

# contents

## Self help module 3: Collaboration and strategic planning

### The community and strategic planning 1

What is a Strategic Plan?  
Why do strategic planning?  
The foundations of strategic planning  
Collaboration and values  
Scoping your program

### The strategic planning process 6

The four steps in the strategic planning process  
The community workshops  
What's in a Strategic Plan?

### The steps in the process 9

#### *Step one: Gathering information – Initial research*

Know what's 'out there'  
Some tools for step one  
Methods of research  
What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step one? 15  
– A situational analysis

#### *Step two: Setting direction – deciding where you are going 15*

The Initial Community Workshop  
Some tools for step two  
What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step two? 18  
– A vision statement  
– A mission statement  
– A SWOT analysis  
– Key result areas  
– Objectives

#### *Step three: Preparing for action – deciding how to do it 23*

Strategic Planning Workshop  
What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step three? 24  
– Actions  
– Performance indicators

#### *Step four: Taking action 27*

Communicating through the plan  
Implementing the strategic plan  
Monitoring the plan

### Making workshops work 29

Ingredients for success  
Checklist of things to do 30  
Assembling the participants for your workshops  
Potential workshop participants  
Developing a communication strategy  
Using a workshop facilitator  
Initial Community Workshop – sample agendas 34  
Strategic Planning Workshop – sample agenda 35  
Timeline for a workshop  
Notes for small group leaders – an example

### Contacts 38

module

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## The foundations of strategic planning

Community strategic planning is based on six principles:

### Empowerment

Strategic planning must empower a community to make changes and control its own destiny, so members look forward with an optimistic attitude.

It is crucial that the community owns the strategic planning process and there is a broad base of support. It requires imagination and effort to communicate the benefits of involvement in the most suitable way to each part of the community. However, the value that flows from involving the wider community is well worth the effort.

### Leadership

The strategic planning process needs leaders who are committed to the future of the community and are strategic thinkers who see the 'big picture'. They need to carry the process through from initial planning to implementation and evaluation. They must consistently paint the vision for others and motivate them to be involved.

The strategic planning process should also be a way of involving and fostering new leaders. Good leadership involves succession planning – when some leaders bow out, others will carry on.

### Building on skills

Strategic planning aims to build community confidence, by developing skills and knowledge and providing tools for those who want to be involved. It identifies and capitalises on every community asset – business people and residents, young and old, male and female. The Strategic Plan identifies skill gaps and how to fill them.

### Entrepreneurship

Strategic planning must help the community identify and seize chances. While the Plan provides a framework, community members must still be encouraged to have their antennae out, so the community can quickly capitalise on opportunities.

Strategic planning and implementation requires a willingness to take risks. As well as celebrating successes, the community must also accept failure as a learning experience.

### Authenticity

People in a community must be given the opportunity to identify the 'truths' about their community from their own experiences. A Strategic Plan should flow from the needs and priorities of the community as perceived by its members, not outsiders. This is the only way to ensure that projects are appropriate and sustainable.

### Diversity

In strategic planning the diversity of experience and wishes are accepted. It is acknowledged that different people can view the same thing in entirely different ways. There should be a willingness to accept different, even opposing views, and find middle ground between them. If this is done well, a Strategic Plan becomes a powerful shared vision.

## Collaboration and values

A lot of research has been done recently about resilient and productive communities. It revealed that communities collaborate in very particular ways. Productive community members:

- actively and enthusiastically participate in a shared purpose
- have a high level of trust in each other
- test their trust through networking
- communicate and interact laterally rather than through power hierarchies
- reinforce and reward behaviour which supports the common good.

There is strong evidence that community collaboration flows from a shared set of values. The strategic planning process helps build these.

Here are some values that apply to resilient and productive communities. You may like to discuss them with your community as participants begin their planning workshops. Perhaps they could form part of the agreement which members of your community make with each other.



### Some 'collaborative' values

- We are committed to our shared vision and these values
- We aim to involve everyone in discussion and decision making
- We tackle priorities, needs and threats head on
- We value people as people, not because of their status
- We take on optimistic views of others' motivations
- We know that conflict can be a creative force and we resolve it fairly and productively
- We welcome the new and risky
- We want to maintain strong networks between different parts of our community
- We believe that a favour given now will be returned later
- We believe that self-interest is a losing game
- We believe that working for the common good is good for all – especially our children.

### Other community's values

For their Strategic Plan, Merriwa chose some succinct statements about values and standards that they felt were relevant to their community:

- Leadership and integrity
- Initiative and planning
- Professionalism and caring
- Excellence and efficiency
- Quality of life and employment
- Identity and independence.

Scone's Plan has 'Special considerations' that say a lot about their community and how they choose to run their program. These are:

- Preserving and enhancing the rural lifestyle enjoyed by residents
- Involving as many communities as possible
- Acknowledging in our projects the diversity in the shire – in people, lifestyles and economic base
- Involving and supporting our valuable network of volunteers in all projects
- A philosophy of maintaining and adding to existing resources
- Continual liaison between community groups to increase communication and knowledge.

## Scoping your program

Before you start, think about the scope of your program.

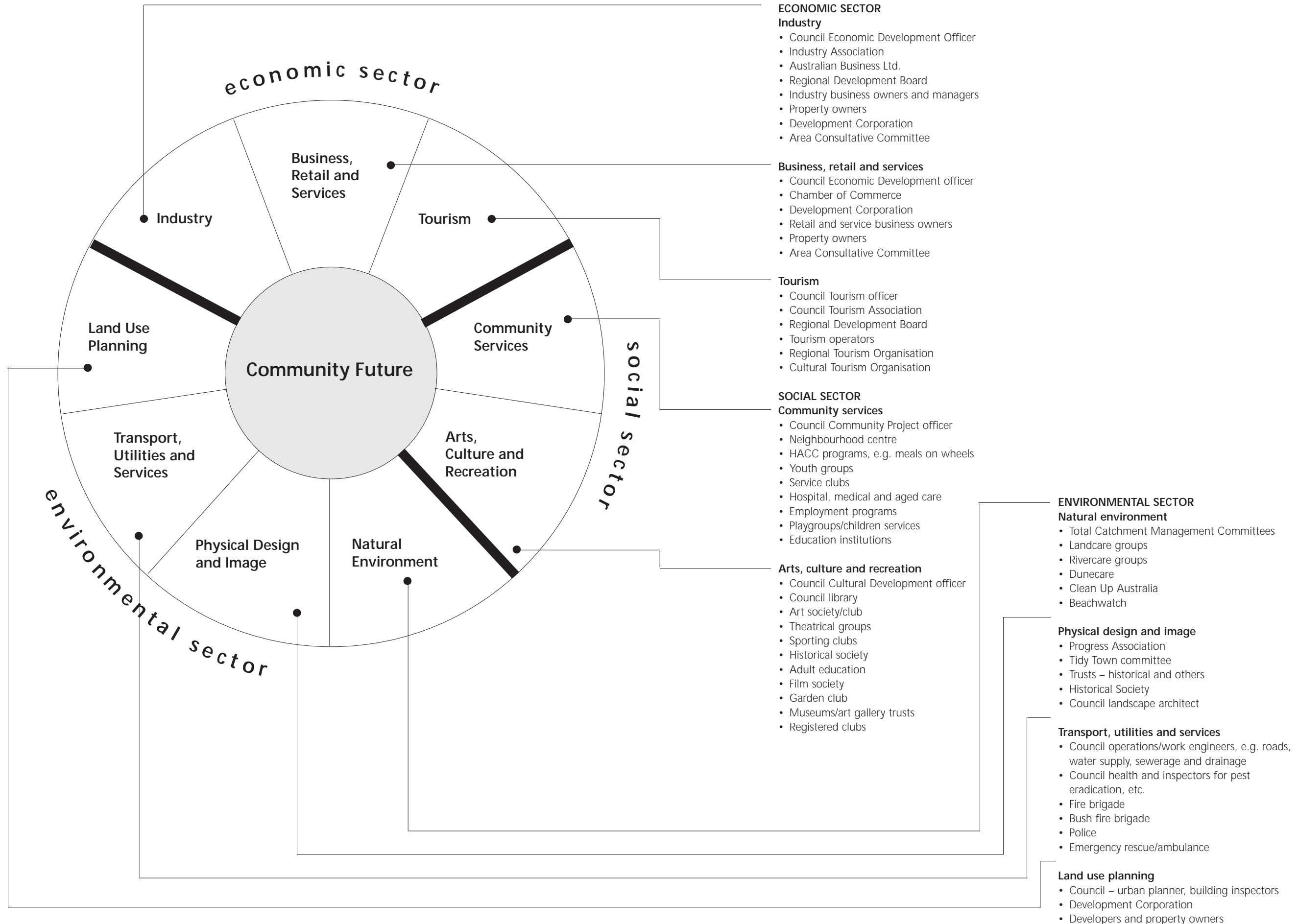
Suburbs, towns and communities are organic things. They have visible and hidden linkages. A shift in one part causes rearrangement in another. An upturn in business activity, for example, may lead to:

- an increase in employment
- a demand for employee training and/or
- a lessening need for some community services.

Because the parts of a community are so interconnected, it is sometimes difficult to decide on the scope of your program, where it should start or stop. However, programs work well if their scope is clearly spelt out from the beginning. This allows them to gain maximum spin off from the activities of other groups and to avoid duplication.

A clear focus and boundaries are vital to a good Strategic Plan. The diagram on pages 4 and 5 shows areas of action that contribute to the present and future quality of life in a community. They fall into three broad areas: economic, environmental and social. Within each are a number of sectors. Some typical groups that work in each sector are shown.





It is helpful to map the organisations that are already working in each of these sectors in your community. This allows you to see the gaps and to identify more clearly the role of the Main Street/Small Towns program.

Most Main Street/Small Towns programs concentrate on the 'Business, retail and services' and 'Physical design and image' sectors. Others include 'Tourism' and 'Industry'. Still others see 'Transport, utilities and services' as key factors that can affect the achievement of their objectives.

The strength of a Main Street/Small Towns program comes from staying focused on your main sectors while being aware of the effect of broader factors and players. It is then possible to identify strategies to create productive partnerships, develop or remove blockages. Strategic thinking about these types of linkages is one of the key attributes of a leader in local economic development



# The strategic planning process

## The four steps in the strategic planning process

There are many ways of strategic planning. A community needs to determine what will suit it best and tailor the process to its needs.

This module divides the process into four steps and suggests some things to do. It is designed to help those who are responsible for the strategic planning process.

However, don't feel constrained by this approach. Use or discard it as you see fit. If you think a better method will suit your community, by all means, use it.

With this in mind, feel free to borrow or improve on the process described here.



**Step one**  
**GATHERING INFORMATION**

What do we know about our place and community?  
What do we know about what's 'out there' that may affect us?

**Things to do**

Initial research is undertaken by the sponsoring body, interim committee and/or interim coordinator.  
A situational analysis is completed.

**Step two**  
**SETTING DIRECTION**

Where do we want to go?

**Things to do**

An Initial Community Workshop uses the gathered information to set direction and develop:

- a vision
- mission statement
- SWOT analysis
- key result areas
- objectives.

The first draft is circulated and comments and ideas incorporated.  
Further research may be undertaken as needed.  
Publicity is generated for the next workshop.

**Step three**  
**PREPARING FOR ACTION**

How will we get there?  
How do we know that we have arrived?

**Things to do**

A Strategic Planning workshop reviews outcomes/objectives from the first workshop and develops:

- actions including tasks with responsibilities, resources and dates
- performance indicators.

A final draft is written up and the draft plan is circulated for comment.  
The final Strategic Plan is accepted and publicised.

**Step four**  
**TAKING ACTION**

**Things to do**

The Plan is implemented – the project plans and work plan are developed and carried out.  
The Plan's progress is monitored regularly and reviewed each year.



## The community workshops

The major part of a Strategic Plan will be developed during two events – the Initial Community Workshop and the Strategic Planning Workshop. A professional facilitator assists in ensuring these workshops are productive.

Two other factors also help ensure their success:

- effective promotion to ensure that the community understands the nature and purpose of the workshops and are motivated to be involved
- careful advance planning to ensure that you get the most out of the time spent at the workshops.

The last part of this module 'Making meetings work' covers aspects to consider in planning, organising and running successful workshops.

**The workshops should:**

- increase community understanding of the Main Street/Small Towns program
- draw out community views
- generate new ideas and test their feasibility
- get endorsement of directions
- identify community leaders for the program
- identify community assets and resources to help implement the program.





## What's in a Strategic Plan?

Following are the common elements in a Strategic Plan. The broadest of these is at the top and the most specific is at the bottom.

A Strategic Plan generally has a time frame of two to three years, although it is possible to plan for longer. Objectives and actions for the first year are generally developed in some detail. After the first year the Plan is reviewed, progress identified, new priorities determined and actions and tasks are developed for the second year.

<p><b>Vision</b> A broad statement of the future that the community wants to create for itself.</p> <p><b>Mission</b> The way the organisation achieves the vision.</p> <p><b>Situation analysis</b> Examines issues relevant to the plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the capabilities and limitations of the community</li> <li>• the factors outside the community that will affect achieving its vision.</li> </ul> <p><b>SWOT analysis</b> Identifies the community's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.</p> <p><b>Key results areas</b> The major areas of activity where a plan must achieve if it is to be successful.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> Realistic, concise statements about the results the plan aims to achieve. Objectives are grouped in key result areas and given a priority.</p> <p><b>Actions</b> The careful choice of the right or best options for achieving the objectives. Responsibilities, resources and target dates are identified.</p> <p><b>Tasks</b> The fundamental steps to complete the actions. If the actions are complicated, tasks are spelt out in project plans or the coordinator's work plan.</p> <p><b>Performance indicators</b> Measures designed to assess the results. They are important and useful pieces of information. Performance indicators are monitored regularly and compared to benchmarks, standards or targets.</p>
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## The steps in the process

### Step One:

#### Gathering information – initial research

It is crucial that all strategic planning is built on a solid foundation of useful and relevant information. Although community members will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the workshops, they must also have access to additional key data so they can make informed choices about options and priorities.

Before the strategic planning process starts, a sponsoring organisation will typically have held a community meeting to test support for the Main Street/Small Towns Program, formed an interim committee and appointed an interim coordinator. It will also have undertaken some basic research about the community.

In the lead up to the community workshops, the interim coordinator and interim committee improve and expand on this basic pool of knowledge by undertaking further research. This will be used at the two strategic planning workshops to develop a SWOT analysis and to choose priority objectives. It also forms the basis of the 'situational analysis' section of your Strategic Plan. It can be used later when project plans are being developed.

The information can be hard-edged, such as business statistics, and can also contain 'softer' information such as the perceptions of people, their wishes or dreams, or the myths that motivate their community. Both types of data collection tools are provided on pages 11-13.



#### What do you research?

The 'gathering information' stage aims to answer the questions:

- What do we know about our place and community?
- What do we know about what's 'out there' in the world beyond our community that may affect us?

#### Know about your place and community

This information gathering and research aims to identify key factors inside your community that will affect the program. It should result in a realistic view of your community that challenges preconceptions. While strengths and weaknesses may be exposed, this puts planning on a firm footing and ensures that your proposed actions address the real issues.

Some questions that might be answered about your community may be:

- What basic facts do we know?
- What trends can we see?
- What are our good features and competitive advantages?
- What do we know about our clients, customers or visitors?
- What benefits does our community have for them?
- What would draw visitors and ex-residents back?
- What local skills and resources do we already have?
- What skills and resources do we need?
- What are our current beliefs, values and attitudes?
- What are the needs and aspirations of different sections of the community, especially the young people?



### Start with the information that is easiest to get

It is a good idea for the people doing the information gathering to begin by assembling relevant information that is readily available. If they understand what it is being used for and have no confidentiality concerns, a number of local groups and organisations may be willing to share their information. For example:

- The local council has reports relevant to the Main Street/Small Towns program spanning many years e.g. traffic, urban design or heritage studies. It will also have a bank of statistical information and other reports, such as the State of the Environment Report, that it may be willing to make available. Also, don't forget the librarian.
- Local community organisations compile a range of information for their reporting or funding purposes that may be useful.
- The local historical society or museum will be a treasure trove of information about your area's past.
- Local real estate agents have a fund of current knowledge about such matters as accommodation, land values, house prices and business turnovers.
- The local newspaper will have a news file, a photo library, a database of advertisers and in some areas may also have assembled the local telephone directory.
- An Internet search will reveal local businesses and organisations which are tuned into the new technologies.
- The arts community and theatre groups will be aware of many trends in your community.

### Then focus on researching the main community issues

Further information gathering and research then focuses on the issues that most affect your community. These are generally the ones that prompted the community to take up the Main Street/Small Towns program in the first place.



## Know what's out there

This stage of gathering information looks at the critical issues outside your community that may have a significant impact.

This analysis is not always done well because local concerns tend to dominate people's thinking. This is understandable because they are more 'burning', close to home and therefore easier to identify. Even so, it is important to look more widely, because outside opportunities and threats may be crucial to the community's future.

So, take some time to look beyond your borders. In doing so, here are some aspects you may consider.

### What will be the impact on your community of economic factors such as:

- a movement in interest rates
- changes in investment, saving and spending patterns
- an alteration in employment trends
- changes in domestic and overseas markets (especially on vulnerable local industries)
- mobility of exchange rates?

### How will developments in technology in these areas impact on your community?

- training
- transport
- the Internet and e-commerce
- telecommunications including mobile phones
- working from home
- phone shopping and banking.

### What is the impact of markets and competitors on your community?

- How many other communities are similar to yours?
- What goods, services and experiences do people want now and in the future?
- Is there a market for what your community is offering? Is it developing, growing, maturing or declining?



### What is the possible impact of government, politics and law on your community?

- What funding or other programs are available?
  - What decisions by government, or changes in government spending or presence may affect you?
  - Are there any overseas political changes that will affect customers, suppliers or raw materials to your community's key businesses?
- What impact will **social attitudes, patterns and behaviours** have on your community?
- What 'quality of life' needs affect you?
  - Will changes in leisure, holidays and lifestyles affect you?
  - Do crime, drug and other social issues affect you?
  - How will changing family patterns and an aging population affect you?

While your local sources may come in handy in gathering this sort of information, the following tools will also be useful.

## Some tools for step one

While you will need to conduct research throughout the life of your program, the information gathering and research you do before the workshops should be chosen on the basis of the issues likely to be raised.

Here are some tools you may find useful both before the workshops and later on. They are divided into:

- sources of information and
- methods of research



## Sources of information

### Australian Bureau of Statistics

#### Community Profiles for New South Wales

The *1996 Basic Community Profile* provides data at national, state and local levels. It is a good place to start if you are looking for basic demographic data about your area. It provides broad information such as:

- total number of people, their age and sex
- numbers born in Australia and overseas
- numbers born overseas and speaking a language other than English
- numbers of employed and unemployed
- individual and household incomes.

Access to data can be obtained through the community builders website:  
<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/ext/articles/research/profiles.html>

#### Retail Census

Detailed information about retail activity in your local government area (by ABS Statistical Local Area) can be found in the *Retail Census* publication, such as:

- number of shops
  - total retail employment
  - total annual retail wages and salaries paid
  - total annual retail turnover
  - total retail floor space
  - retail turnover per person employed
  - annual turnover per square metre of floor space.
- This information can be made even more useful by:
- calculating average sales rate by different retail categories (by dividing total retail floor space in any one category by total shared turnover)
  - making an estimate of your town centre turnover as a proportion of the total Statistical Local Area
  - calculating the floor space in your town centre by commodity group, and calculating its share of Statistical Local Area floor space and hence turnover.



### Domestic Consumption Publication

This publication allows an estimate of the consumption patterns of an average family. It can be used in conjunction with the *NSW Community Profile* information on numbers of families and incomes to establish demand for particular goods and services.

### Household Expenditure Survey

The survey provides detailed information of expenditure by Australian households aggregated by region. It allows you to:

- compare average expenditure by household in your region with Sydney or New South Wales as a whole
- estimate the size of a market in dollar terms by retail category in your Local Government Area (by updating the Retail Census to current prices using the Consumer Price Index)
- estimate expenditure leakage by using the Household Expenditure Survey data in conjunction with Retail Census data.

You can receive assistance (for a fee) with this type of analysis from Plant International, one company assisting small business. See the *Contacts* section for details.

### Eighty 20

With the help of your Business Enterprise Centre you will be able to manipulate census data about your local area to draw conclusions about the viability of marketing and business strategies. The details are at the end of this module.

### Government departments

Some other sources of information are the regional offices of NSW government departments. You could try:

- Department of State and Regional Development
- NSW Premier's Department Special Projects Division
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Department of Education & Training
- Department of Health
- NSW Tourism
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- NSW Police Service, including the Bureau of Crimes Statistics and Research.

Some Federal government bodies, such as the Australia Council will also be helpful. The best way to begin research is at the government websites. See the end of this module for contact information.

### Methods of research

#### One on one interviews

Interviews are rich sources of information about your local community, people's perceptions and attitudes about issues. However, it is important to remember that while a good sample of interviews will reveal a range of views, they will not reveal the extent to which these views are held. Interviews help you develop an effective questionnaire which will test the hypothesis developed during your interviews with a wider sample. The *communitybuilders* website provides information about survey design. See the *Contacts* section at the end of this module for details.

#### Focus groups

Focus groups are non-directive 'group interviews' – the researcher does not direct discussion by asking questions, but allows the issues to emerge naturally in the order determined by the group. The order of priority is a finding in its own right.

Customarily a group of 8 to 10 people is invited to discuss a topic and participants are encouraged to begin by talking a little about themselves. Issues are only explored or clarified after the group has raised them in discussion. The researcher delves further when this happens until all items on the content schedule of items to be investigated have emerged.



### Surveys/questionnaires

Surveys are a great means of understanding the attitudes, beliefs, needs, wishes and behaviours of residents, visitors, businesses, shoppers or other target groups.

Surveys can be conducted in a number of ways. They can be:

- filled out and collected on the spot (sometimes with the assistance of the researcher)
- dropped off and picked up
- mailed back
- emailed backed or filled out on-line at a website
- conducted on the telephone.

There are a number of types of surveys. Some you might consider are:

#### A consumer shopper survey

These surveys investigate expectations and reasons for shopping locally or going elsewhere. Examples are at the *communitybuilders* website and in *Ready Set Go: Action Manual for Community Economic Development*. See the *Contacts* section for details.

#### A visitor survey

A visitor survey determines what attracts people to the area, what may draw them back and what was less appealing to them. See the 'Street/Beach Questionnaire' in *Ready Set Go: Action Manual for Community Economic Development* and the Wisconsin's 'First Impressions Survey' available from your DSRD Client Manager.

#### A community survey

These are broad surveys which investigate 'quality of life' issues and perceptions of residents. They cover a wide range of areas from education and health to telecommunications and business. The '1998 Nebraska Rural Poll' and 'New Residents Survey' are available from your DSRD Client Manager.

#### A survey of ex-residents

An ex-resident survey investigates why people have left and what may encourage them to return. The North Dakota 'Project Back Home' survey is also available from your DSRD Client Manager.

#### A business survey

The DSRD Business Retention & Expansion Program provides a comprehensive mechanism for local communities to collect information on the business make-up of their local economy. Contact your Client Manager for details on the BREP.

### A skills audit

A skills audit requires a team to examine the Strategic Plan in some detail. The idea is to assemble a clear picture of the skills and experience that will be needed to implement the priority projects. When a list of required skills has been drawn up, it is possible to identify gaps and to determine whether the capability could be developed locally, or whether the skills should be 'bought in'. A plan needs to be developed for either developing the skills locally or for raising funds for employing a consultant or expert for a particular purpose.

### A skills register

A skills register records the interests and skills of community members. More importantly, it indicates whether they will be willing to contribute their skills and time to projects. It can be done simply by asking residents and businesspeople to fill out a form.

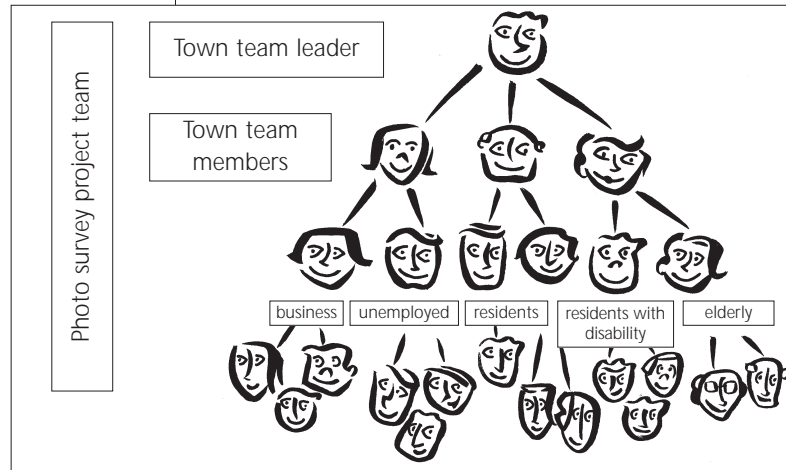




### Cabonne Country 'First Impressions' Photographic Survey

Cabonne Shire decided to evaluate the issues and needs of its eight villages through a photographic survey. In doing so it chose an intuitive approach to research that was very successful in getting to the heart of the matter.

Each town developed a project team to participate in the following way.



The team leader was briefed by the coordinator, and then told the town team members about the aims of the project and their role.

Each team member was responsible for getting a representative from certain sections of the local community – as labelled in the picture.

Each of these people were responsible for soliciting two more participants.

The result was a team of 10 people on the project, plus 12 additional representatives at the public meeting – 32 in all.

Each town was given a disposable camera and over three months each of the original team of ten were asked to photograph six likes and six dislikes in their local community.

A community workshop was held in each village where photographers located their sites on a town map and colour-coded and numbered their photos accordingly. The photographers had 15 minutes to talk about their likes and dislikes and other participants were encouraged to put additional information forward as the photographs jogged their memories.

Each public meeting was facilitated and the emphasis was on keeping information flowing. The emphasis was on focusing on positive strategies. The 'likes' became those areas that could be maintained and promoted. The 'dislikes' became opportunities for change.

A list of priority areas was developed and circulated to the village team, who were asked to verify the accuracy of each report and prioritise the five most important projects. A list of these is on page 26 of this module.

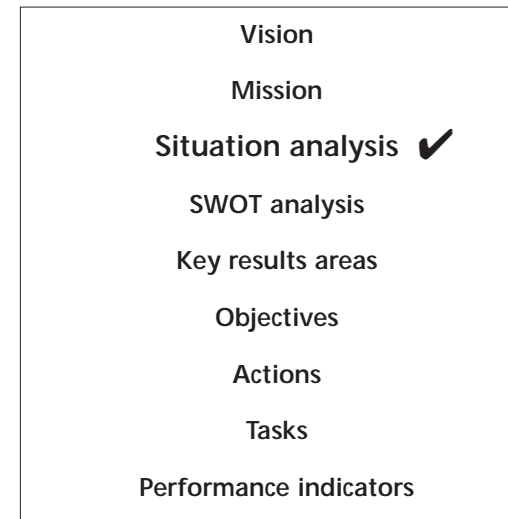
A strong picture of the Shire was built up from this very representative process. People who were involved in the villages at the outset became very motivated and hard working.

There are now over 800 photos of Cabonne with information collected from over 72 photographers, as well as those people who attended the public meeting to express their view. The photos tell the story of Cabonne with elegance and accuracy. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Intuitive tools like this are effective in creating an understanding of a community's 'sense of place'. The Cabonne Country approach permits many viewpoints from different parts of the community and the shows both strong and weak points of the area. Finally it created a shared picture of what people value, and in doing so encouraged people to take leadership roles. By using the photos in locations such as displays, advertising, the media and reports, ownership was created at a 'grass roots' level. Everyone wants to be a photographer!



### What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step one?



#### A situational analysis

The situational analysis section of your Strategic Plan presents your information and research findings in an accessible form. There is no single formula for what it should contain. However, some suggestions are:

- the background to your program and story so far
- any present or planned structural arrangements for the program and committee, including connections with other organisations
- a description of the key issues which led to your program starting
- a summary of the key findings of your information gathering and research showing the sources
- the implications of the findings for your Strategic Plan.

The situational analysis is a useful resource for the community workshops, particularly for developing a SWOT analysis. It will also be helpful later in developing project plans, the coordinator's work plan and for reviewing the Strategic Plan after its first year of implementation.

### Step two:

#### Setting direction – deciding where you are going

##### The Initial Community Workshop

In the early stages of a program, the Initial Community Workshop is a community meeting which generates enthusiasm, gathers support and motivates people to be involved. It needs to be a high energy evening with maximum involvement. This step of the planning process seeks to answer the question:

##### Where do we want to go?

The workshop needs as wide a representation of groups in the community as possible. A list of possible participants is provided on page 31.

It is important to ensure that everyone understands what the workshop is about. The aims of sustainable growth and improving local quality of life must be clearly communicated to the community. It is especially important that business people understand the significance of the program for them.

It is a good idea to see key stakeholders in person. Publicity flyers and articles in local media should send a clear and consistent message about the aims of the workshop and the benefits of becoming involved for different groups.

At the Initial Community Workshop a number of strategies can be used to get people thinking. For example:

- a speaker whose energy and enthusiasm about their own project, business or interest in the community economic development field inspires others
- a presentation by someone from another program who lets the group know what the Main Street/ Small Towns program is about and what can be achieved
- an outline of the research findings so far that gives insights into the issues affecting the community in an interesting and compelling way.



**Tip**

- Achieving visible short term goals are essential to keep up momentum in the program
- Follow up publicity in the local media will raise interest in the next workshop.

This is the time for those present to paint their picture for the future with a vision and mission statement. The group should identify community issues and the needs that they think are most important in the SWOT analysis and objectives.

The workshop must be interactive with a balance of presentation and 'doing' in plenary and small group sessions. It should provide everyone with an opportunity to contribute his or her opinions, ideas and preferences. The Making workshops work section in this module provides some ideas that communities have found useful.

The Initial Community Workshop may also see the emergence of early leaders and the formation of an interim committee. Some people may also volunteer their time for particular projects.

A facilitator can be used to get the most out of the workshops. Eligible communities may apply to DSRD for assistance towards the cost of a facilitator. Contact your DSRD Client Manager for further information and a Main Street/Small Towns program application.

**Some tools for step two**

**Techniques for group work**

There are a number of tried and true methods for generating ideas and for getting a fresh perspective on objectives and actions.

The community-builders website and the *Ready Set Go Action – Manual for Community Economic Development* publication both provide a wealth of strategies for working in groups. See the *Contacts* section at the end of this module for these resources.

Some of the group work techniques from these and other sources are outlined briefly below.

**Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a commonly used technique to generate ideas and solutions. The process involves presenting a problem or opportunity and generating as many ideas as possible in a specified time. Brainstorming works best with a group (between 6 and 10). Criticism is suspended and no judgments are made at this stage. All ideas are accepted. The more wacky or fun the better.

The ideas are recorded so everyone can see them. The facilitator's role is to keep ideas coming by creating a positive climate and discouraging negativity. The results are displayed around the room and evaluated and shortlisted later.

**Unlikely alliances**

This technique can be used for finding new applications or uses for old products, services or resources. For example, you may generate a list of an area's resources and list them:

- e.g. historical courthouse
- park
- river
- motels
- bed and breakfasts
- dairy farms.

Then a second list of potential users is created:

- e.g. parents
- children
- youth
- people with disabilities
- unemployed
- businesspeople, etc.

Each list is torn into strips and placed into two hats. One strip is drawn from each hat. The task is to find as many uses as possible for the resource by the users.

'Unlikely alliances' is good for thinking outside the square of traditional expectations.

**Yellow 'stickies' exercises**

This is a tried and true method of gathering and prioritising ideas in strategic planning. In this process each person has a limited number of yellow sticky papers (usually 2 to 3) and must think carefully about how they use them.

In the process the group considers an issue, for example, the objectives of their program. Each person writes his or her preferred objectives on the yellow stickies. The first person places his or her yellow stickies on a wall or board. The next person reads the first ones and places his choices next to the first one if they are alike, or starts new columns if they are not. At the end of this procedure, stickies with like ideas will be grouped together to form categories which could be key result areas or themes.



Further group discussion is required to clarify any ambiguous ideas or reduce duplications. Also, it is often helpful to identify connections between groupings. It is possible that yellow stickies may belong to more than one grouping, or that groupings may need to be amalgamated or divided.

The number of yellow stickies in a grouping may be a rough guide to the priority of that objective. But not always. It is good to test this with the 'vote by yellow sticky method'. Once again, all objectives are listed and participants may use their 2 to 3 yellow stickies to vote.

**Metaphors**

Often it is good to use left brain capacity to get a new slant on things. Charades, drawing, modelling, creating can break down barriers between people and foster teamwork. For example, a small group can be asked to draw their community as a farm. Without knowing it people tell their story through explaining the metaphors that they choose. Who is the horse? Who are the chickens?

The process of working in this way as a group can free up new ways of thinking. It also can be a way of identifying dynamics which otherwise might be hard to verbalise.

Some warm-up exercises to get people in the mood can also use drawings and symbols. Try:

- If this community was an animal, what would it be?
- If our future was a colour, what would it be?
- If our streetscape was a sport, what would it be?
- If our businesses were a piece of fruit, what would it be?

There are many more. Discussion in small groups about the drawings may help the most reserved participants find the words to describe their perceptions to others.

**Every picture tells a story**

Another technique of this type is to use photos as metaphors for a topic or issue. About 50 photos should be available for people to choose. These should be unusual, interesting and have a range of subjects. Participants are asked to choose one or more photos that they think fit the topic under discussion. They then explain to others in a small group why the photo they chose reminded them of the topic. The stories they tell reveal a lot about what people think, feel and value.

**Jargon**

This can be a fun and interesting way of breaking the ice for a new group, promoting communication and making everyone aware of jargon. Each person is given a card with a jargon word on it. They must explain its meaning without using the word itself. The group must guess the word as soon as possible. A variation on this for more established groups is to use acronyms. To describe the organisation concerned, the person with the card must understand what it does, and the listeners must learn it as well.

**Visioning – myths and storytelling**

Some approaches to community research avoid analytical models. Instead researchers use intuitive methods to help communities express their collective experience in terms of stories, myth-making or another expressive forms. Rather than standing back as outside observers recording information, the researchers become involved in the 'meaning making' with the community.

The benefits of a 'story telling' approach are that it is a:

- different way for the deeper perceptions and understanding of a community to become explicit
- predictor of a community's expectations of each other, and organisations, groups and government agencies and how they will act in the future
- practical means of communicating the findings of this type of research to others.

The visioning strategy is another way for the community to develop its vision and mission statements.

An approach to visioning is outlined in *Community Participation in Practice: A Practical Guide*. See the *Contacts* section of this module for further details.





## What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step two?



The results of an Initial Community Workshop will typically be:

- an increased understanding of issues affecting the local community
- a shared vision for the community's future
- a mission statement for the program.

Depending on the initial research work and how quickly the group proceeds, further outputs of the workshop might be:

- a SWOT analysis
- the development of key result areas
- a list of objectives and priorities for these.

Here are the elements of a Strategic Plan.

### A vision statement

A vision statement is a statement of direction which focuses on what a community wants to achieve. It generally answers the question:

*What do we want our community to be like in 10 or 20 years?*

Effective vision statements appeal to the heart. They are passionate and intuitive and inspire people to work towards the ideals they express. The key words of a vision statement capture the main ideas, making them easily said and remembered. The final test of a vision statement is that everyone owns it.

Here are some examples of vision statements:

*'Lismore – the preferred regional destination for people to shop, visit and conduct business.'*

*'Uralla – to have Uralla Shire recognised and experienced by residents and visitors as a distinct, vibrant and prominent commercial, cultural and community region that is reflective of its unique history, heritage, cultural and natural assets.'*

*'Dungog – a sustainable commercial centre with a rural village atmosphere, which is welcoming and reflects community feeling and pride.'*

**'Cabonne Country**  
 – a safe, friendly, caring community lifestyle  
 – a healthy picturesque environment  
 – a prosperous future.'

*'Gulgong – To initiate and develop a shared vision of Gulgong as a community enjoying sustainable growth through our diverse talents and resources enhanced by our living history and friendly country atmosphere.'*



### A mission statement

A mission statement expresses how the community will reach its vision. It is a statement of purpose for the community, the committee and coordinator. It is a call to action.

Some mission statements are:

*'The Newtown South community will create an attractive, alternative vibrant and viable shopping area based on its diversity and creativity by the Year 2000.'*

*'Katoomba – community, business and government working together to improve our naturally gifted town.'*

*'Merriwa – building a prosperous future for all through inspiring effective teamwork and involving the community.'*

*'The Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizen's Incorporated was formed to promote the economic and environmental welfare of Mathoura-Picnic Point and to create community awareness and pride.'*

**Tip**  
 Vision and mission statements should be short, simple, clear and concise.  
 They stay the same for the life of the Strategic Plan.

### A SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a succinct statement about the internal strengths and weaknesses of a community and the opportunities and threats from the external environment. It uses the information gathered in the situational analysis and the knowledge and experience of the group. It is often developed by brainstorming in a plenary session or in small group work.

A SWOT is a strategic snapshot which helps to identify objectives and actions which will help a community:

- build on strengths
- improve or negate weaknesses
- capitalise on opportunities
- reduce or neutralise threats.

It is also a quick form of risk analysis. The SWOT analysis should be reviewed as part of the annual Strategic Plan review.





Here is a SWOT analysis completed by Newtown South business people and residents for their 1997/98 Plan. We will follow through Newtown South to see how the parts of their Plan relate to each other. The following pages show how the SWOT analysis was used to identify and develop priority actions and tasks.

Newtown South Main Street Project SWOT Analysis	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good tenancy mix (variety of shops)</li> <li>• Good variety of entertainment venues, restaurant and cafes</li> <li>• Successful track record of showcasing these at events e.g. Feastability food event</li> <li>• Large local market (within walking distance) with increasing income</li> <li>• Reputation as an alternative, exotic shopping venue</li> <li>• Friendly retailers, diversity of cultures accepted</li> <li>• Increasing awareness of Main Street Program among retailers</li> <li>• Good public transport to and from city</li> <li>• Heritage buildings</li> <li>• Affordable retail rents</li> <li>• Creativity of area.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing interest in Newtown as a tourist destination</li> <li>• Changing consumer shopping habits – strip shopping back in favour, cafe society, search for the new, etc.</li> <li>• Cooperative Council</li> <li>• Joint Development Control Plan and Urban Study adopted by South Sydney Council and Marrickville Council</li> <li>• Positive response from Australian Taxation Office</li> <li>• Council proposing to consider S94 contribution to cover streetscape improvement</li> <li>• Longest continuous open air shopping strip in Sydney.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run down appearance – pavements, awnings, lighting, facades</li> <li>• Uncoordinated trading days and hours</li> <li>• Lack of public space</li> <li>• Polluted streets – traffic, dogs, noise</li> <li>• Lack of service facilities – banks, supermarkets, government offices, etc.</li> <li>• Length of streets – large area for customers to walk</li> <li>• Different characters of Enmore Road and King Street</li> <li>• Lack of parking</li> <li>• Substance abusers</li> <li>• Constraints of heritage legislation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty about Council commitment to capital works</li> <li>• Broadway Shopping Centre/Metro Shopping Centre</li> <li>• Unrealistic rental increases in current retail climate</li> <li>• Loss of point-of-difference (do not want to be another Paddington)</li> <li>• Shift in consumer spending away from retail to entertainment</li> <li>• Technology – Internet, shopping catalogues, etc.</li> </ul>

binding edge



**Newtown South Main Street Committee – from SWOT to actions**

Newtown South used elements of their SWOT to identify objects and actions. Here are some examples.

Newtown South built on the **strength** of their track record with the highly successful ‘Feastability’ food event to pitch to NSW Tourism for the right to run the 1999 ‘Eat Street Food Festival’. They won!

The program remedied part of its **weakness** of poor service facilities by successfully lobbying for an automatic teller machine in the lower end of King Street.

They capitalised on an **opportunity** by securing a free tax seminar on record keeping for café and restaurant businesses conducted by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). They also learnt about employment and GST requirements. The program turned the **threat** of Internet shopping into an opportunity by running some e-commerce training for traders. As many of the traders are wholesalers as well as retailers, using the technology has become a plus for their businesses.

**Key result areas**

Key result areas are the broad areas where the community must achieve results if it is to be successful. They are matched to objectives and stay the same for the life of the Plan.

When you have chosen your priority objectives some logical groupings become apparent. Some communities have used Department of State and Regional Development’s headings as key result areas, and have grouped their objectives under:

- Collaboration and strategic planning
- Business and economic development
- Marketing and promotion
- Physical design and image

Some communities found that other key result areas better suited their objectives:

*Wee Waa*

1. Organisation and functioning
2. Local economic development
3. Community facilities and cultural activities
4. Built environment.

*Katoomba*

1. Organisation and funding
2. Town built environment – function, layout and circulation
3. Town built environment – streetscape
4. Retail, services and commercial business development
5. Youth business development
6. Arts business development.

*Kempsey*

1. Image
2. Business promotion
3. Aboriginal culture
4. Youth
5. Art
6. Townscape
7. Infrastructure
8. Master plan.





**Objectives**

Objectives are the results you want to achieve through the actions specified in your Plan.

Generally, the strategic planning process generates a long list of objectives – there are always plenty of ideas. The issues in a SWOT analysis should suggest objectives. Discussion, voting or another method culls ‘wish list’ objectives, leaving those which can be achieved. From these the community chooses its priority objectives for next year. If it has a two or three-year plan, objectives are allocated to each year.

In the end there should not be too many objectives. The acrostic SMART can be useful in developing objectives. It is a reminder that they must be:

- Short
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic and
- Time limited.

A number of actions can contribute to the achievement of the same objective.

It is also important to have a mix of objectives – some that can be achieved readily and others which are more ambitious and will take longer. Especially in the first year, early visible achievements are crucial to keeping up enthusiasm and involvement through a sense that something is happening.

Here are the Newtown South Main Street program objectives for 1997–98 grouped under key result areas:

Organisation

- To continue to gain awareness and support of the Main Street program, stakeholders and the community

Business development

- To encourage innovative shop presentation and appearance.
- To attract interesting businesses to the area

Physical design

- To improve facade and awning appearance
- To improve streetscape (lighting, paving, plants).

Marketing

- To increase awareness of Newtown South as an attractive, alternative and vibrant shopping area.



**Step Three**

***Preparing for action – deciding how to do it***

**The Strategic Planning Workshop**

The Strategic Planning Workshop builds on the work of the Initial Community Workshop. It aims to strengthen community commitment to short and long term objectives and identify actions and tasks to achieve them.

Having set the direction, this stage of developing a Strategic Plan answers the questions:

*How will we get there?*

*How do we know that we have arrived?*

Ideally, many of the people at the Initial Community Workshop will also attend the Strategic Planning Workshop. It is good to have continuity, as there is less need for backtracking over work already done. Even so, if more people can be encouraged to attend, revisiting some work is a small price to pay for broader commitment.

Do not let too much time elapse between the two workshops. It is important to keep up momentum and have the work fresh in the mind of participants. A one, two or three week break is best.

At the Strategic Planning Workshop, the group often briefly reviews the vision and mission statements. It is likely that the objectives and key result areas suggested at the Initial Community Workshop will need to be tightened and tidied up so their structure and flow is clear. This would be done by the facilitator, interim coordinator or interim committee between the workshops. These should be presented to the group for endorsement.

There is often a lot of small group work at the Strategic Planning Workshop concentrating on action plans and performance indicators. These require logic and some emphasis on detail. It is important that the small group leader is well briefed about what is needed.

**Follow on work**

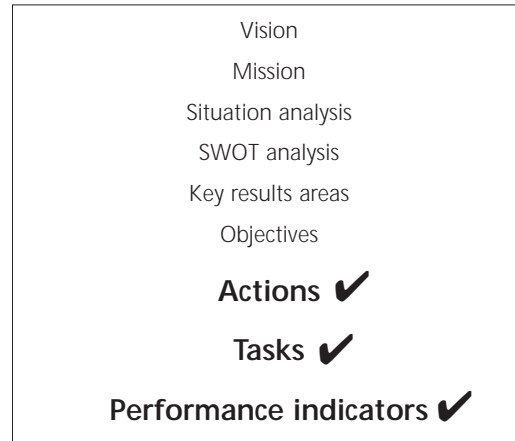
A good deal of the Strategic Plan will be complete at the end of the Strategic Planning Workshop. Often however, there is some detailed work to be completed by the facilitator, interim coordinator or interim committee.

Performance indicators can be difficult for groups and benefit from thought away from the pressures of a workshop session. After all they are the measures against which your success will be measured in the next year. Developing a small number of important indicators requires a whole program perspective.

In preparing the Strategic Plan for circulation, there will almost inevitably be some clarifying and ‘tidying up’ of the outputs of the workshop. This is acceptable as long as it honours the spirit of the group’s work and accurately reflects decisions that were made about key directions and priorities.



## What goes in to the Strategic Plan at step three?



The results of the Strategic Planning Workshop will typically be:

- a review of the objectives and key result areas
- endorsement of priority objectives
- actions including resources, responsibilities and time frames
- some performance indicators to help evaluate success.

### Actions

Actions are projects or discrete units of work which will achieve the priority objectives. They should be realistic and logical. Like objectives, actions are often suggested by the SWOT analysis.

There is often a long list of actions suggested at the Strategic Planning Workshop. Once again, not every project can go ahead and the group must choose the priority actions. As with objectives, there should be a mix of easy and difficult actions – to ensure early runs on the board.

Large and medium projects specified in a Strategic Plan require their own project plans and often a subcommittee or working group to implement them. (See the *Project Management* module in this series for how this happens). Other actions may be projects or activities that will be detailed in the coordinator's work plan.

### Performance indicators

Performance indicators are important pieces of information that let us know if we have been successful in achieving the results we want. It is possible to identify performance indicators by asking the following questions:

*What would we see if this objective was achieved?*

*What would we see if this action was completed?*

Page 25 shows an example from the Newtown South Main Street project of an objective with the priority actions and some performance indicators. They are often written like this on butcher's paper or a prepared overhead by a small group at the Strategic Planning Workshop. A template is at the end of this module.



Key Result Area: Organisation				
Objective: To continue to gain support and awareness of stakeholders for the Main Street Program.				
Actions	Who	When	Resources	Performance Indicator
<b>Bi-monthly newsletter</b> Produce and distribute a newsletter to business operators and property owners	Coordinator	Feb Aug Apr Oct Jun Dec	Set-up design, printing and distribution costs \$_____	6 newsletters produced No. of positive responses from recipients
<b>Walkabouts</b> Conduct face-to-face meetings with business operators	Coordinator	Ongoing	Time \$_____	All business operators contacted at least once a month
<b>Christmas party</b> Organise event jointly with Chamber of Commerce in local venue	Coordinator	15 December	Time \$_____	Event held No. of attendees Dollars raised
<b>Attend Council's Business Centres meetings</b> Attend meetings and act as spokesperson for program	Coordinator	Meeting dates	Postage costs	All meetings attended
<b>Distribute newsletter and promotional material</b> to Councillors, Council Directors and Business Centres Committee	Coordinator	2 weeks before the meeting	Postage costs	Newsletter distributed No. of positive responses
<b>Logo usage</b> Obtain maximum exposure for logo on all publications and sponsorship opportunities	Coordinator	Ongoing	Nil	Logo appeared on all printed material and on sponsored events

These performance indicators will clearly show that the actions have been achieved to a certain standard. However, they do not show whether the objective has been achieved. Other performance indicators will need to be developed for this purpose.

Two common sense performance indicators for the objective could be:

- Increased business owner involvement in two key retail projects. (A target percentage increase is set for each project based on the previous year's participation level e.g. an increase of 5%).
- An increase of positive responses in a survey of stakeholder satisfaction with the program. (A percentage target is set).

Some indicators for evaluation of the performance of the program as a whole are suggested in the *Monitoring and evaluation* module in this series.



**Complex programs**

As Newtown South serves one town centre, it was able to identify a single set of priority actions. However, because the Cabonne Country program covers a local government area and has eight participating towns, a different approach was taken. Actions were identified at two levels:

- the priority projects chosen by each town
- the priority projects at a regional level which emerge as common themes from the town projects.

Here they are:

**The town priority projects:**

**Canowindra**

- Town entrances
- Urban design study for the main street
- Improved parks and gardens

**Cargo**

- BMX track
- Bus shelter
- Swimming pool

**Cudal**

- Paint depot in heritage colours
- Paint community hall in heritage colours
- Bus shelter

**Cumnock**

- Tourist information board
- Urban design study for main street
- Upgrade golf club

**Eugowra**

- Banking and information facilities
- Install barbecue lighting and build toilet block at Apex Park
- Urban design study for the main street

**Manildra**

- Tourist signage
- Bus shelters
- Avenue of native plants through town

**Molong**

- Urban design study of main street
- Upgrade railway station
- Mitchell Highway safety study

**Yeoval**

- Street lighting in main business district
- Tourist signage
- Build roundabout

**Priority projects at a local government or shire level.**

- Access to new information technology including cyber café project
- Business retention and expansion project
- Sustainability – future funding for Small Towns Development
- Marketing and networking
- Appointment of a Heritage Officer
- Banking and information facilities for villages
- Cultural tourism development
- Urban design for village main streets and tourist information signage



**Step four**

**Taking action**

**Communicating through the Plan**

After the planning workshops are over, you will have a lot of information. The challenge now is to assemble it in an accessible, easy to use Strategic Plan.

In deciding on a format and writing up your Plan, here are some tips to consider:

- Keep the structure and language simple and reader-friendly.
- Think about breaking up the Plan with photos, illustrations, diagrams, thoughts, quotes, media clippings, etc. which illustrate its connection with the local community.
- Use a format that can be changed and updated easily.
- Keep planning jargon to a minimum and provide a glossary.
- Refer to the important stakeholders and indicate the resources (especially money) that are available or required.

As well as having a good document there should also be a strategy for letting the community know about the plan and its contents. At a minimum this should consist of:

- a mail out of proceedings
- articles in the local newspaper
- a summary brochure
- a schedule of talks to other community groups.

One of the most powerful ways of letting others know about the Plan is to have the committee and coordinator talk about it and show it to others *all the time*. Think about email and websites as another opportunity.

**Implementing the Strategic Plan**

A Strategic Plan that sits on the shelf is worth very little. It must be a living document.

Here are some steps to get the action under way:

- The committee examines the Plan and determines how the priority actions will be funded and delegates the task of seeking funding or raising revenue.
- A total budget for the program based on the Strategic Plan is developed. (See the *Financial planning and management* modules in this series for spreadsheets to help you.)
- The priority actions specified in the Strategic Plan are developed as project plans, if appropriate. (See the *Project management* module in this series).
- The coordinator develops a work plan flowing from the Strategic Plan.
- Everyone who has accepted responsibility for a task in the Plan should be made aware of what is required of him or her. They must commit to completing their tasks.
- The targets or milestones for the Plan's priority actions are spread over the time frame of the plan. They are presented in a clear way to the committee and coordinator (e.g. Gantt chart).
- Steps are taken to fill the skills and knowledge gaps that may exist among those involved, through:
  - training
  - workshops
  - presentations from experts.
- Key performance indicators are identified and data collection methods are put in place to measure results.
- When projects are completed, there should be rewards for those involved as well as celebration of the achievement.
- Always promote achievements – people will have a sense that positive things are happening on a regular basis. This will maintain active interest and support for the program.





### Monitoring the Plan

Monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan is important for accountability and for assessing and improving the program. Here are some things to consider:

- Use the Strategic Plan as a way of structuring reports to funding organisations and for reporting at the Annual General Meeting.
- Make sure that you give the coordinator the time and resources to effectively manage information to monitor, evaluate and report against the Plan's performance indicators.
- Reports reviewing progress and achievements should be regularly presented to the committee so they can respond appropriately and use them effectively to make decisions and take action.
- Project agenda items should be presented at every committee meeting so that progress can be formally and regularly reported.
- Dates and times should be set for the annual review and updating of the Strategic Plan. DSRD funds may be available to eligible committees to engage a consultant to assist in this process. Your DSRD Client Manager can provide further information and a Main Street/Small Towns application form.

See the *Monitoring and evaluation* module in this series for more information.



## Making workshops work

### Ingredients for success

Workshops require careful planning for success. This section looks at some aspects of planning, organising and running workshops. Some sample items, such as agendas, are provided to illustrate some approaches used by different communities.

Here are some important ingredients for successful workshops drawn from the experience of a number of communities:

- Form an organising committee well in advance and ensure that it has representatives from stakeholder groups. One person should be responsible for the organisation and the roles of those assisting should be very clear.
- Schedule your meeting at a time when most people can attend. This is generally outside work hours. Avoid known regular meeting nights for community organisations such as service clubs. Also, keep an eye out for clashes with other events such as social nights or sporting fixtures.
- An evening session of three to four hours is generally the most productive format.
- Make sure the workshop has lots of interaction – small groups in pairs, etc. It's important that everyone present gets a chance to talk. Provide reading material beforehand, if appropriate.
- Make sure your venue is conveniently located, pleasant and comfortable. It should permit a variety of activities such as group work, pinning up butcher's paper, etc. The layout should be informal to encourage participation. Consider a 'U' shape or chairs around work tables.
- Make sure the purpose of the evening is very clearly explained in the introduction. It is important that everyone has a shared understanding of what they are there for.

- Consider a guest speaker who is able to tell their community's story in an exciting and powerful way. This helps those present understand the program in action.
- If you are inviting guest speakers, confirm your invitation in writing, including the details for the meetings (possibly a map), a good brief and any background information. Make sure that they are asked to arrive early to avoid nail biting at the last minute.
- Provide childcare if possible – otherwise some important participants in your community may be unable to attend.
- Make the atmosphere special and out of the ordinary in some way. For example, have a display or banners, or consider some live music, a singer, string quartet or whatever your area has to offer. Make the entertainment and setting contribute to the feeling that there is something exciting and new in the air.
- Schedule a break during the workshop and provide light refreshments. Supper afterwards is also a chance to meet new people, and network and informally discuss the program.
- Make sure workshop groups' work is easy to see – on overheads or butcher's paper.
- Send out proceedings as soon as possible after the workshops.





## Checklist of things to do

1. **Decide on the date**
2. **Establish the starting and finishing times**
3. **Confirm the venue**
4. **Develop a list of potential participants**

### 5. Book everything

- Make sure the venue, facilitator, key speakers and any other crucial determiners of the day are available and book them

### 6. Identify the role of the sponsor, e.g. to:

- locate and pay (if needed) for suitable venue
- identify, contact and register invitees
- cover costs of catering
- collect workshop results (i.e. butcher's paper, etc.)
- prepare proceedings from workshop
- mail out proceedings to participants

### 7. Identify the role of key players, i.e.

- Chairperson
- Meeting facilitator
- Small group leaders
- Presenters/dignitaries

### 8. Develop an agenda

- Consult about agenda with key community people
- Decide on dignitaries to speak
- Consider a presentation by an outside person, e.g. coordinator from elsewhere
- Assign somebody to copy and hand out the agenda at workshop

### 9. Liaise with the facilitator

- Discuss agenda
- Discuss their strategies for achieving the workshop aims
- Organise travel and accommodation, if necessary

### 10. Establish small groups

- Decide how to divide the groups
- Decide whether they will discuss specific topics or all work on the same topics

### 11. Who will lead the groups?

- Determine how many
- A person to nominate them and seek their agreement
- Prepare notes to outline their function

### 12. Starting a committee

- Is there already an existing body?
- If not, should a structure be proposed?
- Should it be an incorporated body?

#### Note:

If seeking Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) assistance towards the cost of a facilitator, an application must be lodged at least six weeks prior to the workshop with your region's DSRD Client Manager.

### 13. Handling publicity, i.e.

- Arrange pre-publicity
- A person to invite and greet media on the night
- A person to take photos
- Send publicity items to DSRD

### 14. Organising equipment and materials

- Name tags
- Overhead projector and screen
- Whiteboard and/or butcher's paper for facilitator
- Supplies for small groups – paper, pens, blank overheads
- Thick pens for each group for butcher's paper
- Microphone
- Small coloured dots
- Bluetac or velcro for fixing sheets to walls
- Participant register (to be circulated so attendees can provide contact details)
- Tape recorder or video recorder if these are to be used.



## Assembling the planners for your workshops

Strategic planning requires a significant commitment of time and resources to be successful. It is advisable to check whether some of the following key factors are in place before proceeding:

- Does the committee understand the importance of a commitment to planning and achieving the priorities of the Strategic Plan?
- Has someone (an interim or appointed coordinator or someone else) been given responsibility for the planning task and are they supported by the committee?
- Will there be enough time to create a good plan – at least the two workshops, plus dedicated time to write it up, circulate and get responses?
- Are the key stakeholders in the community involved?
- Are people with special skills and interests invited to become involved early, to ensure their involvement in implementing part of the plan?



## Potential workshop participants

Involvement by all parts of the community gives power and sustainability to a Strategic Plan. Business people, property owners, civic and political leaders and the broader community all must be involved. Here is a list to start you off.

- DSRD Client Manager
- Mayor
- Councillors
- senior council staff (including town planner, librarian, cultural officer, etc.)
- local Member(s) of Parliament
- Chamber of Commerce – chairperson and members
- tourist organisations – chairperson and members
- local business people from retail, services, industry and tourism sectors
- property owners
- community groups, e.g. Progress Association, Tidy Towns, Historical Society, etc.
- clubs, e.g. Lions, Rotary, sporting, garden club, etc.
- residents
- arts/cultural advisers
- police
- educational institutions, e.g. universities, TAFE, schools
- youth
- groups with special needs, e.g. the elderly or disabled
- multicultural and indigenous groups
- Regional Development Board members
- media
- registered clubs
- State or Federal government agency representatives.

For more specific suggestions, consult the lists of organisations on page 5.



## Developing a communication strategy

A workshop cannot be successful if no one turns up or if they don't know what it is about. Your organising committee needs to plan and execute a good communication strategy to ensure people become involved and understand your purpose. Here are some things to consider:

- Ensure your messages are clear and consistent. The workshop purpose should be expressed simply, emphasising the benefits of attending. All details are included – time, date, location, childcare if available, etc. Back this up with a visual image on all your promotional material.
- Visit key stakeholders to explain the program and the nature, purpose and importance of the workshops.
- Send out formal invitations to key individuals and organisations. State and Federal politicians need adequate notice. Organisations and community groups may need a long lead-time as their meetings may be weeks or even months apart.
- Develop leaflets that can be distributed through letterbox drops or personal visits to businesses.
- Put up posters or banners to make the workshops visible.
- Use existing community networks to get the message across. Members of your organising committee may already belong to service or sporting clubs, playgroups, educational institutions or churches, for example. If not, seek the support of these and other networks.
- Approach the local paper for coverage in the lead-up to the workshops. If possible, get community service announcements on local radio and/or television. Organise interviews for your guest speakers.



## Using a workshop facilitator

Skilled facilitation can greatly assist the productivity of the workshops and streamline the strategic planning process. A facilitator should not only be present on the night; they should also communicate with the coordinator and committee beforehand to adequately understand their needs. Their experience and advice should help you prepare well for the workshops.

A facilitator is especially helpful if:

- the coordinator or committee have little planning experience
- there is a history of documents 'sitting on a shelf', or a sense of 'we've done this before'
- there is the possibility of conflict – a neutral person helps.

In the lead-up to the workshops, it is reasonable to expect that a facilitator will:

- become familiar with the local area (they need not be a local person)
- help the organising committee finalise the agenda
- discuss with you the strategies they intend to use at the workshops
- brief committee members and other helpers about the roles they may have to play as small group facilitators at the workshops
- be clear about what they are responsible for and what the organising committee is responsible for.



At the workshop the facilitator should:

- make sure that the aims are achieved
- be a resource person who provides knowledge about the Main Street/Small Towns program, other committees' work, sources of funding and the strategic planning process
- generate energy and enthusiasm by focusing on the positive and the future, not negatives and the past
- set the ground rules, e.g. no private agendas, grudges or axe grinding; respect for others' opinions; etc.
- maximise the involvement of everyone present so they feel an ownership of the results
- create a climate of acceptance that frees up creativity and increases commitment to the process
- keep things moving by ensuring comments and ideas are short and to the point
- help the group reach consensus while still allowing people to voice dissent
- turn potential conflict into creative outcomes if possible
- ensure that people enjoy themselves – humour is a must!
- ensure everyone has a feeling of achievement at the end of the workshop.

In hiring a facilitator it is important to assess whether he or she has the necessary skills, technical knowledge and experience through a curriculum vitae or business profile. Confirm your decision by checking with their recent referees. To ensure that you get most out of the consultancy provide them with a clear written brief including:

- the specific results you want at the end of the workshop
- the background to the brief
- the purpose of the consultancy
- the time frame
- what they will do
- what you will do
- a contact for further information
- the deadline for tender proposals.

In selecting a facilitator make sure their tender proposal covers all points in your brief.

When preparing for the workshop(s) you should ensure the facilitator:

- meets beforehand with the key players to identify the major issues
- is provided with a history of the program and any existing documents such as promotional brochures, plans or studies
- is briefed about possible contentious issues and anything else that may affect the results of the workshop
- has access to information in your 'Application for funding' to DSRD (if assistance was sought) omitting the financial details.





## Initial Community Workshop – Sample agendas

### Sample Agenda No. 1

6.30 – 6.35 p.m.	Welcome by chairperson
6.35 – 6.45 p.m.	Outline by Mayor/dignitary (optional)
6.45 – 7.00 p.m.	Program overview (facilitator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process for this evening</li> <li>• Main Street process overview – DSRD officer</li> </ul>
7.00 – 7.10 p.m.	Where are we going? Vision and mission (open forum/facilitator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestions from floor</li> <li>• Committee to finalise vision</li> <li>• Offer opportunity to suggest name for local program</li> </ul>
7.10 – 7.25 p.m.	SWOT analysis (open forum/facilitator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review any analysis already done</li> <li>• Seek additional input</li> </ul>
7.25 – 7.35 p.m.	Issues identification (facilitator)
7.35 – 7.45 p.m.	Tea/coffee break
7.45 – 8.25 p.m.	Development of objectives: Small group discussions (small group leaders)
8.25 – 9.00 p.m.	Presentations by each small group (5 minutes per group)
9.00 – 9.05 p.m.	Grouping of objectives and prioritisation (using vote by yellow stickies method)
9.05 – 9.15 p.m.	Committee formation (facilitator)
9.15 – 9.25 p.m.	Where to from here? (facilitator)
9.25 – 9.30 p.m.	Closing remarks and thank you (chairperson)



### Sample Agenda No. 2

5.00 p.m.	Registration and tea/coffee
5.20 p.m.	Welcome by chairperson
5.25 p.m.	The purpose of the workshop and some background about the Main Street/Small Towns program
5.40 p.m.	Lessons from another program – presentation by an interesting/ inspiring speaker
6.05 p.m.	A report on the findings of the initial research and situational analysis by the committee/coordinator – what does it tell us?
6.15 p.m.	Introduction to the planning process by the facilitator
6.20 p.m.	Our vision for the future/a mission statement – plenary
6.40 p.m.	SWOT analysis using the earlier findings – plenary
7.00 p.m.	Break for light meal
7.40 p.m.	Development of objectives – small group work with group leaders
8.30 p.m.	Presentation of objectives by groups – plenary
8.50 p.m.	Grouping objectives and giving them a priority – plenary
9.15 p.m.	Future directions. Outline of next workshop. Identification of people wishing to join task groups – plenary
9.25 p.m.	Close and thank you by chairperson
9.30 p.m.	Refreshments



## Strategic Planning Workshop – sample agenda

### Sample No. 1

6.30 – 6.35 p.m.	Welcome by chairperson
6.35 – 6.40 p.m.	Outline by Mayor/dignitary (optional)
6.40 – 6.50 p.m.	Program overview to date (facilitator): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• process for this evening</li> <li>• actions already achieved</li> <li>• assistance from Dept of State and Regional Development</li> <li>• links with issues (previously identified)</li> </ul>
6.50 – 7.00 p.m.	Review SWOT analysis (open forum)
7.00 – 7.45 p.m.	Small group discussions (small group leaders): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• select actions to expand on</li> <li>• define objectives</li> <li>• identify individual tasks</li> <li>• review timeframe</li> <li>• estimate costs.</li> </ul>
7.45 – 7.55 p.m.	Tea/coffee break.
7.55 – 8.00 p.m.	Outline budgeting process (facilitator).
8.00 – 8.25 p.m.	Presentations by each small group (3–5 minutes per group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of at least two short-term and two medium-term action plans</li> </ul>
8.25 – 8.45 p.m.	Discuss budget and funding opportunities (facilitator).
8.45 – 8.50 p.m.	Voting by yellow stickies to confirm priorities.
8.50 – 8.55 p.m.	Develop vision (facilitator).
8.55 – 9.00 p.m.	Committee formation (facilitator).
9.00 – 9.25 p.m.	Where to from here? (facilitator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finalising plan</li> <li>• confirm sponsoring organisation/sub-committees</li> <li>• obtaining funding.</li> </ul>
9.25 – 9.30 p.m.	Closing remarks and thank you (chairperson)



## Time line for a workshop

There are lots of ways to organise a workshop. Here is one approach.

### At the outset

- Apply to DSRD for assistance if required and if eligible and have DSRD approval before you proceed (See the program guidelines contained in module 19).

### Two months before

- Develop an agenda
- Identify a facilitator and discuss the agenda and strategies – arrange time for briefing and provide them with background materials
- Book the venue and equipment
- Send out invitations
- Place publicity in local media to coincide with the invitations
- Contact and brief other key players, i.e. chairperson, dignitaries, presenters, small group facilitators
- Organise travel and/or accommodation.

### One month before

- Begin publicity in earnest – advertisements, pamphlets, articles in local media.

### Two weeks before

- Organise catering
- Organise childcare
- Follow up publicity.

### One week before

- Finalise publicity
- Phone key participants
- Copy agenda, name tags and any other papers
- Prepare an evaluation sheet
- Ensure equipment is available

### Before the workshop begins

- Meet with the facilitator and review the agenda
- Organise equipment and materials
- Organise room – chairs, heating, etc.
- Be ready to serve refreshments
- Provide small group facilitators with materials and papers, and hold a refresher briefing about what they must do
- Ensure equipment is working.

### At the workshop

- Distribute name tags, agenda and any other papers
- Greet and seat VIPs and speakers
- Start on time

### At the end of the workshop

- Collect participant register, butcher's paper or overheads and evaluation, if any.

### After the workshop

- Pay bills
- Compile workshop proceedings and mail out
- Send proceedings and publicity to DSRD
- Ensure conditions for funding are met to enable payment by DSRD
- Send thank you letters to appropriate people
- Write an evaluation report for the committee.



## Notes for small group leaders

Here are some notes that one community gave to small group leaders at a strategic planning workshop:

### Purpose of small groups

- Small groups allow everyone to contribute ideas and develop action plans for each objective in more detail
- Actions plans to be developed are at least:
  - two short term actions (to achieve within 6 months)
  - two medium term actions (to achieve in 6–12 months)
  - two long term actions (to achieve in 1–3 years) You can have as many additional actions as you like.

### Role of the small group leader

- To keep the group focused
- To encourage all participants to have a say
- To ensure that at least four actions are developed
- To keep an eye to time

### Group composition

- Will be determined according to the acceptances and who attends the workshop
- Ideally 6–8 per group, 10 maximum
- Groups can gather around the table set-up

### Process

Each group will need:

- A scribe to write up the actions as they are determined
- A spokesperson who will have five minutes when the large group is formed again (plenary) to present the action plans developed by the small group
- Butcher's paper and blank overheads (with pens). Butcher paper is to note ideas and discussion points, especially if they are not ready to be put in action plan format
- Blank overheads in action plan format so that the scribe can write directly onto them, and they can then be used for presentation back to main group.

### Developing action plans (for a Strategic Planning Workshop)

Action plans should follow this format:

- **Objective**  
State the result that action will achieve.
- **Action – What is going to be done and how?**  
Ensure each item is an ACTION, i.e. what to do to make it happen.
- **By whom?**
  - Indicate who may carry out that action
  - Don't assume that all activities can be carried out by the coordinator
  - Encourage those who want or are able to make even a small contribution, to nominate themselves for a task such as distributing leaflets
  - Participants may know of an interested person or group who may be able to assist
- **When?**  
Try to indicate a reasonable time frame
- **Cost?**  
This can be indicative if you have an estimate. If you have none, leave it blank.
- **Evaluation?**  
Performance indicators need to be included and methods of collecting the information should be determined at the beginning.



## Contacts

### The Australian Bureau of Statistics

New South Wales Office  
5th floor, St Andrew's House Sydney Square  
Sydney NSW 2000  
GPO Box 796  
Sydney NSW 1041  
Phone No. (02) 9268 4611  
Facsimile No. (02) 9268 4668

### Plant Location International

Peter Leyshon  
Level 1, 66 King Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Phone No. (02) 9299 2403  
Facsimile No. (02) 9262 1577

### Eighty 20

46 Carter Street  
Cammeray 2062  
Phone No. (02) 9904 1007  
Facsimile (02) 9904 5675  
Email: [invhand@tpg.com.au](mailto:invhand@tpg.com.au)

### Publications

*Community Participating in Practice: A Practical Guide.* Wendy Sarkassian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh, Institute of Science & Technology Police, Murdoch University, Western Australia. 1997.

*Mainstreet Western Australia: Getting Started* Third Edition 1996

Department of Commerce and Trade  
168–70 St Georges Terrace  
Perth Western Australia  
Phone No. 1800 628 767

*Ready set go Action Manual for Community Economic Development*

Prepared for The Municipal Association of Victoria, Strengthening Local Economic Capacity (SLEC) Program  
Peter Kenyon  
Editing and production Jenny Wills and Ken Northwood 1994

*StreetLIFE Resources*

StreetLIFE Program  
Employment Branch  
Department of State Development  
55 Collins Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Phone No. (03) 9651 9222  
Facsimile (03) 9651 9200

### Websites

*Communitybuilders website*

<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au>

*NSW government website*

<http://www.nsw.gov.au>

An entry point for all NSW government websites

*Federal government website*

<http://www.federal.gov.au>

An entry point for all Federal government websites