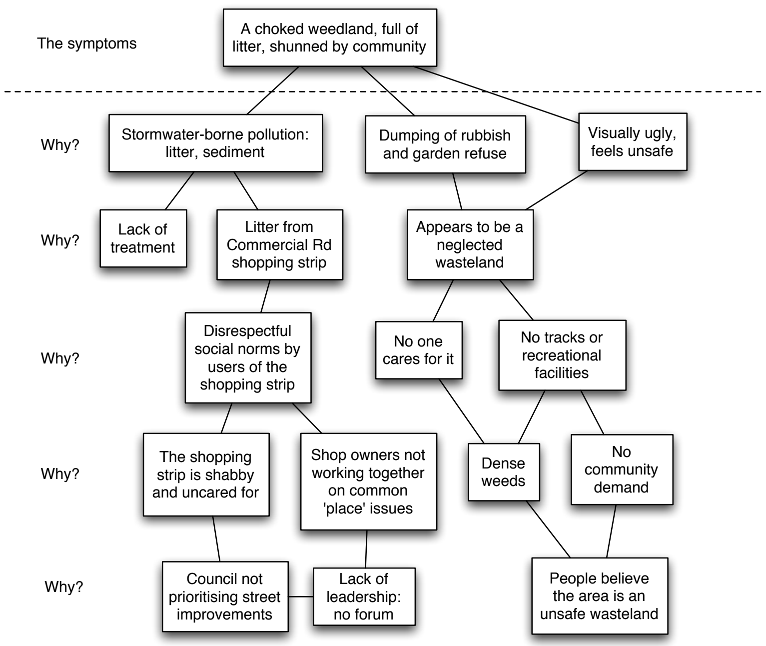
Investigate the causes

Now that you understand the severity of the symptoms, move on to understanding what's causing them. There are likely to be a range of factors, perhaps including:

- public apathy or distrust;
- regulations not enforced;
- lack of services or infrastructure;
- policies or practices of government bodies;
- beliefs and social norms of individuals;
- ignorance.

A great tool for exploring these causes is the FIVE WHYS TOOL (see TOOLS). This helps the group drill down from symptoms to root causes, challenging their own assumptions along the way.

The Five Whys tool is a deceptively simple 'deep thinking' method for groups. Participants start with the symptoms, and ask 'Why?' until they are satisfied they've drilled down to the underlying causes.



Example of a Five Whys analysis of a polluted urban creek.

The result of a Five Whys analysis should be a list of root causes based on the knowledge of the participants.

There will usually be a mix of individual causes (eg. behaviours of individuals, practices of farmers etc), and institutional causes (eg. policies and practices of government organisations or businesses). Some of these will be easier to tackle than others.

You will want to select just a 2-4 of causes that you have a reasonable chance of influencing. This is because, with limited resources, it's more important to get 'runs on the board' than to try to tackle every cause of a problem. They will usually be obvious. However there is disagreement, use the Bang-for-Buck tool as a way to logically choose those where you can achieve the biggest 'Bang' with your resources (see TOOLS).

Tips on using the Five Whys tool

It's not necessary to go down all five levels if you simply can't.

Running into blocks or loops with Five Whys may mean either:

- you need to do some research before coming back;
- you need a rest; or
- you have got as close to the root cause as you are going to get.

The Five Whys tool is only as good as the brainpower and experience behind it, so a diverse membership is vital in the workshop.

Systems thinking: the web of causes

It's good to consider Systems Thinking when analysing causes. Suggest that participants imagine the problem exists because it is being held in place by a web of causes.

There are positive causes (which are not strong enough to improve the situation), and there are negative causes (which are currently dominant).

A Force Field analysis (See TOOLS) can complement Five Whys as a way of collectively assessing the relative strengths of the strands of the web.

Tip: Data collection and analysis should not consume more of the group's time than is absolutely necessary. The most important lessons will be learnt from acting and reviewing the results. The rule should be to act on the basis of 'best bet' or 'balance of probabilities' that the action will improve the environment.

7) Become acquainted with possible solutions

During this stage it's good to start inspiring participants with stories of interventions or solutions which have been tried elsewhere.

Meetings could include presentations from experts, from other groups that have tackled similar problems, or from members of the public who present research or their own innovative ideas.

At this stage keep all options open. Don't make decisions. Just to allow partners and the community to be exposed to a range of 'best bet' options. These options can be critically analysed in the 'action planning' phase later on.

8) Visioning

Analysing a problem is vital, but it's an essentially negative approach that only gets you so far. Change is a positive act of the imagination. The energy for change comes from people's dreams and hopes.

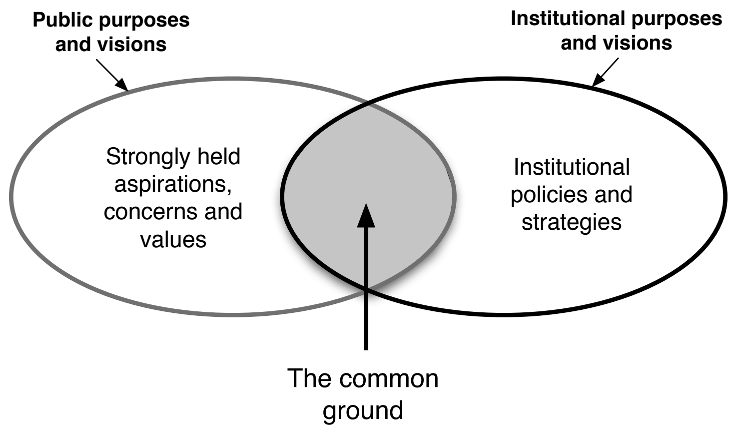
So the next step is to create a collective vision of what the creek, neighbourhood, valley or place could be like if you succeeded in tackling the problem.

Good ways of collective visioning are through story telling, visioning and photo exercises.

A basic group visioning process is provided in the TOOLS.

Finding an inclusive vision

Remind participants that a successful project is one that finds common purpose or vision with both the institutional players and the public. One way to think of this is with intersecting circles.

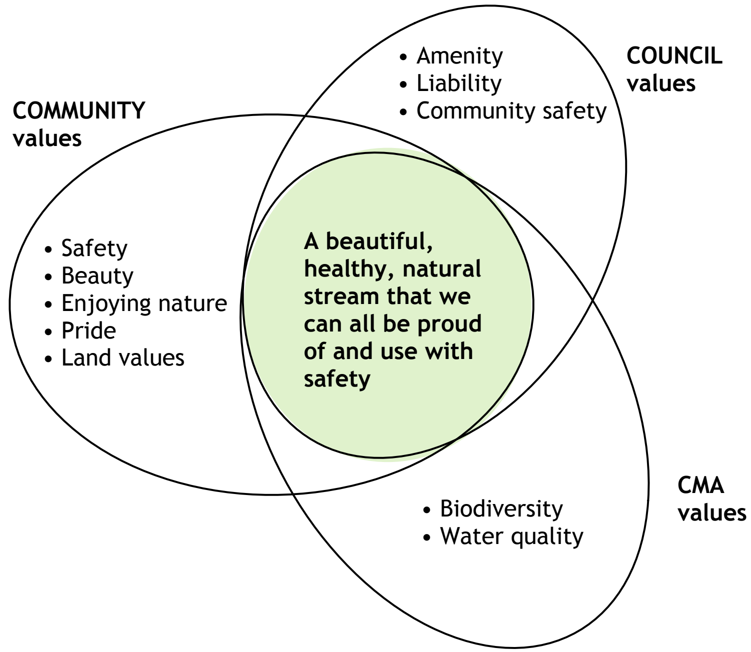


For instance the Catchment Management Authority may wish to restore biodiversity in a creek, while landholders may want to reduce erosion, while local urban residents want to clean out the creek so it looks tidier and safer. A successful collaborative project will find a common purpose at the intersection of these interests. On the next page is an example that would incorporate the visions of both the agencies and the local neighbours.

Note: the visioning workshop can be done concurrently with the problem analysis.

P.S. This could be a good time (if you haven't already done it) to select a community-friendly name for your program).

Tip: It's more important that visions are shared, than that they are perfect!



An inclusive vision must have room for the values of all the players.

The test of a good vision: your elevator pitch

A good vision is one that's interesting and engaging for members of the public.

So: image that you have stepped into an elevator with a member of the public. You have 1 minute to explain the vision of the project before they get out at the top floor. You have 10 minutes to prepare.

This is a fun team activity to do at the conclusion of your visioning workshop: you can make it a competition between tables with a prize for the elevator pitch voted most compelling by the whole meeting.

Visions from some of the Victorian NEIP projects

"A clean Stony Creek corridor that is the pride of all our community."

- Stony Creek NEIP Plan

"In the long term we would like to see Edwardes Lake safe to swim and fish in. Further we would like the Lake and the Park to be used, enjoyed and valued in a sustainable manner."

- Edwardes Lake NEIP Plan

"A proud and connected community creating a prosperous and sustainable future in a healthy and beautiful environment."

- Angelsea NEIP Plan

"The abiding vision of our community is to have a well-managed, attractive and healthy Richardson River where it is a pleasure to live, work and play. This passion is summarised by: Committed to a Healthy Richardson River."

- Donald NEIP Proposal

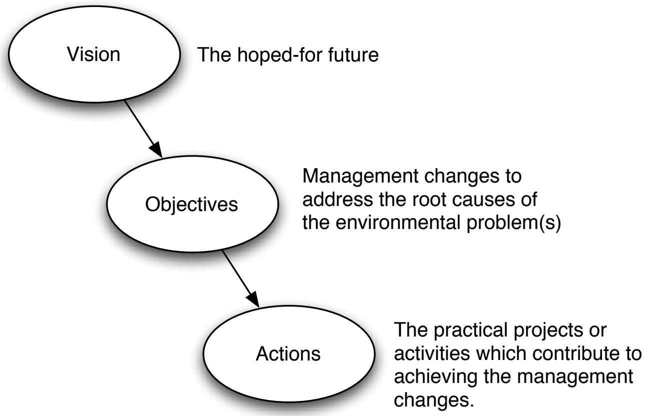
"A healthy Little Snowy Creek that supports a range of uses and is managed in a cooperative and considerate manner for the benefit of all."

- Eskdale NEIP Proposal

Strategic planning

You now have a vision - a statement of group intentions to tackle the problem in a way that accords with community values.

The next step is to do some strategic planning. Compared to visioning, where the imagination runs free, strategic planning is a more rational process. It aims to ensure your eventual actions are linked by a logical chain of cause and effect to the vision you want to achieve.



Strategic planning ensures your actions are logically linked to the vision you are trying to achieve.

The key step in strategic planning is the creation of objectives. The easiest way to create objectives to to go back to the Five Whys exercise where you analysed the root causes of the environmental symptoms you want to tackle. Objectives are simply general statements about how you will address each of the root causes. For an example see the next diagram.

Doing strategic planning as a group ensures that everyone understands why a particular objective or action has been chosen and why it deserves a priority over others.

9) Developing objectives

Objectives are desired changes to the 'whole system' that produces a problem, including both biophysical and human causes.

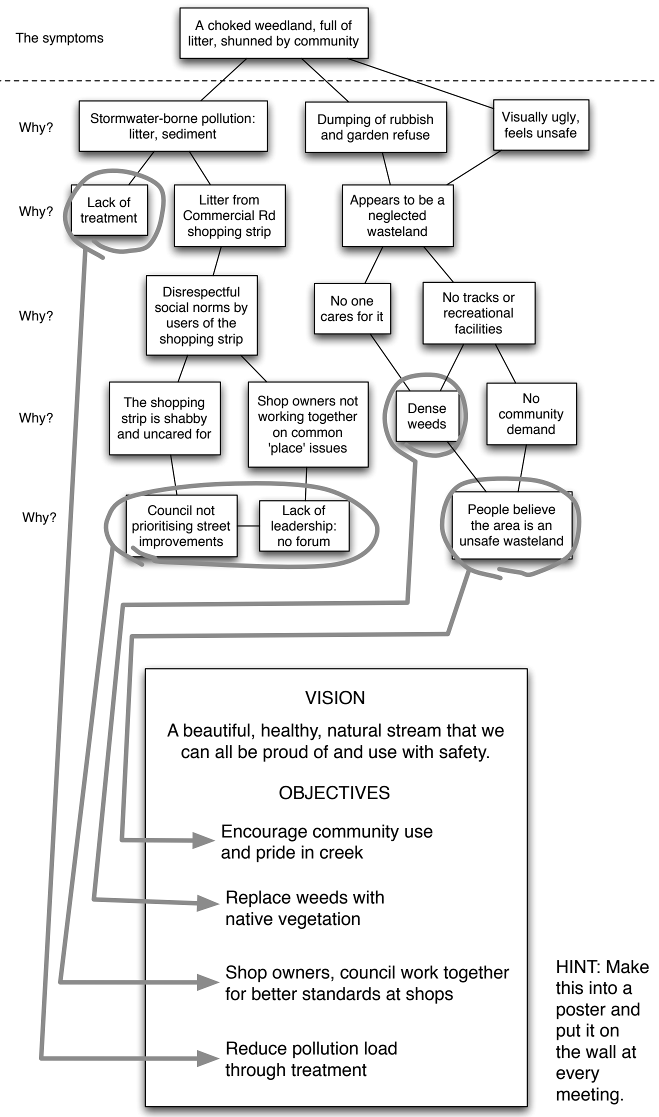
Objectives should be directly linked to the causes you identified in your Five Whys analysis. This can be a simple process. If, for instance, a cause of the polluted stream is stormwater-borne litter originating from a shopping strip, then an objective may be to 'reduce litter entering the stormwater system from the Commercial Road shopping precinct'.

Connecting objectives directly to causes is a good idea because it's relatively easy and it ensures that the objectives actually address the problem.

The example on the next page shows how a Five Whys analysis can feed directly into the objectives.

Be careful not to confuse objectives with specific 'how' actions such as installing litter traps or enforcing litter laws. *Objectives are the outcomes you hope to achieve by such practical actions, not the actions themselves.*

If you end up with more than 5 objectives, you've almost certainly got more than you can handle. Blend related objectives or use a the Bang for Buck Matrix to thin them out (see TOOLS).



Example of a Vision and Objectives Statement

VISION:

"The vision of this collaboration is to transform Shady Creek into a beautiful, healthy natural stream that we can all be proud of and use with safety."

OBJECTIVES:

1. encourage enthusiastic community use and pride in Shady Creek
2. replace weedlands with thriving native communities
3. reduce stormwater-borne pollution entering creek, through treatment
4. encourage shop owners and council to work together to improve standards and reduce litter at Commercial Rd shops.

Your objectives need to be do-able. Make sure they pass the SMART test:

The SMART test

- [ ] Specific: anyone reading it would know exactly what you mean
- [ ] Measurable: capable of being measured
- [ ] Achievable: realistic, within your group's skills and resources
- [ ] Relevant: addresses one or more causes of the problem, or supports the vision.
- [ ] Time-limited: has milestones or deadlines

Of course to meet all the SMART criteria you'll need to add *targets* to your objectives - but it's best to postpone that to the Action Planning stage, after the partners have committed to keep working together.

A process for devising objectives

The starting point is a list of causes you developed through the Five Whys method. This process shows how you can convert those causes into objectives.

Objectives can be developed in a collaborative workshop using the CONSENSUS THINK TANK method (see TOOLS).

Steps

1) List each 'attackable cause' on a separate A4 sheet. Mount these at intervals along a wall or on the floor.
2) Form tables of 6-8, each with a table facilitator. Clearly describe the process to be followed.
3) Ensure people clearly understand the idea of a 'web of causes' (see System Thinking above).
4) Set out the focus question: "What outcome would best address each cause?"
   Instruct people *not* to propose specific project activities at this stage: 'Increase community use' is OK, but 'organise a festival' would be too specific. People will inevitably propose activities, but simply record them so they can be considered in the Action Planning stage.
5) Each individual answers this question for each of the attackable causes. Write each answer on a separate A4 sheet. (5 mins)
6) In groups, discuss each person's answers, and develop a team consensus. (20 mins)
7) Teams place their answers beneath or around each of the first cards on the wall or floor.

8) The whole group then actively rearranges the sheets, simplifying and rewriting until a limited number of objectives (ideally 5 or less) have been identified.

9) If conflicts or uncertainties exist, consider setting up a sub-committee to meet separately and report back with recommendations.

10) Write up the resulting list of objectives and present to the next meeting. At this meeting you might want to divide into tables and review the objectives in detail until consensus is achieved.

10) Develop the draft vision and objectives statement for review by partners and community

The next step is to prepare set out the proposed vision and objectives and circulate them for comment.

It's important circulate it widely to the neighbourhood community and to external stakeholders. This allows you to correct errors, increase buy-in, and inform the community about the progress that has been achieved.

The statement should include a summary of the group's thinking and work to date, including:

- Rationale for the project (impacts of problem, who is affected, the lack of progress from previous approaches);
- Description of the project, and what has occurred so far;
- Problem statement and analysis (including supporting data);
- The partners' details;
- Vision and Objectives;
- Signatures of partners, committing to continue working to develop actions and responsibilities;
- If desired, refer to case studies in other locations, but avoid canvassing particular local solutions at this stage.

The statement should be signed by the partners. This commitment could take the form:

"We, the undersigned agree continue working together to develop detailed actions and responsibilities in support of the vision and objectives."

SIgning is an important 'buy-in' step for partners, building institutional commitment to carry out the eventual actions.

11) Launch the vision and objectives

Now is a great time to celebrate what has been achieved.

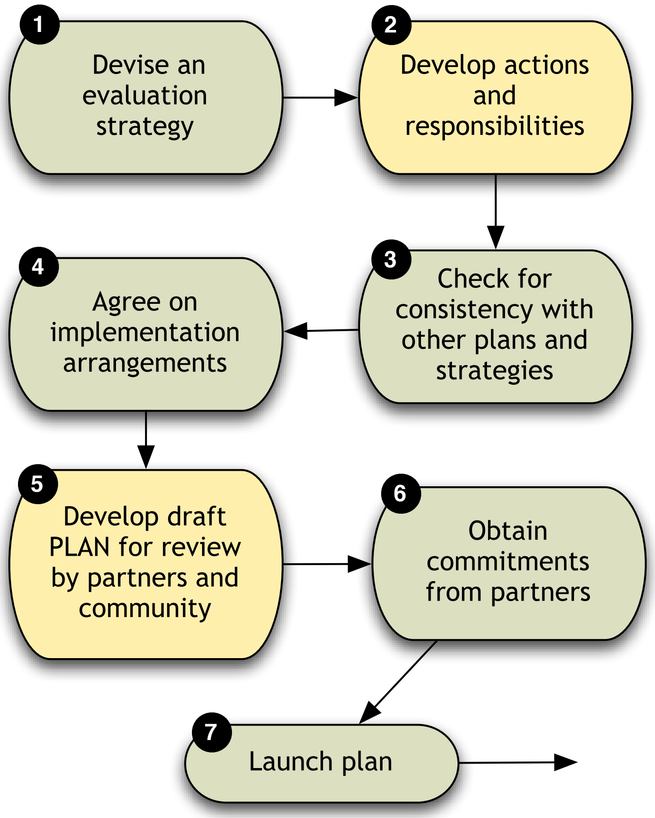
It's a good idea to organise a public party to 'launch' the project.

Invite the local media and let the community know that a momentously stage has been reached: for the first time all the partners have formally agreed to work together to develop practical solutions to an outstanding environmental problem.

Media coverage at this stage is extremely valuable to increase the profile and credibility of the project with the community and, most importantly, with the institutions that will have to implement a the plan in future.

Stage 3: Action planning

Now the group needs to get down to the nitty gritty of practical actions that are capable of being implemented.



Stage 3: This is where the players must agree to specific commitments.

Keep in mind that negotiation and patience may be required to obtain agreement from the partners during this stage, however obtaining that agreement is what a collaborative project is all about.

1) Devising targets for each objective

A SMART objective has to be measurable. At the least you need to know whether it has happened!. So, the next step is to agree on how to do that.

You'll need to think about three things:

- indicators (things you can measure);
- methods of measurement (how you measure them); and
- targets (what you aim to achieve).

Indicators

An indicator is a what you observe to measure change. So, for instance, if you are measuring the replacement of weedlands with native vegetation, you might observe the number of metres of creek bank which have been weeded and replanted with native species.

Indicators should be common sense observations which are easy to make. For instance:

- number of people using a park
- area of bushland regenerated
- number of pollution incidents reported
- reduced complaints.

Beware of choosing indicators which are dependent on factors outside the control of the partners. Water quality targets, for instance, are notoriously hard to meet because they are determined by intractable factors (e.g. the weather, social norms, the extent of hard surfaces) and can take decades to improve. Stick to indicators which are within the power of the project to influence.

Note on indicators: Look up ‘sustainability indicators’ on the internet for a fascinating range of projects and resources in this area.

One interesting challenge is to devise non-technical indicators which are compelling for lay people e.g. a community project on the Georges River in Sydney developed ‘the white sandshoe test’ as an indicator of water turbidity: the depth of water you could stand in and still see your sandshoes!

Method of measurement

This is how you’ll collect the data. The obvious consideration is to choose methods which are quick and easy. Examples include:

- door-to-door community survey
- head-count of visitors
- walk-through environmental audit
- area of land covered by an incentive program.

It’s good if one of the partners already has responsibility for collecting this data.

Targets

The essential criteria for targets is that they are reasonably likely to be achieved within the duration of the Plan.

Because targets are rather arbitrary, avoid spending too much time debating them.

Targets are necessarily ‘best bets’ based on incomplete knowledge, so the best policy is to make those best bets and move on.

Consider setting up an evaluation working group

Indicators, methods and targets can be hard to devise collaboratively as some expertise and experience may be required. It may be best to establish a small working group of individuals with particular strengths to meet separately and report back with a proposal that can be discussed and approved by the whole group.

The matrix on the next page shows how you could set out the Indicators, methods and targets.

Reflecting on what you learn

Remember the most important reason for having M & E plan is to allow your partners to learn from experience. Hence the M & E plan should clearly state how the working group will schedule in sessions to reflect on progress. The Reflection Tool is good to use for this purpose (see TOOLS).

The section “Evaluating your project” gives more detail on the background and format for your M & E plan.

Tip: Don’t sweat targets. They can be very hard to set with high degrees of certainty. Make a ‘best bet’ about what’s reasonably achievable and move on.

Objective	Indicator	Method of measurement	Target
1) Increase community pride and use for passive recreation	Increased community use and valuing of creek	Community survey by steering group (benchmark and annual, in Nov)	100% increase in weekend visitation, and 100% increase in numbers who view creek as valuable community asset
2) Restore native plant communities	Length of creek with restored riparian vegetation	Annual figures from CMA monitoring, in July	300m in year 1;1000m within 3 years
3) Reduce pollution load in stormwater discharge	Number of litter items entering creek from stormwater discharge	Litter counts by Waterwatch group (benchmark and annual, in Nov)	50% reduction in stormwater borne litter by year 3
4) Shop owners, council work together to improve behaviour at shopping strip	Decreased litter in shopping strip	Survey of shoppers attitudes to shopping strip amenity	100% community increase in satisfaction with amenity

Objective evaluation matrix. Tip: make it into a poster and put it on the wall at each meeting.

2) Decide on actions and responsibilities

This is the step everyone has been itching for: figuring out exactly what to do!

Actions are targeted, measurable, achievable activities that specific organisations, groups or individuals agree to perform to support the objectives.

For instance: the Bushcare Group may agree to hold four tree planting days before September; the Catchment Agency to complete Willow eradication along 300 of Shady Creek by October; and the Rotary Club to hold an annual clean-up day in November each year.

Actions can be devised by exactly the same collaborative THINK TANK method used for developing objectives (see TOOLS).

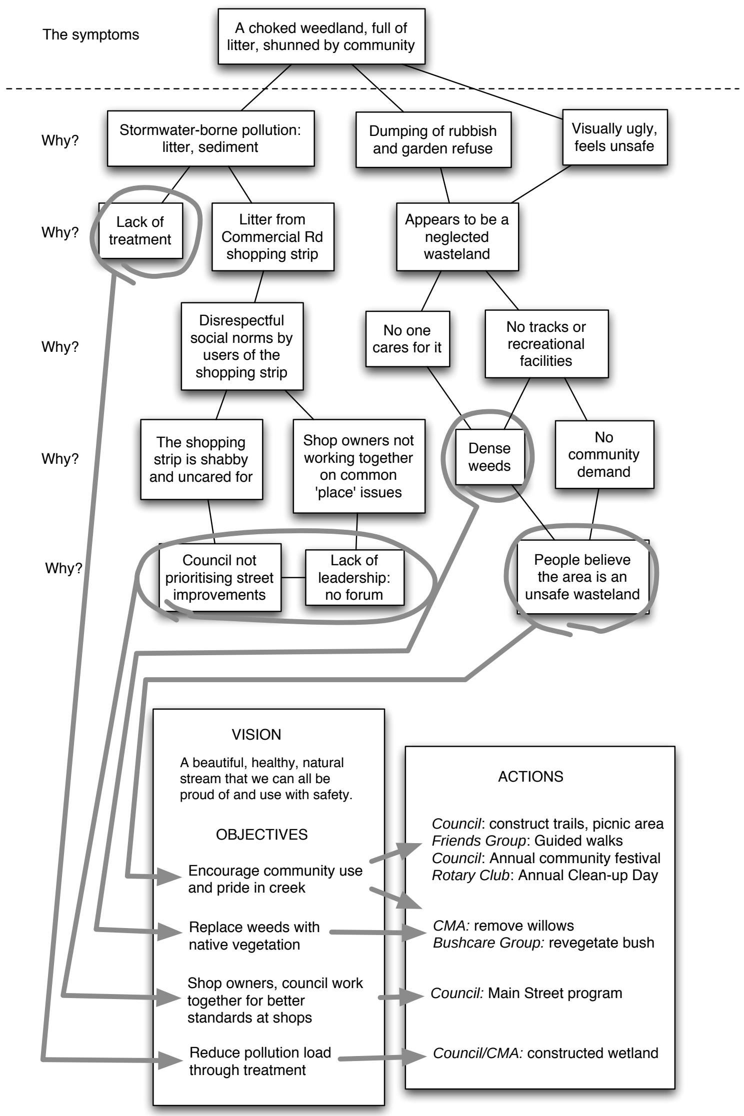
Actions make take several meetings and some patience to negotiate as partners know they will be called upon to definitely commit to carrying them out.

Remember that time will also be needed for agency and council representatives to go back to their organisations and present cases for expenditure or reprioritising or changing plans. They may need assistance or advice from other partners on how best to obtain their organisational commitments.

Actions should pass the SMART test (see page 61).

The Edwardes Creek NEIP developed a very useful ACTIVITY TESTER to decide whether or not to go ahead with actions proposed by members (see TOOLS).

It’s important that actions directly support your objectives (see diagram on the next page).



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Examples of actions

- The Catchment Management Authority will regrade Shady Creek banks and eradicate willows over 1 km of lower creek in 3 years;
- The Bushcare group will rehabilitate the riparian zone at Reedy Park by November;
- The Council will apply for a Main Street program by November;
- Council landscape planners to develop a plan for a constructed wetland for Reedy Park by August;
- The surrounding community will participate in the landscape planning workshop in September;
- Council Parks Department will commence work on the constructed wetland by June next year;
- Council rangers will commence enforcing anti-dumping laws to stop garden refuse being deposited in the riparian zone by June.
- The partners to collaborate to organise a Shady Creek Community Festival by November, and then annually.

All these are specific, do-able, measurable actions, *by specific bodies*.

Actions should be set out together with:

- **Responsibilities:** who has the primary responsibility for leading the action and reporting on progress;
- **Resources:** significant assets or resources that will be required, and who will provide them;
- **Timing:** the starting and finishing dates if known;
- **Indicator:** how immediate results or response will be measured.
- **Milestones:** what you expect to achieve at key stages.
- **Method of measurement and reporting:** Who will you measure the result or response, how they'll do it, and how will it be reported.

The goal is to provide just enough information to ensure that partners understand their responsibilities and there is a process to observe how the activity progresses.

Here is an example:

Action	**Shady Ck willow eradication**
Responsibility	Catchment Management Authority
Resources	$20,000 NHT funds
Timing	Start: May Finish: November
Indicator	Length of creek banks de-willowed
Milestones	300m by June 30; 1000m by Nov 30
Method of measurement and reporting	Audit by CMA. Written statement to Working Group.

Table: A way of setting out actions and responsibilities.

3) Checking for consistency with other plans and strategies

At this stage you should (if you already haven't) check for consistency with other plans and strategies.

Most projects will occur in a 'stakeholder rich' environment and there can be a plethora of other plans and strategies that you need to be aware of. It's important to know about these because your plan will be more effective if it builds on or adds value to the existing plans of various agencies.

These can include:

- local government works plans, stormwater management plans, environmental management plans;
- state and regional planning schemes;
- State Environment Protection Policies;
- Regional Catchment Strategies and Investment Strategies (contact your Catchment Management Authority or NRM group).

4) Agree on implementation arrangements

At this stage it's really important to establish what structures will be in place to implement your plan.

The key factor in the long-term success of your project is how well your community can work together in the future to:

- check that actions are being undertaken when and as agreed;
- come up with new and interesting ways to get people involved in the project;
- decide if new or different activities or approaches should be tried; and
- decide when the project has been completed and the group should cease to exist or change and expand.

You should decide upon:

- [ ] Who will be in your ongoing working group?
- [ ] What the purpose of the working group will be?
- [ ] How often the group will meet?

  (Remember that it should be often enough so you can keep track of what is happening and not lose momentum; but not too often or people will lose interest as it will be a burden.)
- [ ] How formally structured the group will be?

(Do you need a chairperson and, if so, will this be fixed or rotated amongst partners? Do you need a secretary for preparing minutes and organising the meeting? etc)

- ☐ How will the working group will report to stakeholders?
- ☐ How will the public be involved?
- ☐ How will you communicate progress to the community?

5) Develop draft plan for review by partners and community

The draft should be circulated to partners, community and stakeholders to correct mistakes, increase buy-in and start people thinking about implementation.

6) Obtaining commitments

To be achievable, your plan must:

- ☐ Involve all those who need to act in developing the vision and plan;
- ☐ Identify actions which are SMART, and which identify responsibilities and resources;
- ☐ Result in specific, formal commitments to carry out those actions.

Naturally it is vital that the players participate throughout the process so that they genuinely ‘own’ their commitments.

This means that there is great responsibility on members representing agencies and outside organisations to ensure that they have kept their managers advised throughout the development of the plan. If not, then sign-off might take a whole new phase of negotiation!

Remember that commitments depend on a high level of trust being built throughout the process. Both the facilitator and participants should be aware that pushing particular outcomes early in the process at the expense of developing trusting interpersonal relationships between all participants will reduce the likelihood of obtaining commitments. All involved need to be aware that trust-building does not happen overnight, and may require considerable patience.

Signatures of partners

Partners should demonstrate their commitment to the actions under the Plan by signing the final document.

It's a good idea to have a big signing event to celebrate the achievement of finishing the plan and the hard work it entailed.

A suggested commitment for the partners to sign is:

> *"We, the undersigned, being partners in the attached plan, agree to undertake the actions specified in this plan and to implement the plan in a spirit of openness and active participation by all the partners."*

In projects where there are a large number of community participants, or even a whole community, the commitments should still be in writing and preferably given in the presence of their peers in a signing event

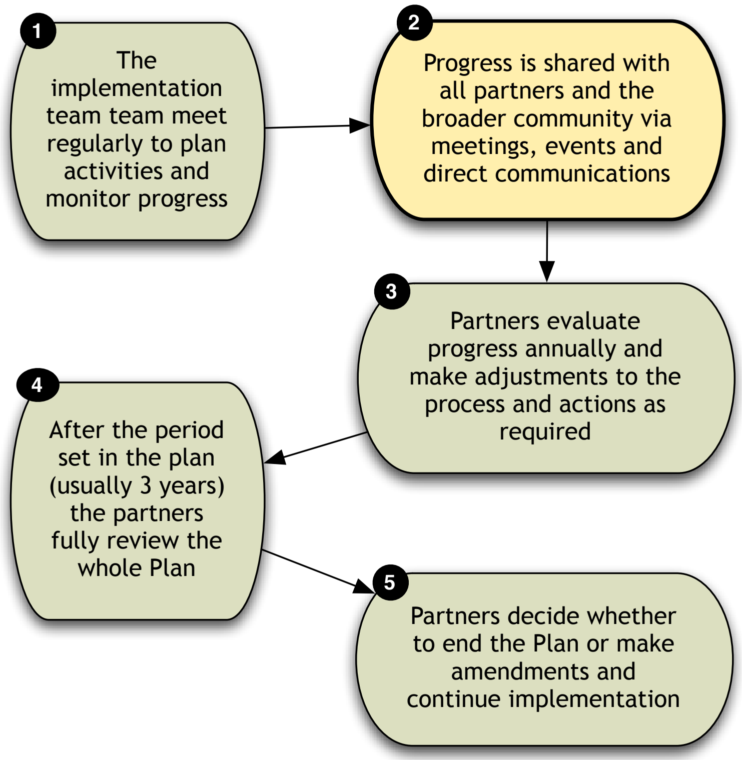
7) Launch the plan

The plan, with all commitments agreed to, is a major achievement that should be shared with the community.

Organising a launch event not only rewards the efforts of all concerned, it starts the process of engaging the community in the actions that will follow.

Stage 4: Acting and Monitoring

It's time to move from planning to action.



Stage 4: Shifting to action.

How your group proceeds is up to the group.

The key to implementation is the continued guidance of the working group, which should continue to meet regularly. The role of the working group is to consistently and systematically see through the implementation and monitoring process. There are five functions for the Working Group in this phase:

1) Monitoring progress

Working group meetings should include structured feedback and reflection on activities that have occurred since the last meeting. (See section on Evaluating your project).

2) Communication

On-going communication may be the core team's most important function. You have to provide regular feedback to:

- participants and partners;
- funders and gatekeepers;
- the broader community.

A newsletter or e-newsletter is a good idea. Make use of community notice boards. Don't forget to feed stories and photo opportunities to the local media.

3) Celebration

Make sure that people and efforts are recognised and rewarded.

4) Reviewing and amending the plan

Your plan should be a living document. It's important to amend objectives, targets and actions based on what you

learn from real experience. But don't forget to obtain the working group's consensus on any changes.

After the life of the plan (say, 3 years) it's time for a formal review. Ideally, this should involve high levels of community involvement. You may wish to consider using exactly the same processes you used to develop the plan - that way you will be combining reflection with developing a entirely new phase of the project.

5) Seeking funding

A good place to start looking for grant funding opportunities is the Australian Parliament's Guide to Community Grants at www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spgrants.htm

Other starting points are:

- your council's environment division;
- your council's community services division;
- your Catchment Management Authority.

Coordinating activities

Here is a checklist of hints and tips that may help getting your activities successfully implemented:

- [ ] Decide how the activities will be co-ordinated and who will take on those roles. It may be one person, a number of people or the whole group but you will need to be clear about it from the beginning.

- [ ] Starting small is OK as it is easier to build your confidence completing smaller projects than starting with something large or long term.
- [ ] Do you have enough people? How could you find helping hands?
- [ ] Find out where you can get support if you need it and utilise that support early.
- [ ] Develop a timeline for each activity with milestones along the way.
- [ ] Design some specific jobs that need doing to get the project started and link the assets within the group to each of these projects.
- [ ] If there are a number of activities, arrange for regular communication between all the groups to share stories and draw on each other's assets.
- [ ] Document the progress of activities.
- [ ] Be flexible and adaptable in your approach. Getting around and through barriers is a crucial part of the process.
- [ ] If in doubt about resources, just start anyway. The resources may appear once people see you are serious!

PART 3: BEING A FACILITATOR

Facilitation is a state-of-mind and a set of skills. Although both are best learnt through practice, this guide includes basic principles, processes and tools to keep in mind.

Keep in mind that your project must become self-facilitating over time. This means that sharing skills and experience in facilitation with members of the group. Hence this guide is not just for the facilitator - it's for everyone who partcipates.

The facilitator's role

Facilitation means 'to make easy'. Facilitation is the glue – sometimes invisible – that holds a group together. It's different from leadership, although good leaders are invariably good facilitators.

As a facilitator your role is to work with a group of equals to achieve change. You may be organising a community garden or a tree-planting day. The participants will be volunteers. They will all expect to be treated like competent, interested, motivated adults who have as much to say and offer as any 'leaders' or experts. They will include highly skilled and experienced people, as well as naïve and energetic ones. There may, inevitably, be one or two eccentrics or 'prophets'.

You will need to treat all these people with respect and provide structured avenues for their ideas and energy to make a difference to the work of the group.

A good facilitator is an 'introduction agency'. They bring people together, help personal relationships bud and nourish the human side of a project:

- They establish an atmosphere that supports respectful, informed, equal exchange and discussion.
- They take responsibility for monitoring the collective health and energy of the group.
- They ensure that efforts are rewarded and achievements celebrated.
- They help people work through conflict.
- They recognise burn-out and encourage exhausted people to move off the front line.
- They may do these things without being the obvious 'leader' of the group.

Facilitation can be quite subtle or shared between a number of people, yet when no one takes these responsibilities a group is doomed to a lot of conflict and frustration.

Most visibly, a facilitator organises meetings and activities. They create safe face-to-face encounters where real personal change can occur. Most importantly they create empowerment by bringing people together with common vision to experience success.

If you are a newcomer facilitation may seem rather intimidating. But the important thing is just to start. It's best learnt through practice.

Practically, a facilitator may take responsibility for:

1) Ensuring that venues are suitable, with disabled access, refreshments, toilets, shelter, access by public transport etc. The seating arrangement should encourage easy discussion.

2) Conducting introductions, presentations and ice-breaking exercises so people are put at ease.

3) Seeing that agendas are formed, agreed upon and stuck to, including time allocations for each item and realistic finishing times.

4) Making sure members are identified by name tags and frequent addressing by name.

5) Ensuring that other roles, e.g. chair, sub-facilitators, scribes, timekeeper, team or sub-committee leaders, are carried out.

6) Ensuring that all have an opportunity to speak and no one dominates discussions.

7) Maintaining focused discussion. Don't let the group be distracted. Move the agenda along so people don't feel time is being wasted.

8) Ensuring all decisions are actionable. That is, someone is allocated to perform each action by a certain deadline.

9) Offering a stimulating agenda, with inspiring speakers, brainstorms, mapping, small group discussions.

10) Optimistically summing up and setting the time for the next meeting or activity.

11) After the meeting, circulating the minutes, following-up and checking that decisions are acted upon.

Some desirable qualities of a facilitator

Here are some of the qualities which participants usually hope to find in a facilitator. No one is expected to perfect all these qualities: rather they are a model we can measure ourselves against as we learn to be better facilitators.

Believe in people
A facilitator should firmly hold the belief that an empowered group of people can 'change the world' and that the only real barrier is self-doubt.

Be energetic
The group takes its energy level from you, so keep it dynamic with lots of short sessions, plenty of variety, and regular time checks to keep people on their toes.

Listen
Learn to listen deeply and intently without interrupting. This is a core skill. A facilitator should aim for a listening to talking ratio of at least 2:1. Remember that discussions between participants are more important than discussions with you.

Be curious
Cultivate the ability to say 'now that *is* interesting'. Be genuinely interested in exploring ideas and seeing what new knowledge the group can create.

Be neutral about content
It's vital to be neutral about content. A facilitator must be a 'honest broker' without a hidden agenda - if you do have an agenda, explain it honestly at the start.

Be assertive about process
Plan the agenda carefully. Once the group has agreed on a process it's your job to shepherd the group to stay on track and on time, especially in the early phases of working together. Be assertive but not dominating.

Respect all participants
Never reject a contribution. Establish a comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere where all views are respected. Always welcome new or challenging ideas. Never dismiss 'left-of-field' ideas - they are the spice in the stew.

Help everyone participate
Monitor the discussion to make sure a few personalities don't dominate. Shift the focus to encourage those who are quiet.

Strive to create clarity
Be a sense-maker. Ask questions. Translate confusing ideas so all can understand. Demystify concepts. Dispel jargon.

Take the pulse
Constantly monitor the group's energy levels and intervene with breaks, energisers or variations in session length.

Know when to do nothing
When the group is running well, stand back, be quiet, and enjoy the show.

Be people-friendly
Your personal manner is important. Be warm, friendly, and enthusiastic. Enjoy yourself - it will be infectious.

Facilitation and leadership

Environmental groups often become unstuck over conflicting notions of leadership. ‘Leadership’ is not one person’s job. It’s something the whole team does. In fact the oft quoted definition of good leadership is that you know it’s happened when every member of the group is able to say ‘we did that’.

Centralised, directive, charismatic models of leadership are probably not suitable in any situation these days, but they are certainly wrong when dealing with environmental volunteers.

As a facilitator, your personal behaviour sets standards for the group. You can encourage healthy group leadership by modeling it in your own behaviour and rewarding it when appropriate.

Hence it’s worth keeping in mind the qualities of good leadership. This list is broadly adapted from Kouzes and Posner’s survey into hundreds of leadership situations.

An ideal leader:

- Is honest and open.
- Is willing to challenge the status quo and pioneer new approaches to doing things. Is an early adopter of innovation. Values experimentation and risk-taking.
- Is passionate, enthusiastic and optimistic.
- Is imaginative. Encourages other people to imagine. Builds other people’s ideas into an inclusive vision.
- Listens. Understands the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of the people they want to enlist.

- Is an enabler. Lets the people own the process. ‘We’ not ‘me’. Builds confidence. Delegates. Trusts people.
- Rewards creativity and initiative.
- Celebrates success.
- Loves people. Is kind. Puts the people before the vision.
- Is humble. They are there to serve and support.

Adapted from Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd edition, Jossey-Bass

Good leaders make supportive and rewarding environments where people can grow in the skills, knowledge and confidence required for their roles.

As you can see, these qualities could apply to every member of a team.

Tips for good facilitation

- Give your full attention to each speaker.
- Summarise conclusions at each stage.
- Celebrate each person’s contribution e.g. by positive comments, and applause.
- Monitor the mood and adjust the agenda to suit.
- Make it enjoyable. Have prizes. Have food.

Seven keys for entering a community

As a facilitator you will often be an outsider to the community you are working with. The Centre for Participative Change offers the following tips, with quotations from community organisers.

Starting to do organising work in a new community is always tricky. Every community has established networks of social, political and economic connections, and an outsider doesn't have a place in those networks. Many people are sceptical of outside assistance.

First, an organiser has to know, even before entering a community, three things: who you are, what you stand for, and what you're trying to do. The answers to those questions set the foundation for the majority of the conversations that you have once you enter a community.

(1) Start with a rock-solid belief in everyday people. Your entrance into a community should be upon a core belief that everyday people can come together to create positive change in their community.

"It's important who makes the change in a community. Is it us, as outsiders, or the people themselves? I believe that it has to be the people. So often people have no one who believes in them. And if I can be that one person to believe in somebody, it will help them believe in themselves. Because if they don't believe in themselves, change will not happen." - community organiser

(2) Find gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are folks who are well connected in the community, understand the project, and are willing to support and sanction the work. They understand the needs and opportunities of the community, and are trusted and respected by both grassroots leaders and formal decision-makers.

"It gives us so much credibility when I say, 'Yeah, we're new to working in this county, but we've been working for a while with Robin Mauney over at REACH, and she's on our board and she's been helping us. And Lisa Twiggs over at the Family Resource Center, she helped us put this thing together too.' That just gives people an automatic sense of ease, because Robin and Lisa have lots of connections and are trusted in the community."
- community organiser

(3) Find grassroots leaders. Grassroots leaders are indigenous, local, natural, informal leaders - as opposed to people who hold formal leadership positions in government or non profit groups. They are known by everyone, trusted by everyone, and respected as people who make things happen for the common good.

"Robin connected us to Wilma, and Wilma connected us to the rest of the community. Wilma knew who to bring together, and she did it." - community organiser

(4) Draw out people's experiences. When talking with grassroots leaders, a first step is to draw out the wisdom that people have gained through their life experiences.

"I think the job in the beginning is to bring out the experiences that people have already had as community leaders. You can reflect on what they already know, what they've already experienced. I use questions like, 'What worked, and why? What is your vision? What skills do you have?' " - community organiser

(5) Listen. To build relationships with people we have found that we need to remind ourselves to listen fully, deeply, and actively.

"Listening is one of the most powerful things an organiser can do. One woman I worked with, she said, 'You're the first person who has ever listened to what I had to say and taken it seriously.' That's a powerful thing. Asking people what they think, and really listening to them, is very powerful." - community organiser

(6) Find people who can connect grassroots groups with resources in existing systems (eg. government grants, economic development programs)

"We have found several people who work within the system, and who trust us, and who want to support local grassroots groups. And there are others who can provide future support. They may not be doing anything right now, but we need to keep them in the loop, and keep them involved." - community organiser

(7) Stay patient and confident. Bringing people together into a grassroots group is a very slow process. Understanding the pace of organising work, and staying patient even when things go slowly, gives us the confidence to keep working day-in and day-out.

"It's easy to get impatient and frustrated, and lose your confidence [but] you can't get frustrated and try to force things to happen too quickly in the community, because all of a sudden everybody will become 'too busy' to participate. You just have to let things unfold, and be patient. Every conversation, every phone call, and every meeting - they're all a part of organising. All those little things have to be seen as successes. That's what keeps me confident and motivated. You have to remember how slow the organising process is, and let that keep your confidence up when you're building the foundation." - community organiser

Adapted from *How to Enter a Community as an Organiser by* Paul Castelloe and Thomas Watson. Reproduced with kind permission from Center for Participatory Change, 2000

See www.cpcwnc.org/toolbox.html for the full document (it makes good reading).

The role of the facilitator in group development

Although all groups are different, some distinct stages of group development have been noted by researchers. They begin with 'getting started' and 'getting to work' followed by 'maturity' and 'ending' where the group has reached a point of fulfillment. This process has been referred to as forming, storming, norming/ performing and dorming.

A supportive facilitator helps a group to move through these stages. They help define a clear purpose, support the group in identifying action steps, and maintain motivation. Without facilitation and support a group may flounder midway, losing its enthusiasm. Loss of purpose can lead to conflict and division. The following table suggests the role of a facilitator at each stage.

Stage of group development	The facilitator's role
Forming stage • Lots of questioning about the purpose and tasks • Looking for leadership • Uncertainty about roles and appropriate norms of behaviour • Impatience for action	• Patiently explain purpose • Introduce people • Define common definitions • Set up structures e.g. how decisions will be made • Develop group vision and objectives • Establish leadership
Note: These preliminaries take patience but they minimise conflict later.	

Stage of group development	The facilitator’s role
Storming stage • Disagreement over goals and objectives and methods • Conflict between group members, jostling over leadership, formation of cliques • Withdrawal of some members • Frustration over lack of achievement of goals	• Reiterate purpose and goals; clarify definitions • Celebrate achievements however small. • Carry forward the processes that have been agreed on • Check on tasks. Reassign them if necessary and reviewing resource needs to carry them out. • Develop agreed ground rules for dealing with conflict. Mediate between personalities. • Possibly rotate the leadership to encourage involvement of other group members.
Note: This stage can be stormy. The facilitator must stay neutral and above conflict. Keep the overall purpose in mind and chart a patient course.	
Norming/performing stage • Group attendance is high and enthusiastic. • Tasks are being performed regularly. • Optimism about achievements.	Maintain the momentum by: • ensuring resource needs are met • celebrating achievements • learning from successes and failures.
The group can then go in one of two directions:	

Stage of group development	The facilitator’s role
A. Dorming or ending stage • The group purpose has been achieved, or • circumstances have changed and the group no longer continues.	• May require a redefinition of goals if the group wants to continue together, or • acknowledgment of achievements in order to leave participants with a positive experience of group work.
B. Independence • The group has a clear vision of the future and a real sense of purpose. • The group feels empowered to deal appropriately with issues, conflicts, resource needs and other changes as they emerge. • The group is innovative and moves from solving one problem to creating a desired future by identifying and tackling related issues. • The group has strong partnerships and networks with agencies and other groups. • Individuals in the group confidently reflect on and appraise their actions.	• The facilitator’s role reduces and the group does most of the day-to-day facilitation itself. However, an external facilitator may still: - assist the group to establish good networks with their community and beyond; - help the group undertake good evaluation of its process, outcomes and networks so they can learn from experience; - maintain a supportive environment for the group to try out ideas and take risks.

Adapted from Allen W., Kilvington, M., and Horn C., 2002 Using Participatory and Learning-Based Approaches, *Landcare Research*, New Zealand, p44

Steps in facilitating a session

Here are some steps to follow when facilitating a meeting or group session.

Before the day

1) Find out about the people and issues

Before you facilitate a group for the first time, find out about the people. What are their reasons for attending? Their hopes and expectations? Their 'hot issues', fears and concerns? What are their backgrounds? Experience levels? Ages and genders? Are there potential points of conflict?

2) Plan for a pleasant, stimulating environment

Organise the room so there is a sense of equality: not a lecture hall. Put the chairs in a circle or square. Remove barriers between yourself and the participants. Never stand on a stage.

Remember that a pleasant venue and good food are important ways to honour the time and energy of the participants.

Think about:

- [ ] name tags, someone to meet and greet;
- [ ] photo displays, art works;
- [ ] music, entertainment;
- [ ] acoustics, pleasant things to look at;

- [ ] food and drink.

3) Make a day plan

A high level of personal organisation is vital. All sessions should be carefully planned and paced. You should allocate times to each stage in the session (knowing that you may have to vary these on the day). All speakers should be carefully briefed about the purpose of the event and the interests of the audience.

Sketch out a step-by-step plan for the day, including introductions, breaks and energisers. Time each step.

Variety is important. Ideally, try for a mix of 20% inspiration, 20% information, 20% creative interaction, and 40% business.

The energy level is important. It's a good idea to divide the activities into short, sharp sessions of 2-10 minutes each and time them, using a bell or other method to give warnings as the end of the session approaches.

Breaks are important to allow chatting and networking, also to help people process what has been happening. Set generous break times, but also monitor energy levels and call a break if necessary. Use energisers after lunch (see TOOLS for examples of energisers).

Good things to aim for in your day plan are:

- a dynamic day with no dead time;
- lots of structured interaction;
- opportunities for participants to share their own stories;
- clear, succinct results at the end.

For small group work a good number per table is 6-8. Make sure you appoint a sub-facilitator and scribe for each table.

4) Think about your ground rules
This is especially vital where there is a potential for conflict. Ground rules are discussed on page 110.

5) List all your props (including prizes)
Make sure you've organised them to be there. See the Facilitator's Props checklist on page 107.

6) Confirm the venue and catering

7) If possible visit the venue
Make sure it's nice. Check the acoustics. Figure out the seating. Check equipment like the sound system, white board, digital projector and screen.

On the day

A facilitator's legitimacy is their most important asset. This legitimacy needs to be established at the start of the relationship. If the group is already well established, legitimacy can be passed to the facilitator by the group's legitimate leader or representative. However if it's a new group, then the facilitator should explictly ask for the group's permission to be their facilitator, and suggest limits to that role at the same time.

So, at the start of an event, the most legitimate person present should:

1) State the purpose of the day

That is, why we are here, what we aim to achieve.

2) Introduce the facilitator

This establishes your legitimacy.

Then, as facilitator, you take the floor and get to work:

3) Sketch a proposed plan for the day or session

The plan should list the activities, times and breaks. You should then seek consensus from the participants about this plan. "Here is a proposal for today's activities. How do you feel about it? Does it suit your needs?" Modify the day plan if appropriate.

4) Propose ground rules

Propose ground rules for the day and seek consent from participants. This will include clarifying your role as facilitator "As facilitator, my role will be to...". Ground rules are discussed in more detail below.

5) Participant introductions

Make sure the participants get to know each other. Always have a starter exercise where they introduce themselves to their neighbours and their expectations for the day (see TOOLS).

6) Your introduction

Introduce yourself, your background and interests. Sometimes it's good to state your personal agenda ie. what you want to get out of facilitating the group.

Remember to be relaxed and friendly - it will put others at ease.

7) Start the first session

Explain the steps clearly and slowly. Write the steps on a board, so people can check what stage they are at. Allow participants time to ask for clarification.

Remember to monitor how the group is traveling. Visit tables quietly every 5 minutes or so and watch the energy levels. If a table is having trouble or getting confused, or being dominated by one person, intervene to provide assistance.

If people need more time, vary the schedule to make it possible.

8) Ending a session

At the end of each session, sum up and celebrate the group's efforts (e.g. by applause).

9) Ending the event

• Review decisions and plans

• Thank everyone, and celebrate the collective efforts (e.g. by applause).

• The 'most legitimate person present' then gives a commitment to act on what has been heard. They must clearly state 'what will happen next'. *This is essential*.

• Agree on time and place for the next meeting

10) The start of the next event

• Bring people up to date (and celebrate recent successes)

Tips for good facilitation

• Where your eyes go is important. Make frequent eye contact around the room. Don't just stare into the air or at your notes.

• Take your time. Pause frequently. Don't rush – that spreads anxiety.

• Learn people's names - and use name tags to help. Refer to people by name when asking questions. If you refer to a point made by a participant, acknowledge them by name.

The facilitator's props

- [ ] Butchers' (flipchart) paper
- [ ] Whiteboard markers, texta pens
- [ ] Prizes
- [ ] Camera
- [ ] Attendance sheet
- [ ] Evaluation sheets
- [ ] Name tags
- [ ] Bluetack, masking tape, bulldog clips, scissors
- [ ] Sticky coloured dots or stars
- [ ] Coloured cards or A4 sheets
- [ ] Personal emergency kit: flu tablets, painkillers

Tips to get the creative juices flowing

One of the most valuable things about group work is getting people to think creatively about possibilities that they hadn't thought of before. Some good ways to stimulate creative juices are:

- Games and energisers. Physical activity and a degree of chaos are great for stimulating the synapses.
- The unexpected. Surprise people with a wildcard: a performance, a comedian, a Playback theatre event. [3]
- Inspiring speakers. There is nothing quite as empowering as hearing from another group that's been in the same situation and triumphed.
- A photographic display with examples of the area in the past and present: "as it was" and "as it is".
- Video of other successful projects or local material (10 mins max for video).
- Supply a camera and pass it around to participants during the day/meeting so that they can take part in documenting the process.
- Use a talking stick (or some quirky object). Pass it around from one participant to another to symbolise the process of giving each person time to speak exclusively.

[3] Playback theatres are found around Australia. They do spontaneous, improvised storytelling on any subject and are a fabulous resource for stimulating engagement and (surprisingly enough) evaluation.

- Use visual arts. If you have a visual artist in your group, ask if they might paint a canvas during the day/meeting to which anyone participating can contribute ideas. Share stories about the community amongst the group from the past and present.

Setting ground rules

Every group needs ground rules to ensure that members are comfortable, interact easily, work well together, and deal with conflict.

Ground rules should be agreed at the start of a session. As a facilitator it's your job is to suggest ground rules for discussion, negotiate them with the group, and obtain the group's consent.

If you think there is a potential for conflict, setting ground rules is especially important.

Here are some examples:

Rules for civility

- Every person has the right to voice his or her opinion.
- Respect all contributions – no interruptions please.
- All speakers must go through the facilitator in order to ensure decorum.
- Positive contributions only.
- Statements to be backed by reasons.
- No personal attacks.
- Confidentiality (if relevant).

Rules for decision-making

Decisions can be made by strict meeting rules, informal majority, or consensus. Who should be included? What decisions require notice? When should the agenda be sent out?

Rules for sharing and providing information

All information should be available on request to all participants. As much information as possible should be provided openly at meetings, in briefing kits and information sheets.

(Remember that more than two months should pass without updates being sent to members, whether they attend meetings or not. And media releases don't count as updates).

Rules for making public statements

You need to decide who can speak for the group and how they consult with members before public statements are made. You might want to agree that no one can discuss in public the views of other participants.

Rules for dealing with conflict

If you sense a meeting may be 'hot', then start by asking for authority from the group to control it (see Dealing with conflict below).

There are plenty of internet resources on ground rules. Try these search terms: 'setting ground rules conflict' and 'conflict resolution'.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict and tension can be good things. They tell you that people are passionately engaged.

Unaddressed conflict can be destructive. Let it come out. It's important to hear and respond to conflict, not have it simmering below the surface.

But never take sides in a conflict. That will wreck your authority.

As facilitator, you can obtain the group's authority to manage conflict by setting ground rules in advance. If you sense a meeting may be 'hot', then commence the meeting by asking for authority from the group to limit negative 'baggage dumping', to ban personal attacks, and if necessary to move the conflict to another time and place. You should specify that people may disagree with ideas, but not with the people who express them.

If ground rules are broken or you are personally challenged, be calm and assertive, refer back to ground rules for your authority, and if it continues ask the group for a ruling.

Once people 'get it off their chest' the raw emotion is often defused. But don't let it rest - there may be issues that need to be faced. Ask aggrieved individuals for a clear statement of the problem without (if possible) specifically blaming other people. Spend time examining the argument to find out what the underlying issues are (the ORID method is very good for this - see TOOLS). Often people have common values (they care about similar things) and the dispute is really about ways to achieve them, about misunderstandings, or about a sense of disempowerment.

If important issues emerge, for instance over leadership styles, policies or goals, ask the group for a ruling. In this way conflict can drive valuable improvements in group norms, policies and practices.

An excellent guide for negotiating conflicting interests can be found at: www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/getting_organised/people/negtkt.html

Running satisfying meetings

Enjoyable and efficient meetings make people happy and create confidence that the project is on track and productive. This section gives guidance on running effective, satisfying meetings.

Tips for running great meetings

Be purposeful. Meet for a good reason and aim to get a clear result.

Give plenty of notice. Circulate the agenda and drafts of documents 1-2 weeks before a meeting so people have time to read them, digest them, and have an informed discussion.

Have a great agenda. Aim for an agenda that is dynamic, varied and well timed, but also has flexibility to respond to the group's needs. And don't pack the agenda: be realistic about what can be achieved (or people may feel steamrollered).

Give clear navigation directions. Start by clearly reminding people what stage they are up to in the process. It can be complex and good directions avoid confusion.

Make it interesting. If all you do is plough through business items, people will eventually lose interest and membership will flag. Include a high point in every meeting: an inspiring speaker, a prize or celebration, a debate or role play.

Shift boring bits off-agenda. Consider having an executive team meet separately to despatch the boring agenda items before the main meeting. But make sure the whole group agrees on what is dealt with this way.

Make it pleasing. Have food and drink. Choose a nice venue. Pay attention to the lighting and acoustics. Do you need a sound system so all can hear?

Make it accessible. Think about convenient times and locations, child care, wheelchair access, and public transport.

Make it friendly. Welcome each participant. Use name tags. Set the chairs in a semi-circle to encourage interaction.

Make in interactive. Don't let people just sit there. Some are just dying to speak. Others are shy but have great ideas. Put decisions to the group. Let the group amend the agenda at the start. Create plenty of opportunities for decision-making during the meeting. Create structured opportunities for discussion, including pairs and small facilitated groups where people will be more at ease. Above all, help people talk to each other. Remember the group has to bond.

End well. Summarise clearly at the end. Thank all. Say what will happen next and give crisp commitments to follow-up.

End on time. Be realistic about what you can fit into an agenda. People hate meetings that drone on forever.

Follow up. Following up a great meeting is just as important as the meeting itself. Call those who were expected but didn't show and give them the highlights. Make sure that commitments made at the meeting are carried out.

Evaluate. Make sure you gather feedback from participants:

- use an evaluation form (see TOOLS);

- use the Dart Board method (see TOOLS);
- delegate team members to ask for informal feedback from participants over tea at the end of the meeting.

Then get together with your coordination team (see Roles page 17). Ask what worked? Why? What didn't work? What could you do differently?

Getting people to come

If you want people to come to meetings you have to:

a) develop a reputation for holding fascinating, enjoyable meetings; and

b) you have to give them plenty of notice; and

c) you have to ask them!

Seattle City's guide for great meetings offers this advice to ensure that people actually attend meetings:

> "As a rule, people don't respond to just a mailing, a poster or a notice in a newspaper, although each is helpful in notifying or reminding people of an upcoming meeting. The only sure-fire way of getting people to an event is to talk to them - directly.
>
> "For membership events, a written notice or invitation should be mailed far enough in advance so people can make plans to attend.
>
> "Two weeks is about the minimum. One week before the meeting, follow-up with a personal phone call. Talk to people about what's on the agenda and the expected highlights of

> the meeting. If controversial issues are being debated, let people know about the issues so they can come prepared (as the coordinator, you will also gain a better sense of how people are feeling about the issue). A day or two before the meeting, call back those people who said they plan to attend and those who were undecided. Keep track of those who say they will attend."
>
> - from The City of Seattle neighbourhoods website

Consensus decision-making

Decisions should be based on consensus rather than majority vote. Consensus means: the agreement of all the players.

Consensus is preferred because all participants need to buy into the result. Consensus requires respect for every participant's ideas, opinions, and suggestions. Consensus is much more likely when participants have helped craft the process. The facilitator's role is to share decision-making about the process, to create a safe atmosphere for discussion, to identify areas of commonality, and help the group move forward through an organised set of steps to reach agreement.

This method of decision making is time consuming and should not be rushed. A series of meetings will probably be necessary to obtain consensus on controversial subjects.

Building skills is vital

Few partners will have been involved in such a collaborative planning exercise before. All will need skilling up to make the project more effective. Experience shows that a working group benefits greatly from training in:

- strategic planning;
- communication, marketing and media management;
- facilitation and team skills;
- information on agency responsibilities and activities;
- technical and ecological knowledge.

This can be done by having guest speakers, trainers or presentations by partners.

These skill building sessions can either be short presentations/ discussions during normal meetings, or longer training-style workshops.

How long between meetings?

A sense of drive and urgency is important. Equally importantly, it's important not to overburden busy people. The partners should probably meet about once per month, as they are busy people with plenty of other responsibilities. Smaller working parties or sub-committees can meet more regularly.

If, for some reason, more than 6 weeks passes without a meeting, there should be some direct communication (letter,

email or phone call) to partners to ensure they feel engaged in a dynamic project.

Meeting etiquette for participants

A good meeting is everyone's responsibility. That means you!

It's time to suspend self-interest and personal agendas to contribute to a wonderful collective effort.

- Contribute, be courageous and responsive. Speak up and support points of view that you agree with. Don't sit silently and let good ideas wither for lack of support.
- Be accepting and tolerant of differing points of view.
- Be positive. Build on others' ideas, don't wreck them.
- Listen to what people say and respond intelligently. Don't just wait for them to finish so you can continue your single track.
- Don't hog people's attention. Remember that being listened to is a gift from your audience. Respect it.
- Be courteous.

More on great meetings

There are plenty of good meeting guides on the internet. Just put 'great meetings' into any search engine. This chapter was partly based on:

How to Run a Good Meeting by Craig White, Center for Participatory Change at www.cpcwnc.org/Toolbox/tbxmeeting.html

The City of Seattle's *Great Meetings!* at www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/pubs/meets.pdf

Engaging the broader community

Reaching out to the neighbouring community and other interested stakeholders should be a vital part of your project.

Outside of the committed working group of core partners there is a wider circle of people who can make a difference or have an interest at stake. For example, if the 'problem' is a polluted creek, then virtually everyone who lives or works in the catchment has a stake in the solution.

This broader community should be engaged during at least the following stages:

- deciding what problem should be tackled;
- analysing the causes of the problem and likely solutions;
- developing the vision;
- reviewing the draft Vision and Objectives Statement
- reviewing the draft plan.

There should also be regular updates to the community on progress, both while developing the Plan, and during the implementation.

'Engagement' is a catch-all term for communicating with and actively involving this larger community.

Engagement may range from 'informing' the public through media stories and newsletters, though to 'empowering' them at the core of group decision-making.

The Spectrum of Engagement is a good thinking tool for understanding the different types of engagement. It proposes five categories of interaction between an organisation and its community. The art of engagement is about choosing a level of engagement that meets your community's needs and expectations.

The Spectrum of Public Participation

	Purpose	Promise	Methods
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and solutions.	We will keep you informed.	• Media stories • Newsletters • Flyers
Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	• Stalls • Focus groups • Consultative meetings • Surveys

	Purpose	Promise	Methods
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure your issues and concerns are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	• Workshop and forums (fixed agenda)
Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommend-ations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	• Workshop, forums, advisory committees (open agenda)
Empower	To place final decision-making power in the hands of the public	We will implement what you decide.	• Delegated decision-making: task forces, action groups

Source: International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org.au

It’s important to choose a mix of methods so that members of the public can be engaged at a level that suits their needs and level of interest.

Keep in mind that the higher levels of engagement (e.g. involve, collaborate and empower):

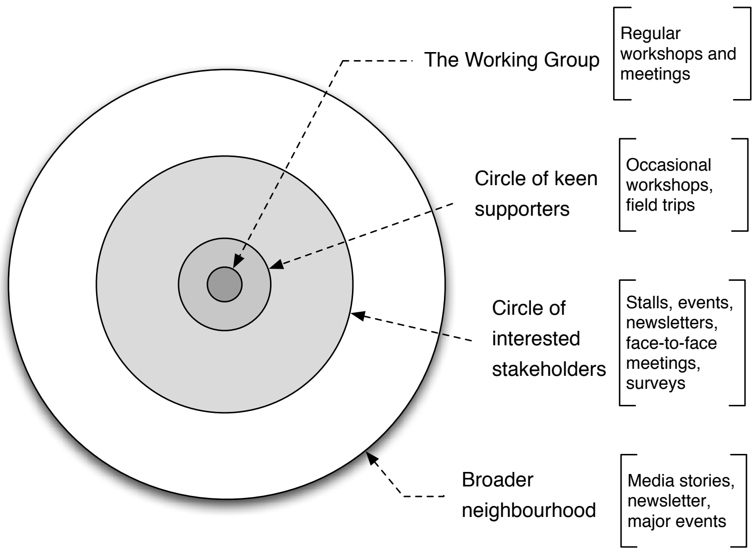
- result in more creative solutions by engaging diverse brains in problem-solving discussions;
- elicit the greater levels of ‘ownership’ and commitment;
- increase the level of public trust in the project; and
- are better at gathering in-depth information and historical memories from the public.

However higher levels of engagement also place increased responsibilities on the organisers to make honest promises about how the information will be used and to provide on-going feedback.

As a rule, higher levels of engagement should be matched by similar levels of feedback and on-going involvement. For instance, members of the public who participate in a planning workshop should be kept informed by a newsletter or personal letters, and an offer to attend a face-to-face feedback session, rather than simply reading about it in a newspaper.

Shaping your engagement strategy

It’s good to imagine your engagement strategy as an onion – with the working group at the centre.



A sound strategy should have something for everyone, including those who wish to offer their skills and ideas.

Remember that community engagement is not just an ‘instrumental act’ to gather information for your plan. It has a strongly ethical dimension. It is part of the spirit of the collaborative project to be open, inclusive and celebratory. High, respectful levels of community engagement build the public’s confidence and sense of community – essential ingredients in solving complex environmental problems.

Who is a 'stakeholder'?

Not everyone likes this term, but it is a useful catch-all for 'any person with an interest in the outcome of the project', including individual citizens and organised groups of any kind.

The problem with the term is that it tends to exclude important interests: the environment itself, future generations, disinterested local experts, and keen citizens who may have no direct interest in the issue but care about their communities.

When using the term 'stakeholders', therefore, it's a good idea to interpret the term as widely as possible: for instance as 'anyone who could be affected by the outcome or could make a difference'.

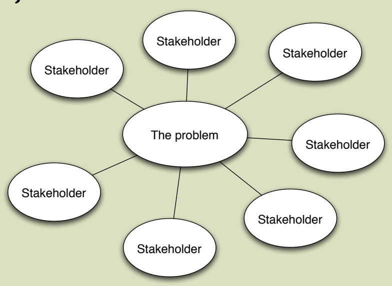
Stakeholder mapping

You can easily map the potential stakeholders in a BRAINSTORM based on two focus questions:

"Who can influence a successful outcome?" and

"Who has to live with the consequences of the problem or solution?"

You can capture the results in a mud map.



The principle of Respect

There is one overarching principle in making community engagement work. That is the principle of RESPECT. Engagement should always be respectful.

For instance, the time and energy people willingly volunteer for your project should be honoured by honest, open, regular feedback and opportunities to stay involved. People will be keen to know what has happened as a result of their efforts and you should be proactive in getting this information out to them. Failure to do so can result in feelings of betrayal, distrust and cynicism.

The Success Factors checklists below provide good guidance on making engagement respectful.

CHECKLIST: Success factors for respectful engagement

A) QUALITIES OF INTENTION

- [ ] **Agency commitment:** Are the sponsor and partners genuinely committed to the community engagement process?
- [ ] **Framing:** Does the process focus on issues the community believes to be at stake? Does the process focus on the common good? (Rather than simply agency needs)
- [ ] **Meaningful:** Is the purpose clear?

- [ ] **Shared decision-making:** Will you start the process early, without set ideas in advance? (either 'a blank sheet' or an honest disclosure of any constraints)

- [ ] **Preliminary research:** Have you had initial discussions with local players and residents to ensure you understand local issues and perceptions?

- [ ] **Representation:** Do the participants represent all relevant players, including minority interests (youth, indigenous, non-English speaking background, disabled)?

B) QUALITIES OF PROCESS
(especially for higher levels of engagement)

- [ ] **Access:** Is there physical access at times and places that suit the participants?

- [ ] **Responsiveness:** Can the participants genuinely influence the agenda, process and timeline? Will participants' requests for more information be met, or reasons given? Will minutes be taken? Will people see their words in print?

- [ ] **Neutrality:** Is there a skilled, neutral facilitator? (An independent facilitator is especially important where there is potential for conflict.)

- [ ] **Relationships:** Will the ground rules facilitate respect, openness, honesty, understanding, listening and trust? Will the process build better personal relationships (an 'extended family')? Will it be fun? Will there be food?

- [ ] **Depth of analysis:** Will the process go beyond assertions and try to empirically verify facts? Can the process commission new research? Will the process reflect on the values underlying the discussion? Do participants have to give reasons for their assertions?

- [ ] **The facilitator:** Is the facilitator enthusiastic and approachable?

- [ ] **Honouring commitments:** Will you be specific about your commitments and follow through (or explain why not)?

- [ ] **Visible results:** Will something observable happen as a result of the process?

Tip: Communication must be regular enough so that people feel they are in touch with a living project eg. no more than 8 weeks between events, personal contacts or media events.

Getting media coverage

Getting media coverage is an important part of the facilitator/coordinator's role. Positive media stories are essential to increase the status and credibility of your project in the eyes of the public and institutional stakeholders.

Remember that councils and government agencies have their own professional media and event management staff who can provide good advice or share their skills with the working group. Don't be shy in asking for their assistance.

Many events and activities associated with your project will provide excellent media opportunities. The biggest of these are when you launch your proposal or plan. At these times you have a great opportunity to get the Minister for the Environment, celebrities or other VIPs to attend your event. The advantages of this are that you will improve your attendance numbers at the event, get greater media coverage and will therefore get greater profile for your project and your community.

Note: If you want to get a government minister involved in an event you should contact the minister's office as early as possible before the event.

Here are some general points to keep in mind:

Aim to build good media relations

Put time into developing good working relationships with journalists, editors, chiefs of staff and news directors who are likely to cover your project. That way they'll get to know your issue and be more likely to see you as a credible source.

These are the people to target with your phone call and follow-up media release.

Find out their deadlines. Don't be afraid to call and introduce yourself. Stay in regular contact and offer them interesting items of insider information. Don't be afraid to offer exclusives.

Remember journalists are busy, hard-working people. They work under pressure and, like normal mortals, get frazzled close to deadlines. The easier you can make their jobs, the better your relationship will be.

Do your homework and be well prepared. Present them with a good story, simply and succinctly, and you're at the start of a fine relationship.

Journos can misquote you and get things wrong. Personal contact is a way to make sure they are clear on the important issues. Most journalists will not read you their story before it's published, but if there is something very sensitive or potentially damaging in the story, ring them anyway and try to check if they've got it right.

If a journo does a good job, ring and thank him or her. It will help build your relationship.

It's all about the story

It's your job to give journalists a good story.

Knowing how journalists and editors define a good story is a vital part of being an effective media manager.

Mostly, journalism is a conventional business and a good story is defined in conventional ways. To be acceptable to journalists your story should aim to:

Report a real event

News is active. It depends on actual events and happenings. The event must be recent and preferably unreported. That is, someone must do something today. This is called ‘breaking news’. Journalists never run old stories.

Launches and public events are good ways to obtain media coverage.

If there is a fish kill or a toxic spill or a visit by dignitaries, then move quickly and put out a media statement with your group’s position.

If nothing has happened lately it may be necessary to create an event in order to get your story told!

Have a photo opportunity

There is a often a lot of competition for the news pages. The stronger your photo opportunity, the greater the chance of getting covered. Think drama: people collecting dead fish is more dramatic than people talking about dead fish.

Have a human focus

‘Pesticides kill frogs’ might sound like a good story, but a better story is: ‘Locals expose pesticide link to frog deaths’. That is, someone doing something.

The human element is vital and the central drama of a good story should be the experiences, joys, tribulations, triumphs, discoveries or views of actual people.

Have a strong ‘angle’

Here are a few typical story angles to keep in mind:

- local heroes named;
- genuinely novel, surprising or amazing discoveries or facts;
- progress with an unexpected, original or innovative solution;
- they said it couldn’t be done;
- locals working together;
- heart-warming involvement of kids or animals (photos essential).

Be credible

You need hard proof. Assertions without supporting evidence won’t cut it with journalists or their readers and viewers. Suspicions, opinions and hearsay are not ‘stories’.

You need to build your story around a ‘smoking gun’: an eye witness interview, an official report, a new scientific study, photographs, an independent expert, a respected commentator.

The exception to this rule is anything said by senior politician, celebrity or business mogul. This generally constitutes a ‘good story’ without the need for supporting evidence.

This section is adapted from *Working the Media*, a short, easy guide to using the media. It can be downloaded in full from: http://media.socialchange.net.au/people/les/Working_the_media.pdf

Evaluating your project

Evaluation is one of the key functions of the working group during the implementation phase.

Your project must be able to tell its story to the community and supporters for four reasons:

- accountability to funders, supporters and the community;
- learning, so the steering group can effectively manage and improve the project;
- celebration, so success and commitment can be rewarded;
- to obtain grants.

Evaluating involves measuring progress and making judgements: either something worked as expected or it didn't work as expected. When you find something didn't work as expected, you have an opportunity to learn. Unexpected results, either higher or lower than expected, are the learning opportunities because they tell us we need to reconsider our assumptions.

A monitoring and evaluation strategy is about planning in advance how to collect the evidence you need to tell your story and improve your decisions.

As facilitator you play a central role in ensuring this evidence is gathered. Keep in mind that there are two kinds of evidence:

1) *Qualitative:* photos, anecdotes, quotes, endorsements, and media stories. This is compelling evidence. You should be conscientious about ensuring this type of evidence is collected and preserved from every activity.

You should have:

- a day-book or project diary, where you collect quotes, stories and notes;
- a folder for collecting media clippings;
- a camera (and someone delegated to record every event).

2) *Quantitative*: this consists of statistics. Easily accessible statistics include surveys, activity records, and head counts. The tools included at the back of this guide should help statistical evaluation of progress.

Understanding evaluation

Evaluation is easier if you visualise an evaluation framework or 'log frame'. [4]

Look carefully at the framework below. Note there are three levels: vision outcomes, objective outcomes, and activity outputs.

Level	Indicator	Method of measurement
Vision (longer term outcomes)		
Objective (short term outcomes)		
Action (immediate outputs)		

Basic evaluation framework or 'log frame'

4 Log frame is short for 'logical framework'. Use 'log frame' as an internet search term to learn more about this important approach.

Now look at a detailed version of the same framework. Note the differing time frames for reviewing data and making your assessments at each level. Also note the choice of indicators and methods that are relatively easy to apply.

What you are evaluating		*Indicators*	*Methods*
Vision outcomes Progress towards the vision for the desired 'resource condition' Time scale for assessment: **3-10 years**	Progress towards a beautiful, healthy natural Shady Creek that we can all be proud of and use with safety	Improved water quality	Review trends in WaterWatch data
		Improved biodiversity	Stream corridor assessment survey by Bushcare Group
		Improved community pride in Shady Creek	Community survey

This first level shows how you could evaluate progress towards your vision. Note that vision outcomes are longer term outcomes and you would probably not expect to see meaningful improvements over the first 3 years of your project. Vision evaluation is not discussed in this guide. However, as you can see from the indicators and methods, it can be quite straightforward.

Important: avoid confusing vision outcomes and objective outcomes. Most vision outcomes are longer term *changes in the* *condition of a resource*. Objective outcomes, as you can see below, are the more immediate results of *changes to management systems*. They are easier to measure and what your project should be all about.

What you are evaluating		*Indicators*	*Methods*
Objective outcomes The results of management activities that contribute to the vision outcome Time scale for assessment: **1-3 years**	1) Increase community pride and use of creek for passive recreation	Increased community use and valuing of creek	Community survey by steering group (benchmark and annual)
	2) Restore native plant communities	Length of creek with restored riparian vegetation	Annual figures from CMA monitoring
	3) Reduce pollution load in stormwater discharge	Number of litter items entering creek from stormwater discharge	Litter counts by waterwatch group
	4) Shop owners, council work together to improve behaviour standards at shopping strip	Decreased litter in shopping strip	Litter count by council officers

What you are evaluating	*Indicators*	*Methods*
Activity outputs What you actually did Time scale for assessment: **per activity (eg. 1-3 months)**	*Human measures:*	
	Number of workshops or events	Log book
	Number of participants in various activities	Count heads, record in log book
	Satisfaction of participants; Personal changes	Participant feedback tools
	Physical measures:	
	Number of trees planted; area revegetated; area of willows removed	Record in log book
	Number of bags of rubbish collected	Record in log book
	Dollar equivalent of in-kind support	Record contributions in log book

Choose indicators that are achievable

Make sure your indicators are within the capacity of your project to affect. Water quality, for instance, is a notoriously problematic indicator. It is strongly affected by long-term changes in social norms, land uses and weather cycles. You will rarely be able to measure changes in water quality during the duration of a project (e.g. 3 years). Such changes are often generational and are best measured over decades.

Choose indicators that are easy to measure

Specific physical changes like revegetating a creek corridor, or changes to the practices and policies of managers, or changing community attitudes are relatively easy to measure. Achieving these changes should be the central purpose of your project. To monitor these changes you will often need to benchmark the current state and make an annual survey or data collection to report improvements which have occurred.

Outcome monitoring is valuable to give partners confidence that progress is occurring towards the vision. If, on the other hand, you see little action, it's a message you need to explore the barriers preventing players from acting on their commitments, and develop more appropriate actions.

Making judgements

Evaluation is more than collecting information. You need to make judgements about what the information means.

A superficial evaluation may focus on deciding whether or not the project was 'successful'. That's an important thing to decide because it builds the confidence of participants, funders and

partners. However a more important question is "What could this data be telling us about improving our strategy, tactics and assumptions?"

It's important to sit down as a group and discuss what the data could be telling you about your assumptions. What could it be telling you about:

- the interests and motivations of different players?
- the effectiveness of your methods and tactics?
- the relevance of your objectives?
- the effectiveness of your evaluation methods?

A change project is based on a host of assumptions. The best use of evaluation is to continually test and improve your assumptions and then ask "What should we do differently?". This is called 'action learning' or 'adaptive management'.

Tip: Don't make a meal of collecting evaluative data. The right amount of data is the least necessary to make a reasonable judgment.

Thinking about evaluation: Paul Bullen's Rules of Thumb

According to Australian community management consultant, Paul Bullen, evaluation is the process of asking and answering questions about worthwhileness:

- Is something worthwhile happening?
- Could something more worthwhile be happening?

Bullen believes there are no value free evaluations. Worthwhileness implies values. A key question in any evaluation is therefore: Whose values will be used to judge the worth of what is happening?

His rules of thumb for rigour include:

- Use collaborative reflection and dialogue methods
- Listen to people's experiences
- Collect facts and figures
- Ask different people the same things
- Involve people with contrary views.

A key evaluation question is: Given the nature of the change we are evaluating, are we collecting sufficient information to convince a reasonable person about the worth of our project?

More: see www.mapl.com.au

Setting out your monitoring and evaluation plan

Since your objectives and actions are already SMART they should be easy to measure and evaluate. To develop an evaluation plan you simply need to identify who will measure them, when by, and who will receive feedback.

The plan can be set out as a matrix. Here is a model you may like to follow.

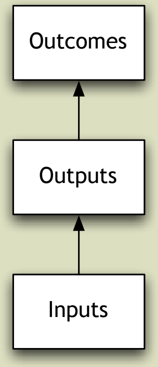
Columns to put in your monitoring and evaluation plan:

Objective /action	Indicat'r	Method	Target(s)	Who measures	When	Who will receive feedback and how
Reveg. Shady Creek banks	Length of creek reveget-ated	Stream corridor survey	• 300m of lower reaches of Shady Creek within 1 year. • 1000m within 3 years.	Bushcare Group	Annual in Nov	Key Friends: • News-letter story Creek neighbrs: • Letter drop

Here are some columns to add later, to assist making your evaluation based on the results.

Results	*Expected or unexpected?*	*If unexpected, what could it mean?*	What should we do differently?

Inputs, outputs vs outcomes



An important distinction in evaluation is between inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Inputs are the resources you use: effort, money and skills.

Outputs are the tangible activities undertaken by the group to achieve its goals. The immediate responses to those activities (e.g participation by the public) are also considered to be outputs.

Inputs and outputs are easy to measure but don't tell you much about your effectiveness.

Outcomes are the effects on society or the environment of the outputs. Outcomes are often unpredictable since they depend on your assumptions and on numerous external factors. There are always both intended and unintended outcomes. Unintended or unexpected outcomes are learning opportunities.

Action learning: the power of the unexpected

Remember to make time to review progress - both while making your plan and while implementing it.

Don't just 'accept a report' from a player and move on. It's important to facilitate your group to do *action learning*. This requires you to facilitate a genuine curiosity about cause and effect. If a partner reports that only a few people attended a public meeting, it's important to understand possible reasons and draw lessons from them.

But don't just interrogate partners - that will create paranoia and bad feeling. Instead aim to facilitate a regular 'action learning' session at each meeting - in which all participate.

The ACTION LEARNING TOOL provides a simple format for collaborative sessions where all members can assess progress and draw lessons (see TOOLS).

You can achieve amazing insights by looking for unintended or unexpected outcomes. For instance, if a public meeting is packed out, don't just pat yourselves on the back (well, it's OK to do that). Ask: what could this fact tell you about the community's concerns and attitudes? Perhaps they are willing to get more actively involved than you thought? Perhaps there a hot community issue you need to explore more?

Hence the three most important action learning questions are: 'What was unexpected?', 'What could it mean?' and 'What should we do differently as a result?'

Monitoring the human dimension of your project

Your project is a kind of human organism - you'll need ways to take its temperature and assess its health. The success of a project depends on partners and participants enjoying their involvement and remaining optimistic about their ability to achieve change.

1. Evaluating meetings and events

A head count of participants is important, but it's equally important to have photos, statements and figures that demonstrate the satisfaction, energy and enthusiasm of the group.

This guide includes two meeting evaluation tools which let you track how satisfying and 'on target' your meetings and events are (see TOOLS).

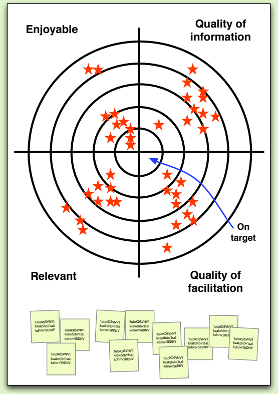
2. Exploring 'how we changed'

Another dimension is to demonstrate how the project has changed the individuals who participated. This can be done by using the REFLECTIVE APPRAISAL TOOL (see TOOLS). Performed in pairs, this is an insightful learning exercise for participants. It also allows you to track and celebrate the personal changes that are inspired by the project. It can be used at intervals during the project.

How Angelsea targeted better meetings

The Angelsea NEIP group set up a mock dart board at the back of the room. The centre was marked 'exceeded expectations' and the outside margin was marked 'missed the mark'. It was divided into 4 segments: enjoyment; relevance; quality of info; and quality of facilitation.

Participants were supplied with 4 coloured stars to stick on the board at the end of the meeting. The facilitator would also ask people to discuss why they put them where they did and what ideas they had for improving the sessions.



Participants were also given Post-it Notes to stick on the Board in answer to three questions: 'Why didn't you score it 10/10?' 'Why didn't you score it 1/10?' and 'What should be different next time?'

At the next meeting, the team put up a poster listing all the changes they had made to the meetings as a result of the feedback. As a result participants were part of designing the way the meetings were run.

Thanks to Geoff Brown for this story, and the Post-it note idea. The Dart Board idea was created by Dr Jess Dart: thanks for her kind permission to include it here.

3) Monitoring the spirit of your project

It's vital to be able to tell the story of the human side of a project. In some ways it is the most important story of all. Politicians, funders and members of the public are all strongly influenced by evidence that a project has engendered enthusiastic community support: it's a key definition of 'success'.

Ideally participants should believe their project is:

- ☐ visionary, inspiring, enjoyable and rewarding
- ☐ achievable
- ☐ driven by all partners
- ☐ open and participatory
- ☐ flexible
- ☐ locally relevant

The PROJECT APPRAISAL TOOL allows participants to assess whether the project is staying true to this spirit (see TOOLS).

PART 4:

JUST-IN-TIME TOOLS

A collection of facilitation tools and processes suited to collaborative projects.

Introductions

Exercises to set people at ease and help relationships bud

Get to know

A simple get-to-know for a group of strangers.

Time: 10-20 mins

Steps:

Ask people to form pairs.

Partners take turns asking each other about:

- their name,
- their work,
- their reason for coming to the workshop, and
- one unexpected fact about themselves.

Alternatively, you could ask pairs to find out each others' favourite music, film, animal etc.

Each person reports to the room on what their partner told them.

The 'unexpected facts' usually break the ice nicely, and remind us of the mystery and wonder of human life.

Our path to here

This is a good team forming activity for a group that will have to work together over time.

Time: 1-2 hours, depending on the size of the group

Steps:

Form pairs.

Each person shares three personal formative experiences from their life that led them to be here, now in this room.

Then form into groups of 4 to 6 and discuss the experiences you had in common. As a group, choose 3 favourites experiences. (15 minutes)

In your groups, plan how to present the three experiences as 'freeze frames'. That is, all 4-6 people together figure out how to form a series of three different tableaus which represent the experiences. It's a bit like charades, except you do it in groups, and each picture is a still life. (30 minutes)

The groups present their tableaus. The audience close their eyes and only open them while each frame is 'frozen'.

This is lots of fun, helps people bond, and, shows how diverse life experiences can nevertheless underscore common values.

Alternative options:

"What in an passionate about is..."

“What I want to change in this community is...”

"What makes me hope is..."

To add zest: offer a prize for the most inspiring tableau.

Bicycle chain

This is a dynamic way for members of a large group to get to meet each other quickly.

Time: 5-10 mins

Steps:

Form two straight lines facing each other.

Each pair greets each other and says a few words.

Individuals then move off in opposite directions (eg. each turns to their right) and greet the next person, and so on until all are met.

A fun alternative is for the first pair to introduce themselves so all can hear, then link arms and ‘do-see-do’ (spin together) down the centre of the two lines.

Buses

(Named after the way people mill around as different buses arrive at a bus stop).

Time: 10-15 mins

Steps:

All stand around randomly in an open space.

People are instructed to move into a bunch when their category is called.

Tell the participants to shout out who they are and bustle quickly to join the others.

Call out different categories and watch the fun.

Some categories can be fun:

- male/female
- discipline or organisation
- star sign
- hobby
- breakfast food
- what time you got to bed last night
- cricket lovers

Others can be more instructive:

- number of years in your job
- who drove/who came by public transport/who walked
- place of birth
- travel time to reach the venue
- mother tongue

This can be done more sedately (and in shorter time) by simply asking people to make bird noises, flap their wings etc. as you call out the categories

Source: From Chambers 2005 p23

Energisers

Ways to raise energy levels, especially in the dreaded after-lunch doldrums.

Fruit Salad

This is a wonderfully chaotic after lunch wake-up. It's also a clever way to get people organised in new groups.

Time: 10 mins

Steps:

Arrange all chairs in a circle, one fewer than the total number of participants.

Decide how many groups you want to end up with and designate a fruit to each one. For example: 4 groups = banana, kiwifruit, watermelon, lemon.

Go around the circle assigning a fruit to each person, in succession, so the fruits are equally distributed.

Before you start the exercise, call each fruit and ask people to raise their hands to remind them which fruit they are.

Now start: The person on the middle calls out the name of one of the fruits. All participants who are that fruit must change chairs. The person in the middle should also try to get a chair.

One person is left in the middle. They repeat the process by calling out another fruit.

If you call out ‘fruit salad’ everyone must change chairs.

If you want to get people working in new groups, you can now announce: ‘all pineapples will work together’.

Variations: for fruit you can substitute native animals, foods, tastes, Simpsons characters, or practically anything that comes to mind.

Another variation is to call out: ‘move if you love cricket’ etc.

Source: From Pretty et al, 1995, p143, 148

The numbers game

This is another energiser that sneakily allows you to re-sort people into new after lunch groups.

You’ll need to prepare by doing some calculations to work out different possible combinations of groups. If you have 80 participants you could have 4 groups of 20; 5 groups of 16; 10 groups of 8; 16 groups of 5 etc.

Steps:

Ask people stand, move to an open space, and spread themselves around randomly.

Then ask them to form X groups of Y members as quickly as possible.

Then call out another combination of numbers.

Continue doing this.

As a last step, call out the combination that divides people into the right numbers for the next session eg. 10 groups of 8.

Source: From Pretty et al, 1995, p146

Assassins and Bodyguards

This is a fabulous wake-up exercise that gets everyone's hearts pumping. Ideally, it needs a group of at least 15.

Time: 5 mins

Steps:

Form a circle.

Each person secretly chooses one person to be their bodyguard (don't let on who it is). Then each person selects another person to be their assassin (don't say who it is).

Explain that the object is to move so that your bodyguard is between you and your assassin.

On "go" everyone runs around trying to make sure that they are safe from their assassin.

The result will be energising chaos. It's really good for that post lunch energy hole.

Visioning

Ways to imagine different futures.

Basic visioning

This is a visioning exercise for a group of any size.

Time: 1.5 - 2 hours, depending on the size of the group.

Materials: Textas and butchers paper, for each participant.

Steps:

1. Form groups: Ask people to break up into homogenous subgroups, in other words groups in which people feel that they are with people who are similar, e.g. women, young people, elders etc. The groups can be made up of between 5 and 10 people.

Each group should appoint:

- a facilitator (whose role is to ensure that all have an equal say); and
- a scribe (ideally, the most confident sketcher in the group).

2. Introduce the exercise: Tell people they will be imagining a future in which their dreams for a better community have come true. Explain that there are no right or wrong visions and they should let their imaginations run free. Then explain the steps below. (5 mins)

3. Imagining the vision: Ask the participants to sit in a circle and close their eyes. The time is 5 years in the future. Each person should imagine they are a bird flying over the area where they live. Ask them to imagine what the eagle would see as it looks down to the ground. In particular, ask them to imagine what the people are doing. (5 mins)

4. Drawing the visions: Ask people to use the marker pens to draw what they saw in the vision. Encourage them to be creative, and assure them that there is no "right way up" - everyone should draw from their own perspective. Specifically encourage people to include the people in the drawings, and to show what they are doing. (5 mins)

5. Sharing the visions in the group: Each person is invited to share their drawings with their group and explain what it means. (15-20 minutes)

6. Creating a group vision: Each group then agrees on the elements they want to construct into a group vision. The scribe sketches these on a separate sheet. The facilitator ensures that the vision is as inclusive as possible (if necessary there can be options). (10 minutes)

7. Reporting back to the whole group: Each group selects one or more spokespeople to share the group vision with the whole meeting.

After the spokesperson has explained the picture to the whole group, give members of the group an opportunity to contribute

anything that has been left out. As each group presents, attach their picture to the wall. (20 minutes)

8. Synthesis of the vision: Looking at the pictures, ask the whole group to point out the common features. (10 minutes)

9. Formulating the common vision: Ask for a small team of volunteers to synthesise a joint vision based on the group presentations, to be presented after lunch, or at a later meeting. This can be a statement, story, illustration or plan.

10. Presenting and endorsing the vision: Once a good working draft has been prepared, the small team presents the vision to the whole group. The statement can be modified based on feedback if there is consensus about the changes.

Option: school art competition. To provide marvellous inspiration, you can invite the local primary school to participate in an art competition on the themes 'What I love about my neighbourhood' or 'How I would change my neighbourhood'. Then display the entries during the community visioning session.

Hints:

People who are not used to drawing may be shy about participating. By making a simple drawing you can demonstrate that it is not too difficult to draw something that is recognisable. Explain that this is not an art competition, but a way of expressing complex ideas in a way that is easy to share. Encourage people actively: the results will be rewarding!

The joint vision is always challenging. Recruit a few members of the facilitation team and from the community to join the task team to work on it while the rest of the community is involved in something else, or having a break. The vision statement can then be presented to the larger group, and modified in response to comments from the other participants.

Source: From World Bank Community Knowledge Exchange Toolkit 2 www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/commun_toolkit/Toolkit2/introductionII.htm

Most valued experiences

This is an inclusive way to form a vision out of what people value about their experiences of a place 'that are most worth protecting, or restoring, for next generation'.

Time: 2-3 hours

Materials: butchers paper, textas

Steps:

Stage 1

The meeting divides into tables, each with a facilitator (whose role is to ensure everyone has a fair chance to be heard) and a scribe.

Then carefully describe the process below.

To set the scene, invite 2-3 carefully selected people are invited to present prepared stories about their memories of the place eg. an elderly resident, a child, an artist, a biologist, or a parent (10-15 minutes total).

Every person then takes few minutes to remember their own most valued experience of the place e.g. exploring the creek as a child when it was clean and sandy (3 minutes).

Table facilitators encourage individuals to share their stories with the table, for just 2-3 minutes each (15-20 minutes).

Each table discusses the stories they heard and agrees on 2-3 'most valued experiences' to share with the whole room (10 mins).

Stage 2

Individuals then list 'what it would take to make the experiences possible?' e.g. clean water, no litter (3 mins).

Table facilitators encourage individuals to share their ideas about what needs to change, for just 2-3 minutes each (15 minutes).

Groups agree on a list of 3-4 'top changes' that would be needed to restore the experience for the next generation. Write each change on a separate card (10-15 mins).

*E*ach table presents its 2-3 stories and its 3-4 changes to the whole group (30 mins).

Lay the cards on the ground and invite the whole group (or a select group of sorters) sort them into categories. The stories can be sorted into a list of values. The changes can be sorted into a list of project objectives or actions (15 mins).

Review the results, and seek points of consensus (10 mins).

Ask for a small team of volunteers to assemble the results into a vision or statement of values.

Alternatives:

Option 1: Value sketching

Each person can make a simple sketch of something they value about the place, and then discuss it with their table, and the sketches can be assembled into a larger, inclusive, illustration.

Option 2: 'Like' and 'dislike' photos

Photos are a powerful ways to present values, and construct visions.

Instead of sorting cards, participants can be issued with disposable cameras prior to the session, and asked to document 'what I like about the place' and 'what I dislike about the place'. Groups can sort their photos into similar themes, and the results presented using the method in the visioning exercise above.

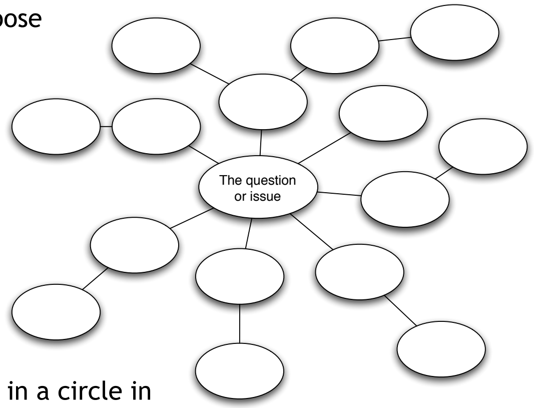
This has the added benefit of making the vision easy to communicate to other members of the community.

Tools for capturing ideas

Multi-purpose props for brainstorming and other situations.

Mud maps

A mud map (or mind map) is a simple multi-purpose tool for exploring relationships and causes, and for capturing the results of a brainstorm.



Simply agree on the issue or question to be explored and put it in a circle in the centre. Then link the causal factors, relationships or associated ideas.

This has endless uses.

Cards

Cards are a fun, active way for participants to sort, rank and experiment with their ideas during brainstorms or group think tanks (which is hard to do with a mud map without making a confusing mess). It's very useful where ideas need to be mapped, prioritised, categorised, or assembled into cause-and effect relationships.

Use single sheets of coloured A4 paper. People write one idea per sheet.

Then place the sheets on the ground, or on a wall (with bluetack) and rearrange them until the group is satisfied with the result.

Post-it Notes

These are an alternative to cards which take up less space and have the benefit of being sticky.

Option: include a pink one for 'if only we could do this'.

Stars and spots

Sticky stars or spots are great ways for people to indicate their support for alternative ideas. The advantage over voting is that people get to stand up and move around while they are fixing their stars or spots to their chosen card or bullet point, which makes for some nicely liberating chaos.

Analysis and prioritisation

Ways to create new knowledge.

Brainstorming

A brainstorm is a quick, easy way to generate ideas. It's good for exploring a topic and focusing people's minds before more detailed work.

Brainstorms create a lot of ideas without regard to their quality; subsequent sorting and prioritising will usually be necessary.

Steps:
Agree on an issue or question. The group freely proposes ideas, responses or solutions. They are recorded on butchers paper, a white board or cards.

Keep in mind:

- ideas should be accepted and recorded with little discussion;
- quantity is more important than quality;
- all responses are of equal merit.

Once the ideas are gathered, you'll need to sort or prioritise them using other methods such as Force Field Analysis or Bang for Buck Matrix.

Tip: Speed and energy are important. Don't let participants discuss each others' ideas at length or the session will bog down. You may have to issue repeated instructions like 'Don't debate it…just get those ideas down!'

Option: ***Brain cards***
A fun option for brainstorming uses A4 sheets or cards. Each participant writes in the centre of their card an issue to be analysed, and one link in the mind map, then passes it on to the their neighbour, who adds another link, and so on, around the circle. Pass the cards around the table 5 or 6 times, then lay them on the floor for discussion.

Option: **Visual brainstorming**
Not everyone thinks verbally, and words can often inhibit the imagination.

Ask each person to draw an image that represents the idea, problem, cause, player, action etc. If appropriate, they can draw themselves in it.

Each person then presents their drawing to the group, explaining what it means.

The other members each discuss their reaction to what they saw and heard.

Once all have been heard, the group assembles a single image that represents what they have learnt about the situation, and shares it with the whole group.

This can be very good for tackling blockages in groups.

The Five Whys

Five Whys (also called the *Cause and Effect Tree* or *Problem Tree*) is a powerful way to identify the causes of problems rather than superficial effects.

It can be quite a dynamic group exercise, with cards being rewritten and swapped around until all are satisfied that a 'best bet' cause and effect diagram has emerged. Remember that you don't need total scientific certainty about causes and effects, only the 'best bet' consensus of the participants. If you run into unanswerables or insoluble disagreements then you may decide to go away and do more research before completing the diagram.

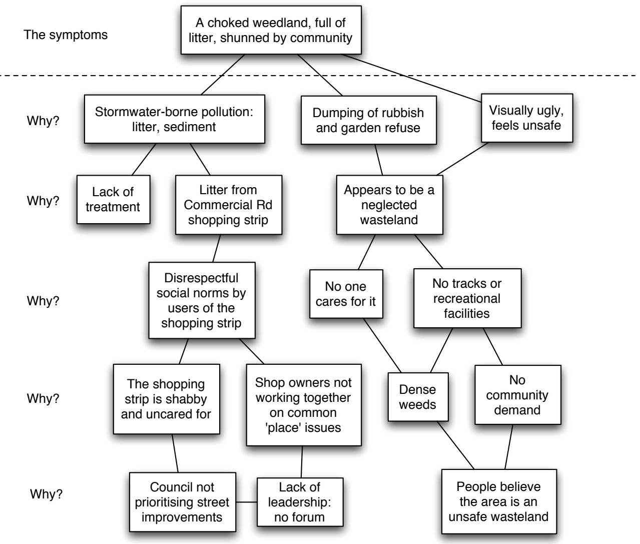
Materials: Textas, butchers paper or A4 sheets. The exercise can be done on a single sheet of butchers paper, but sorting A4 sheets is more dynamic.

Time: 40 mins to one hour.

Steps:

Establish groups of 7-8, each with a table facilitator and a scribe. Then carefully describe the steps below.

Each group writes a collectively agreed statement of the symptoms on one coloured card (or in a box at the top of a sheet of butchers paper). (5 mins)



The table facilitator then asks 'Why?' People write private answers for 1 minute and then discuss them. The scribe records the agreed answers on cards, and places them in a line below the first card. (15 mins)

The table facilitator prompts 'why? up to five times. Meanwhile cards are created, shuffled and discarded until the group is satisfied it has uncovered the root causes of the problem. (20 mins)

The facilitator then compares the results from each table, looking for common themes. (10 mins)

More: See AusAid's Ausguidlines for a good description of the Problem Tree method: www.ausaid.gov.au/ausguide/ausguidelines/1-2-1.cfm

Consensus Think Tank

This is a straightforward, all-purpose method to build knowledge, create consensus, or do action learning with groups ranging from 8 to 100+ participants.

The choice of question is important. It should be big, strategic and open, so that wide-ranging viewpoints can be elicited. Such questions include: What issues, if tackled, would have the biggest impact on quality of life in their community? What strategies are likely to be effective? What principles and practices for community engagement should we adopt? What have we learnt about working for change in the past X months? What should we leave behind and what should we carry forward?

Time: 1-1.5 hours per question.

Materials: butchers paper and coloured texta pens per table.

Steps:

A) The set up

Divide the group into tables of 6-8.

Choose a facilitator for each table. Their role is to ensure all have a fair chance to be heard and to keep the table on topic and on time.

Choose a scribe for each table. Supply them with butcher's paper and texta pens.

Describe the question to be considered. Have a brief discussion to ensure all understand the question (5-10 mins).

B) The process

All participants spend silently writing individual responses to the question (1-2 minutes).

Each table has a facilitated discussion to share all answers. The scribe records what they hear (15 minutes).

Each table then looks at the views collected, and looks for common themes. Ideally, they should aim to agree on 3-5 'top points' to share with the whole group (10 minutes).

Each table selects one or more members to present to the whole group. If there is time, allow an extra 5-10 minutes for 'creative presentation' as some issues lend themselves to performance a drama, artwork, song etc.

Each spokesteam then presents their findings to the whole group (3-5 minute per group). Meanwhile the facilitator maps emerging common themes on a whiteboard. The facilitator should encourage applause for each group to reward its efforts.

C) Closure and commitment

The facilitator summarises the common threads or themes that have emerged, and checks that these are in accordance with the consensus of the group (5-10 minutes).

Gifts are then awarded to one more groups on the basis of the quality of their ideas, the best performance etc (the facilitator can be the judge, or the whole group can vote). The gifts are symbolically important to celebrate the efforts of the whole group.

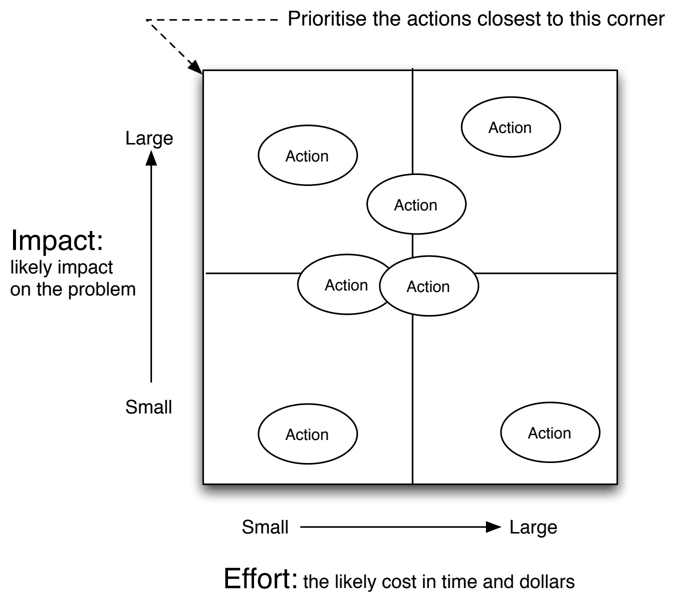
Lastly, a commitment must be made to the participants about how the ideas will be used and what happens next. This is vital. The person with the greatest authority must make the commitment. It must be definite and must include a timetable for performance.

Prioritising Matrix

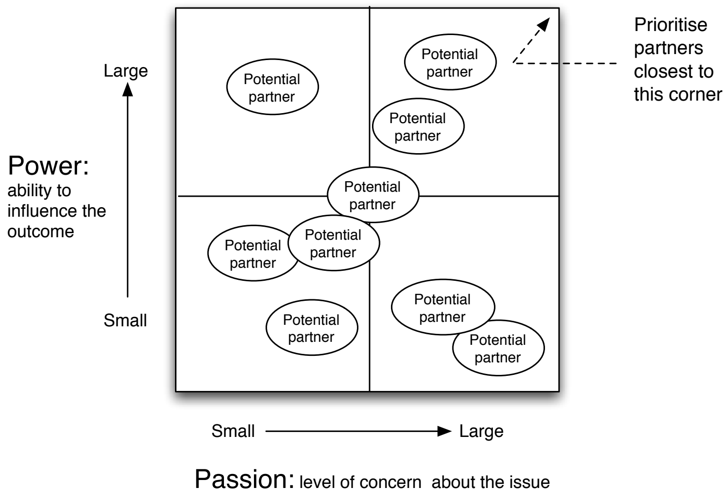
A simple 2-way matrix is a useful in lots of situations.

The most common example is the 'Bang for Buck' matrix below. It's a neat way to prioritise any set of related ideas or actions.

You can also sort on the basis of any two characteristics that are important to you. Here are two examples.



The Bank for Buck matrix: a multi purpose tool that's good for prioritising actions, objectives, causes and more.



The power and passion matrix: a way to prioritise potential stakeholders or partners.

Force Field Analysis

This is a way to gauge the strength of the forces for and against a proposition. It can help decide whether an objective or plan is viable, and prioritise where effort needs to go.

Time: One hour (plus time spent on initial brainstorm or Five Whys process).

Materials: for each person: a texta, A4 sheets/cards, supply of sticky stars or spots.

Steps:

State the proposition you want to explore e.g. stopping people from dumping garden waste over their back fences into bushland.

Form tables, each with a table facilitator.

Use an analytic method like Brainstorming or Five Whys to identify the pro and con forces e.g. Reasons they are doing it, and reasons they might stop.

Tables interrogate all the forces: Are they valid? Can they be changed? Which are the critical forces? (15 mins)

Write the resulting forces on a separate card.

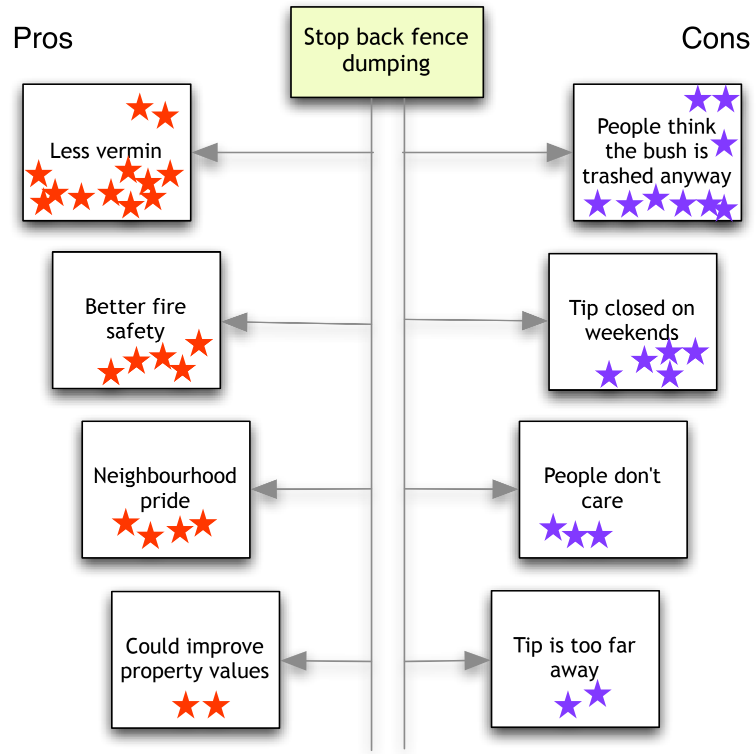
The whole group sorts and simplifies the cards. Mount the final set on a wall, or spread them on the floor (15 mins).

Issue each participant with a number of votes or stars/spots (any number less than the number of cards is OK).

Participants allocate their votes or stars/spots to each force (15 mins).

Reorganise the cards so they are listed in order of strength.

Now look at the resulting arrangement. Discuss: How viable is the objective or project? Can the strong 'Con' forces be moderated? Can the strong 'Pro' forces be increased? (15 mins)



A Force Field Analysis is a good way to agree on priorities or sort different factors. In this example it's used to weight different 'drivers and barriers' influencing a public behaviour.

Role Plays

A role play aims to model an actual or anticipated situation. Role plays are powerful strategising and learning tools. They let participants experience a situation first-hand from the perspective of another player. When well run, a role play can have a strong impact.

The briefing for a role play involves two parts:

1) The scenario: A description of the starting point, for example, what is the situation, who is involved, in what capacity?

2) The roles: An indication of how each person might react or behave after the role play begins - this is often referred to as their "brief" (Are they 'pro' or 'con'? Are they enthusiasts or sceptics? What is their personal interest?).

Steps:

To get the most value out of a role play, follow these steps:

- plan the role play in advance, including the scenario and roles;
- brief the participants;
- brief the audience;
- run the role play;
- clear up unfinished business that might have occurred during the role play;

- thank the participants;
- debriefing: ask the audience and the participants for their interpretations of what occurred (perhaps using the ORID method, or the Reflection Tool - see TOOLS)
- discuss the implications of the role play.

Fishbowl

A fishbowl is a popular method to find common ground on a controversial issue.

Interestingly, it also illuminates how communication styles affect outcomes.

In it's basic form, a 'fishbowl' is simply a debate or discussion between a small number of participants, surrounded by a larger circle of observers. The facilitator may stop the discussion at various points and ask for comments from the observers. Finally, the facilitator may attempt to seek a consensus or verdict from the observers.

There is also a more structured form. Here it is:

Time: about 1.5 hours

Materials: room and movable chairs

Steps:

Clarify and obtain consensus on the controversial issue for discussion (10 mins).

Form pairs of speakers and coaches. Carefully describe the process to be followed (10 minutes).

Round 1: The pairs retreat to prepare for the dialogue. Coaches ask their partners about their views on the issue and their intended discussion strategy. How certain are they? What evidence can they refer to? Are they prepared to change their views? (10 mins)

Form two concentric circles of chairs.

The speakers take a seat in the inner circle, opposite their coaches who sit in the outer circle facing their partner.

Give the start signal for the dialogue. Do not intervene for the next 15-20 minutes and then stop the dialogue (20 mins).

Round 2: The partners retreat again, this time for 5 minutes. The coaches give the speakers their feed-back about what they observed during the dialogue, including the communication style of the speaker (5 mins).

Swap roles and repeat the same process (20 mins).

Debrief. Note the effect of the communication styles. Invite all to comment on the lessons learnt. Is a consensus possible on the issue? (15 mins)

SWOT Analysis

This is the well-known framework for scanning a situation in terms of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats.

How to do it:

Form tables and brainstorm an issue under the four headings:

- strengths of your group or community to tackle the issue;
- weaknesses of your group or community to tackle the issue;
- external opportunities you could take advantage of; and
- external threats or risks you may need to respond to.

The resulting matrix can be dynamic. For example: opportunities can build strengths and counter threats; strengths can become weaknesses if they are taken for granted; threats and opportunities can be interchangeable, depending on how you respond to them.

Note: one of the problems of SWOT is the emphasis it gives to weaknesses and threats. This often stifles a group's optimism. As facilitator, you should maintain a positive 'can-do' state of mind and spend more time on positives than negatives. Advise that the only reason the group is identifying weaknesses and threats is to make sure we are prepared to overcome them!

Asset Analysis

Appreciative Enquiry and Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD) are 'glass full' approaches to community development of great relevance for collaborative projects.

They aim to build on the strengths, resources and capacities which already exist in a community, rather than focusing on weaknesses.

An ABCD process begins by exploring what gives life and strength to a community. Then there is a dreaming phase to create a shared vision of what may be. Then practical planning occurs.

Good sources on Appreciative Inquiry/ABCD:

- Central Coast Community Congress Working Party, 2003, *Making Headway, Building Your Community - How to Get Started: An Asset Based Community Development Tool Kit*. This is a detailed, step-by-step guide to running a community development project which builds on the strengths of a community. www.communitycongress.org/
- The article by Jeannette Butterworth, from Mountain Views, March 2004. www.cpcwnc.org/Toolbox/inquiry.html
- Peter Kenyon's web site. www.bankofideas.com.au

- Assets Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, USA www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html

Rapid Participative Appraisal

Rapid Participative Appraisal (or RPA) is a set of analytic methods which involve active collaboration of community members. The methods are mixed, matched and modified to suit different situations.

The following is reprinted with permission from the Centre for Environment and Society, University of Essex, UK.

Stages and Methods in Participatory Appraisal

There are three important stages for the analysis and understanding of a given problem situation:

1) Understanding history and the present

This is designed to focus on how situations arose. A focus on history is always an easy starting point.

A wide range of appraisal methods can be used, including map-models, seasonal calendars, social audits, historical profiles (see below).

2) Setting out desirable futures

This is designed to encourage participants to think about how they would like things to be – what is their ideal future? The future can be shaped by the actions of people today, but we often do not appreciate what can be done. A time frame of at least 20 years ahead allows participants to jump a generation,

and not be constrained by what is likely, rather than what is desirable.

Ideal futures can be developed in focus group discussions, or by brainstorming on wall-charts.

3) Defining action to get to the future

Once the desirable future is established, then participants can be encouraged to dwell on how they can achieve such a future. Responsibility for carrying out different aspects of action plans can they be allocated to appropriate institutions and individuals.

The responsibility and action matrices help to focus discussion during this phase.

This simple set of stages (looking back, looking forward, planning action) should be put together into a package that suits the specific needs of the players and context. These will always be different, and so the methodology should always be designed to meet these needs. The process could, therefore:

- Occur in a single event, such as a two-day Future Search or one-day community planning event;
- Occur intensively over several days – such a Community Appraisal involves a mix of drop-in opportunities for community members and the team going out to pre-arranged meeting places to meet individuals and groups in their own contexts;
- Occur as linked events spread over several months.

Rapid Participative Appraisal methods

Participants' data sheets

Purpose: To record details about the participants involved in the process; and to break the ice. Allows for accurate information to be collected anonymously.

Method: Give each participant a series of sticky dots, and ask them to add them to complete prepared boxes on a sheet to represent age groups, gender, skills, resources, length of time in the community, distance travelled to work/school etc.

Map/model

Purpose: To reveal geographic knowledge of participants, and to break the ice.

Method: Participants make their own maps or models of what they believe is significant in their community. There are a wide range of different types of map – resources, social, health, impact monitoring, special places, problems, opportunities for improvement.

These can be provided or drawn/constructed by participants, using Post-it Notes or coloured flags.

- Provided: a coloured map or polystyrene model;
- Drawn/constructed: on paper or on the ground.

Historical profile or time line

Purpose: To document the history of major recollected events in a community by decade or with approximate dates.

Method: Events are marked onto sheets of paper hung on wall (for many participants) or on small sheets (single participant).

Seasonal calendar

Purpose: To explore seasonal patterns and constraints eg. rainfall, labour, credit, food consumption, illnesses, prices, migration, pests, fuel etc

Method: Draw a histogram on paper or use seeds or dots to illustrate relative quantities of item of interest.

Social audit

Purpose: To understand the local social organisations, their activities and their linkages to external agencies.

How. Use circles to represent people or groups; these can be cut and arranged, or drawn on paper.

Transect walks

Purpose: To observe and hear details about the area of interest. Best conducted as systematic walk with key informants.

Method: Walk through the area of interest, observing, asking, listening, seeking problems and possible solutions. Findings can be mapped on to a transect diagram.

Activity profiles

Purpose: To explore daily or weekly patterns of activity.

Method: Chart each hour of the day with typical activities, amount of effort, time taken, location of work. Compare for different people eg. men, women, old, young; compare profiles and routines for different seasons.

Multi-criteria matrices

Why? To compare items according to a range of criteria.

Method: Items are placed on columns of a matrix, and criteria for judging or scoring them in rows; scoring is conducted row by row, with an individual score allocated to each cell. These can be discussed and scored, or use seeds to construct final score.

Systems diagrams

Purpose: To identify linkages and connections in complex real-world systems.

Method: Drawn as systems diagram with elements and linkages marked, with analysis of both flows and system states.

Ideal futures

Purpose: To identify how participants would like things to be in 20 years time – beyond what is likely to what is ideal.

Method: Conducted on wall-charts or in group discussions.

Responsibility and action matrices

Purpose: To determine which stakeholders are best suited to and capable of taking on future activities.

Method: Matrix the separate activities that local people can do themselves; what they can do with external help and support; what external agencies can do.

Thanks to Prof. Jules Pretty for kind permission to adapt this article from the University of Essex Centre for Environment and Society website at:

www2.essex.ac.uk/ces/ResearchProgrammes/pa&caoverview.htm

Evaluation and reflection

Ways to learn from experience.

Situation Report

This is a great all-purpose exercise for debriefing, solving practical problems and developing strategies. It usually leads to free and informative discussions, as some people realise that others' 'successes' are the answers to their 'obstacles'.

Time: about 1 hour

Steps:

Divide into pairs. Participants introduce yourselves.

Each person then asks their partner:

- What was your biggest success in last period?
- What is your current major challenge?
- What do you think will be your biggest obstacle?
- What will be your biggest strength?

Partners report back on each other's answers. The facilitator encourages an open discussion as each person reports.

Where there are more than 15 participants, either choose a limited number of reports at random, or divide into tables and use the Consensus Think Tank method.

Meeting evaluation form

The simplest way to evaluate a meeting or activity is to distribute a form at the start of the session and remind participants to compete and return it before they leave.

Make sure you ask no more than 6 questions. Make sure people know they are not expected to put their names on the forms.

Here is an example:

How satisfied are you about this session/meeting/workshop?

Disappointed So-so Very satisfied

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

What was the best thing in the session?

What was the worst thing in the session?

What could be improved?

What was the most important thing I learnt?

My overall assessment:

A simple meeting evaluation form. It generates a satisfaction figure as well as guidance on what is and isn't working and how it could be improved.

Dart Board

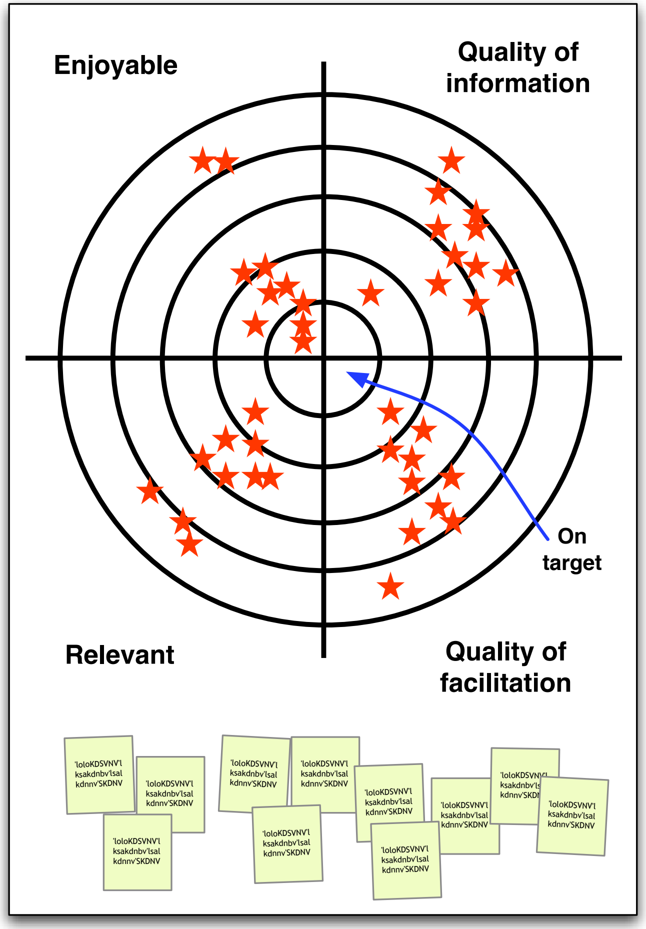
This is a dynamic alternative to the meeting evaluation form.

Set up a sheet of butchers paper at the back of the room, marked as a dart board (see illustration).

At the start of the meeting, issue each participant with 4 stars and one Post-it Note.

At the end of the meeting, invite participants to evaluate how 'on target' the meeting was, as they file out.

Also invite them to put an idea for improvement on the Post-it Note and attach it to the 'Dart Board'.



The Dart Board evaluation method.
Thanks to Dr Jess Dart for kind permission to reproduce this method. Also to Geoff Brown who added the Post-it Note idea while facilitating at Angelsea NEIP.

ORID

ORID is a valuable process for debriefing after events and for unpacking conflicts. It aims to ensure we become aware of the individual perspectives and emotional responses before we leap to conclusions.

It can be used in lots of ways eg. as a guide for facilitator-led discussion, or as a more structured group activity (similar to Situation Report).

Observe

What did you notice, feel, see? [Maybe people saw different aspects of the same event]

Reflect

How did you react, feel about it? [Maybe people’s immediate emotional responses coloured their opinions.]

Interpret

What does it mean? [What is the ‘why’ behind the event? Consider its significance more dispassionately]

Decide

What should we do?

Developed by the Institute for Cultural Affairs

Reflection Tool

This is a good tool for groups to reflect on lessons from recent activities (it's an extension of the ORID method).

Date:

Observe: What happened during the last period?

Reflect: During this period:

What worked well or was satisfying?

What did not work so well or was unsatisfying?

What was the most unexpected happening or result?
(could be better or worse than expected)

Interpret: What could this unexpected result mean?
(ie. What does it tell us about our approach, ideas, assumptions or strategy?)

Decide: The next step: In the light of these reflections, what should be done differently during the next phase of the project?

Project Spirit Appraisal

This is a thermometer of your group's emotional health. Use it an intervals during the project.

Your appraisal of the project, so far

Based on your experience, please rate how you think the project is traveling:

Is visionary and inspiring:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is enjoyable and rewarding:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is achievable:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is driven by the participants:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is open and participatory:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is flexible:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is locally relevant:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is making progress towards its goals:

Not al all | Slightly | Moderately | Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

IN SUMMARY:
How's the project traveling overall?

If the project is performing poorly on any of these qualities, how could it be improved?

Reflective Appraisal Tool

Reflective Appraisal of Programs is a method of asking questions based on a 'logic model' of change, in this case Bennett's Heirarchy.

he seven levels of Bennett's Heirarchy are: inputs, program activities, people involvement, people reactions, KASA change (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations), practice change, and end results.

Because Bennett's model focuses on the individual adoption of new practices it's a good way to assess the impact of the program on participants' own lives.

The questions can be done in pairs, with one person probing: e.g. 'why', 'can you explain', 'give me an example' etc.

The tool seems to have been originally invented by Claude Bennett of the US Department of Agriculture Extension Service.

For more see Richard A. Krueger's excellent website: www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/evaluation.html

For Clause Bennett's original article see: Bennett, Claude. (1975). "Up the Hierarchy." *Journal of Extension*. Vol. 13, No. 2. Download from http://www.joe.org/joe/1975march/index.html

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Reflective Appraisal

To what extent did you participate in recent activities?

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

To what extent did these activities meet your expectations at the time?

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Think back to the activities in which you were involved. To what extent did you learn more about the issues at stake?

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

To what extent did you become more interested in the issues covered by the project?

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

To what extent did you acquire more skills?"

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

To what extent do you feel more connected to your community?

Not al all			Slightly			Moderately				Greatly
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

To what extent did you become more determined to try new practices?

Not al all · Slightly · Moderately · Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To what extent have you put to use the ideas or skills you learned in the project?

Not al all · Slightly · Moderately · Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To what extent have the ideas and skills you acquired already enabled you to make personal changes?

Not al all · Slightly · Moderately · Greatly

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reflective Appraisal as a qualitative tool

This exercise can be done in pairs, with one person being the prober and one being the probee.

Over the last period:

How have you been involved with the project?

How did this satisfy your needs and expectations?

What were the main things you learnt (any ahh-hah moments)?

What things did you become more interested in?

What did you become more confident at?

What new connections did you make with people?

What new practices would you like to try?

What changes have you made to your lifestyle or business as a result of your involvement in the project?

What results are you seeing?

The Activity Tester

All proposed activities can be run through this tool. Only activities performing well may be considered for inclusion in the project.

The tool was developed through the Edwardes Lake Our Lake NEIP. It's based on work of Dr Doug McKenzie-Mohr and Les Robinson.

Project Title	
Action/project description	
What other (or potential) activities does it replicate or is it similar to?	
Who is the audience/target group?	
Who/which organisations will be responsible for delivering the project?	
Which objectives does the project address?	

How will the project impact on or address the objective (s)?	
What are the barriers to the activity and/or participants?	
What are the benefits to (ie. selling points for) program participants?	
What is the time commitment for participants?	
What is the project duration? (ongoing – start and end time, one-off etc.)	
What resources are needed? (including cost, time implications and required expertise/skills)	
Is this project likely to attract resources, corporate sponsorship or funding?	
Does this project have an evaluation process to determine what impact it does actually have on the overall objective(s)?	

What are the program's strengths in terms of the Seven Doors model of project design? Is the activity designed to: 1. Help set or shift norms/visions? 2. Fill knowledge gaps? 3. Build skills? 4. Help make systems or actions easy, accessible and convenient? 5. Build peer support and maximise opportunities for social influence? 6. Offer new opportunities and spaces (outside of normal routines) for people to learn, create and imagine new actions, futures and behaviours? 7. Deliver results and satisfaction to participants? Share and reward success?	
Does it pass the ATRACT-ORS Test (below)?	

The Activity Tester continued:

The ATRACT-ORS test

- ❑ ACHIEVABLE – Has this project/action got a reasonable chance of success given the context and history of the audience?
- ❑ TARGETED – Is the audience reachable?
- ❑ REALISTIC – Are you and those working with you likely to have the resources to make a difference?
- ❑ ACTION-ORIENTATED – Is a definite, measurable action or decision required from the audience?
- ❑ COMPELLING CASE – Are the benefits compelling for the audience? Are they interested in the benefits you could offer them?
- ❑ TIMELY – Is there enough time to plan, prepare and implement the activity/project, and for the audience to respond?

If it fails any of the above tests, it may still be included if it passes one of the following tests:

- ❑ OPPORTUNITY VALUE – Is the opportunity too good to miss even if the outcome is unclear? (ie. it's a calculated risk)
- ❑ RECOGNITION VALUE – Is it a major opportunity for exposure and profile building for the project?
- ❑ STRATEGIC VALUE – Is it strategically essential to support existing relationships or allies?

Meeting organisers' checklist

Before the day:

- ❑ Organise agenda
- ❑ Distribute agenda
- ❑ Book venue
- ❑ List who'll do what
- ❑ Organise catering
- ❑ Organise entertainment
- ❑ Organise childcare if necessary
- ❑ Organise and brief the facilitator and speakers
- ❑ Organise publicity & promotion
- ❑ Who will welcome people?
- ❑ Handouts
- ❑ Visual display, learning aids, inspirations
- ❑ Evaluation tools
- ❑ Name tags
- ❑ Contact list for participants
- ❑ Check equipment to be used on the day

On the day:

- ☐ Set up the registration/welcoming table
- ☐ Participant list
- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ Handouts
- ☐ Visuals
- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Housekeeping toilets, etc
- ☐ Make sure people know they can take a break when they need to.

After the day:

- ☐ Distribute the minutes
- ☐ Keep people informed about what's happening

Community participation resources

Effective Community Engagement: Workbook and Tools

Produced by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment. This is possibly the best Australian guide to community engagement available on the web.

Go to www.dse.vic.gov.au and enter 'community engagement' in the search field.

Valuable methods described in detail include Backcasting, Community Indicators, Fishbowl, Kitchen Table Discussion, Photovoice, Planning4real, Scenario testing, and Snowball sampling.

Useful planning tools include:

14.1.3 Stability of the system
14.1.5 Citizen and stakeholder relationships with the project
14.1.8 Review, reflect, and celebrate
14.2.1 Defining stakeholder and community success
14.2.2 Anticipate surprises
14.5 Your community engagement plan

Other resources

The internet is a great source of group activities. Try 'facilitation guide' as a search term.

Here are some sites to start with:

Pretty, J. and Hine, R. ***Participatory Appraisal for Community Assessment***, Centre for Environment and Society, University of Essex 1999 www2.essex.ac.uk/ces/ResearchProgrammes/pa&caoverview.htm

Borrini-Feyerabend, et al, ***Co-management of Natural Resources: Organising, Negotiating and Learning-by-Doing***, GTZ and IUCN, available on the Massey University (NZ) website: nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/cmnr.html
...especially the descriptions of active participatory methods (including transect walks and mapping) at nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/cmnr7.html

FAO searchable library of participation tools and processes www.fao.org/Participation/ft_find.jsp

A good description of Rapid Participative Appraisal is at: www.snvworld.org/cds/rgMRD/rural-development/rra-pra_1.htm#description1

The **Eldis Gateway of Development Information**, University of Sussex is a good source of participation methods: www.eldis.org/participation/index.htm

The World Bank community engagement toolkit:www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/commun_toolkit/Toolkit2/introductionII.htm

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All Known Idea Generation Methods researched by Martin Leith:www.ideagenerationmethods.com

The most practical and comprehensive manual for Rapid Participative Appraisal is:
Pretty et al, 1995, ***Participatory Learning and Action - A Trainer's Guide***, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.
It's not on the net but you can order a hard copy through www.amazon.uk

If I could recommend one book for facilitators it would be the wonderfully accessible, wise and quirky:
Chambers, Robert, 2002, ***Participatory Workshops - a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities***, Earthscan, London. You can order this through www.amazon.uk

A strongly Australian recommended guide to facilitation practice is ***In the Tiger's Mouth - an empowerment guide for social action*** by Katrina Shields. It seems to be out of print (a damned shame), but you may be able to buy a copy over the internet, or find one in your library.

Another very good Australian guide to working with groups is Chandra, S, and Mortiss, P.D. ***Working together for Land Care: Group Management Skills and Strategies***, 1990, Australian Academic Press. Your local library may have this.

A valuable resource on indigenous involvement

Queensland Government, ***Protocols for Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People***
www.indigenous.qld.gov.au/resources/cultures.cfm

Glossary

The terms used community participation work can be infuriatingly vague and clumsy. Here are a few definitions which may be helpful.

An alternative idea is to spend time as a group agreeing on your own definitions.

Collaboration See partnership.

Community

A catch-all term for everyone with an interest in finding a solution to a problem, either because they are affected by it or because they can make a difference. It includes unaffiliated members of the public as well as representatives of agencies or organisations.

Narrowly: it refers to a notional ‘community-of-interest’ in relation to a particular issue ie. roughly the same thing as ‘stakeholders’. Widely: it can be expanded to include ‘everyone’, including those not yet borne, animals and the environment itself!

Engagement

A general term for the range of relationships than can exist between an organisation and its community, stakeholders or partners. It has been referred to ‘a series of transactions in which things of value are exchanged’.

Engagement is usually said to include a spectrum of activities including:

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- informing, ie. education or awareness-building;
- consulting, ie. seeking feedback;
- involving ie. two-way dialogue e.g. through a forum or planning workshop;
- collaboration or partnership ie. two-way dialogue that includes sharing of control over the process to be followed;
- empowering: where the organisation promises to act on what it’s community says.

The use of the term ‘engagement’ is problematic because it takes so many forms, and because it masks what is really important in a relationship, which is the ‘locus of power’. At one end of the spectrum - informing - power is firmly located with the organisation. At the other end of the spectrum -‘collaboration/empowerment’ - power is shared or delegated.

Rather than using the term ‘engagement’ it can be a good idea to spend time agreeing on the meaning of ‘inform’, ‘consult’, ‘involve’, ‘collaborate’ and ‘empower’ and use those terms instead.

Gatekeepers

Those whose positions allow them to oversee or monitor the actions of the project or the partner representatives. Gatekeepers include funders, supervisors, and key office-holders such as general managers, mayors and executive officers. Gatekeepers need to be kept informed about the project. They need to be happy with the outcomes.

Neighbourhood

The area covered by the boundaries of a project. These boundaries are chosen early in the project. See page 43.

Partnership

An active relationship that delivers mutual benefits to the partners. It assumes shared control over the process that delivers the benefits.

Public

This refers to members of a community who are acting in the role of unaffiliated citizens rather than representatives of agencies, businesses or organised groups.

Stakeholder

People or organisations with an interest in the outcomes of your project, They could be impacted by the problem; they could be affected by potential solutions; their actions could make a difference; their 'turf' (institutional responsibilities) could be involved.

Working Group, Partner, Chair, Facilitator, Coordinator

See Roles in a Collaborative Project, page 17.