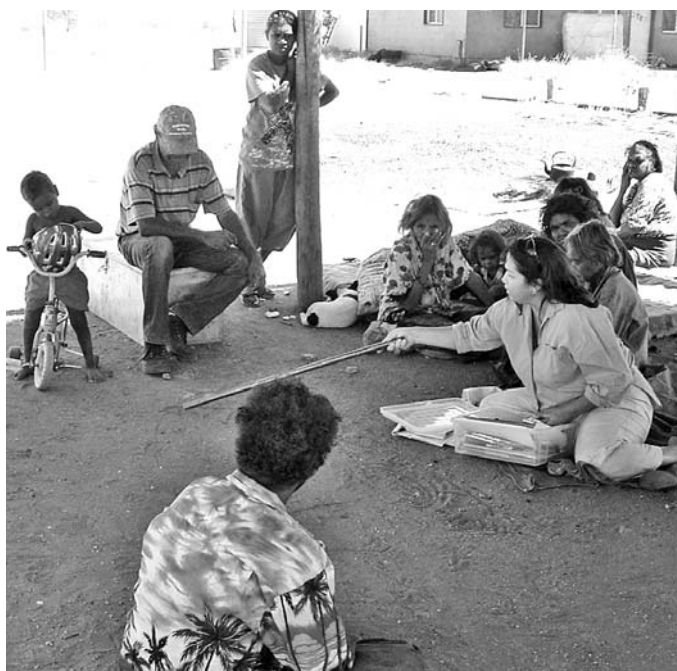
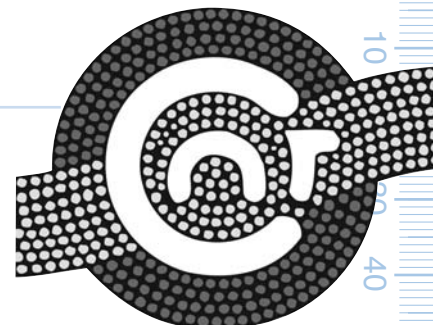


How to develop a project for your community



This BUSH TECH is designed to be a guide to the basic principles of community projects and more comprehensive advice is always necessary, especially from people with project management skills and experience and, depending on the project, specialist technical skills.

In all communities, projects can play a vital role in achieving community aspirations, building capacity and skills, transferring knowledge, improving community services and infrastructure and supporting community development. For example, many CDEP work plans are built around community projects. Project success is often determined by people living in the community participating in the project from planning stages to development and to evaluation of the project. Being involved in the project process itself brings about community ownership, builds capacity and ensures that a project is grounded in community plans and priorities.

The success of projects can also be determined during the project stages. Projects need careful planning in their definition, design, development, implementation and evaluation. In this BUSH TECH, brief explanations on the steps identified above are provided. All of them are helpful to success of projects; future BUSH TECHS will go into more detail about implementation and evaluation as these phases require more information.

Defining a project

This is the start in the planning and development of a project. At this stage decisions are made about what the project will address. It is critical to identify community aspirations, priorities, capacity of the project team and having realistic goals. Whilst all the limitations/risks of the project might not be identifiable (resources, time, etc) it is important that these are discussed openly. Projects can take many sizes or forms; the list below provides examples of the variety of community projects:

- Camel-proofing water holes: A project to design and build fences around water holes to keep camels out but allow small marsupials and mammals to drink from the waterhole.

- Developing better governance: A project working with the local Community Council to build capacity to make decisions within the constitution.
- Investigating feasibility of a tourism trail: A project setting up a tourism trail at an outstation and assessing the viability of it as an enterprise for the family.

Whatever the project, the definition stage is vital to ensure that everyone on the project is working towards the same goals. A good place to start is by making a list of the aspirations and then working out the priorities. Some questions that might help in this stage of planning include:

- What is the present situation on your community?
- What works and what could be improved in the community?
- What is needed to implement change in the community?
- What are the plans and priorities of the community?
- Who will work on the project?
- What assets and resources do we have within the community?
- Do we need help from outside of the community?
- What options do we have to solve the problem?

At the end of this phase, the decision should be reflected in a project title and aim that people agree on.

Designing and developing a project

Designing a project is usually the second phase of the project. During this time, the project decisions will be made around:

- what exactly will be done.
- project team and roles.
- outside involvement.
- funding (budget) and resources required.
- the objectives of the project.
- mapping of the possible risks.
- limitations or problems with the project.

Once these factors have been worked out it is important to provide detail to the project (deadlines, dates, and responsibilities). What needs to be done by whom and when? Some people choose logical frameworks or other tools to map out these responsibilities. The project plan should reflect items you need to look at first. Some problems can wait, others depend on the main problems being tackled first and some may require urgent attention.

This stage is often done in a group where people are assigned responsibilities. Individuals may want to think about:

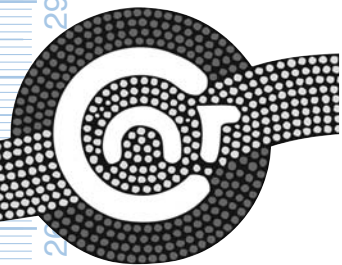
- What is it about these problems that you can fix?
- How can you contribute (resources, labour, time, skills) in helping the project?
- Who would you like to work alongside?

A project manager needs to be appointed at this stage to keep records regarding:

- Establishment of the project team and documenting directions.
- Defining roles and responsibilities of team members.
- Ensuring work plans reflect the commitment to the project.
- Developing schedule of regular team meetings.
- Developing shared documentation process.

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Implementing a project

This is usually the largest and most important part of the project. Even if the project so far has had good definition and development, there may be some unexpected risks or problems with the project (i.e. an extended wet season or delays in the materials arriving at the project site). To minimise these risks it is important to:

- make sure the work site is safe.
- employ skilled competent people.
- hold regular team meetings.
- have honest and open communication throughout the team.
- assess deadlines/timeframes and flexibility in the project.

At this stage it is critical that work plans are followed, reviewed and revised where necessary. When individuals do not maintain their responsibilities or roles then the whole team suffers as a result.

The team should be asking itself:

- How is the project going?
- Is everyone working well together?
- Is there room for improvements?
- Is the project achieving the original aims?
- What should be changed in the project?

Evaluating a project

Plan the evaluation when you plan the project. There are many different ways to evaluate your project, such as looking at impact assessment, measuring effectiveness, assessing real changes in attitudes, cost/benefit analysis, etc. The method chosen will depend on the project and who is doing the evaluation. In some cases, it may be worthwhile obtaining an outside person who is separate from the project and will make an independent evaluation. When thinking about evaluation it is important to ask the following questions:

Measuring goals:

- What were the aim and goals of the project?
- How do you know if you have reached your goal?
- How do you know how close you are to your goal?

Note: Decisions on the evaluation (such as method used, who will do it and data required) are usually made throughout the project with a final report compiled at the end.

Leading by example

Below provides a brief example of a project that a community close to Alice Springs is currently working on.

Step 1

Definition

The community members identified that there was a need to repair buildings and structures on community such as their stockyards, water stations, ablution block and install fences and gates. They drew up their plan as shown.

Step 2

Development and design

The community members worked out their plan of attack, their team and project outcomes. In regards to outcomes, the community members recognised:

- Repairing the stockyards, the horses would be contained and this would reduce soil erosion.
- Horse health would also improve as many of them were dying from dehydration in their uncontained state.
- The facility of the yard would provide infrastructure which would allow the people to start a reduction program.
- Repairing the yard would create on-site skill development for youths.
- The same infrastructure could be used in the development of tourism facilities within the community.

During this stage the project team identified and costed materials/resources required. This included the hire, lease or purchase of equipment, machinery, trailers, office hardware, transportable toilets, tools, extra diesel for generator and top-up CDEP labour.

Step 3

Implementation

The project involved people working on a range of tasks, that include: identifying appropriate fastenings and fixings; welding on gate fastenings; using carpentry skills; discussing and drawing plans of a yard and making a concrete slab, co-ordinating the project, managing the budgets, etc.

The community people had previously arranged to delegate tasks to people with particular skills. All projects are different, therefore you need to plan in a way that works well for your community.

Step 4

Evaluation

The project is still in the implementation phase but once complete the community intend to have on-going monitoring and assessment of the improved community facilities.

For more information

The Technical Skills Group at CAT offers a Certificate III in Remote Aboriginal Community Leadership that prepares trainees to take leadership roles in developing and submitting applications to fund projects.

Contact Shaun Cusack, Community and Trainee Services at the Centre for Appropriate Technology, Alice Springs on 08 8951 4351 or email shaun.cusack@icat.org.au

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