



strengthening rural communities

Tool 10: Decision-Making Workshop

This tool is used to bring together the priorities of the community and the planning processes to create a community vision that forms the basis of a strategic plan for the future.

The Workshop allows the group to facilitate a community based decision-making process.

- step 1** Determines the time and place for a workshop involving between 4-6 hours of structured discussion, decision-making and priority setting.
- step 2** Find someone to facilitate the workshop.
- step 3** Prepare handouts and summary materials for the workshop.
- step 4** Present to findings to the group, allowing time for discussion, questions and small group analysis of the profile
- step 5** Establish an agreed framework for how priorities are going to be determined and acted upon.
- step 6** Work through the list of issues, set priorities, use group techniques to identify possible and desirable actions, timeframes and responsibilities
- step 7** Set a time for the facilitator and the group to debrief after the Workshop

The Next Steps

The process of creating a Community Profile has generated significant community activity that can be used in a variety of ways to strengthen local communities.

Communities that are coming to terms with significant structural change need time to generate coherent local responses to this change. The Community Sustainability Profile provides a framework for action that can be used as submissions for funding through a range of existing NSW and federal government programs. The Profile provides a powerful negotiating tool for partnerships with business, industry and governments to provide a range of appropriate services to the community.

To come this far will have involved a huge community effort. The actions that result from those efforts belong to the community, as everyone who has been involved – as someone surveyed, or interviewed, or someone whose talents have been identified for the first time – will be stimulated to think differently about the community and can be encouraged to be involved in bringing the action plans to life.

What are the community's key strengths and assets? Which Key Characteristics need to be strengthened?



From the research project, the following themes emerged as challenges for the communities involved. The communities used these themes to identify and develop projects that would help to strengthen the community in ways that were of benefit to their Community Profiles.

Key Themes

- Strengthening local leadership and decision-making
- Developing a shared vision for the community's future
- Diversifying the local economy
- Improving the quality of life
- Neighbourhood renewal
- Fostering Entrepreneurship
- Increasing citizen participation in decision-making
- Promoting social development
- Understanding the impacts of globalisation on local industries
- Improving facilities for young people
- Maintaining physical infrastructure
- Valuing local citizens
- Fostering local initiatives and cultural heritage
- Investing in employment and retraining
- Accessing information technologies
- Celebrating local successes and achievements
- Managing and improving environmental assets
- Marketing the community to the region and the world.

Developing local projects around these themes may require nothing more than refocusing local efforts and existing resources. Projects can be developed in partnership with businesses, community organisations, councils and state and federal governments.

The NSW Government's website: www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au has been established as a clearing house of information for communities about program and project funding sources, research tips, techniques, case studies and ideas for community development.



The NSW Department of State and Regional Development has a number of programs that focus on small community development, including business expansion and retention:

www.dsrd.nsw.gov.au

For communities interested in renewal through improved facilities and services, programs under the auspices of the Departments of Sport and Recreation (www.dsr.nsw.gov.au) and the Local Government (www.dlg.nsw.gov.au) can provide advice and examples of how other communities have tackled these issues.

Other Australian states also have useful links to successful programs and projects. You can find these links at: Queensland: www.qld.gov.au; Victoria: www.vic.gov.au; South Australia: www.sa.gov.au; Western Australia: www.wa.gov.au ; Tasmania: www.tas.gov.au.