

# Group Capacity Building

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In this Section you will find a range of different tools for use in building the capacity of small community groups. The tools relate both to the sustainability of the group itself and to enhancing group outcomes. You will find tools for:

- Group Building and participation
- Resourcing group leaders and catalysts
- Developing effective group processes
- Group Development and Education
- Community engagement and Networking
- Strategic Planning

Within each section you will find:

## ? **Key Questions**

These questions are designed to assist groups to assess their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and boundaries and to consider strategies for building group capacity.

## i **Strategies & Tips**

These tips provide information and options for groups to consider and apply. In addition, some sample tools have been provided as a guide for possible ways to implement the strategic tips.

## ✂ **Tools and Resources**

These are resources such as sample surveys and documents that the group can adapt and use to enhance their capacity.

## ✍ **Process Checklists**

Checklists are designed to assist groups to use evaluative tools and strategic tips.

# TOOLS FOR GROUP BUILDING & PARTICIPATION

This section includes tools for building a group and enhancing the participation and meaningful engagement of group members.

## ? Key Questions

- What is the current level of participation?
- What is the desired level of participation?
- What time frame is needed to achieving the desired level of participation?
- How effective are current and past recruitment techniques?
- Do recruitment techniques need further development or alternatives?
- How strong is the sense of purpose among the group?
- What level of sharing exists?
- How effective are current and past group management techniques?
- Are achievements acknowledged and celebrated?
- How do we want this group to function in the future?

## i Strategies for Building Participation Levels

- Create an open and supportive group atmosphere by developing a Group Contract or Values Statement that guides group interactions and behaviour.
- Ensure all group processes and communications are both ethical and transparent.
- Develop a group culture in which different points of view are valued, and friendly conflict is seen as part of the process towards finding the best possible solution.
- Acknowledge, value and support individual contributions
- Offer opportunities to contribute existing skills and knowledge as well as to participate so as to develop new skills/knowledges.
- Encourage all members to express/exercise their capacities and develop meaningful roles in which they can do so.
- Introduce recognition rewards/ incentives, such as 'group member of the month' acknowledgement, vouchers, training opportunities, document good practices and social functions.

- Strengthen relationships among group members using strategies such as working parties and project teams, buddy systems and revisiting group goals and purpose.
- Encourage social interaction.
- Acknowledge, explore and challenge group values, beliefs and needs.
- Develop a sense of group ownership and belonging through group visioning and celebration of milestones towards meeting goals.
- Map the group's capacity and plan for future development including diversification of roles, knowledge and skills.
- Develop a sense of purpose among members by planning forward, acknowledging progress and highlighting the current and future benefits of the work.
- Ensure that all group activities are FUN.

## ① **Developing a Recruitment Strategy**

When developing a recruitment strategy, community groups may find it is useful to find out about potential new members in the community through conducting a survey. This can help a group to:

- Find out about levels of community awareness about the group. If people don't know you exist, they will not be interested in joining.
- Identify the different language and specific words that are most appealing to potential members
- Ask potential members why they have not participated in the group to date
- Promote the benefits of participating in the group to others
- Identify various methods of recruiting new members to the group and compare the effectiveness of these methods.

## Sample Community Survey

*You are more likely to receive answers to this survey if it is conducted verbally than if you ask people to fill this out as a questionnaire.*

1. Are you aware of the (name of group)? Yes  No

2. Where did you hear about (name of group)

- Word of Mouth
- Media including local newspaper
- Promotional material received in your letterbox
- Promotional stall at event
- Attending group activities/workshops

3. What do you understand about (name of group):  
Focus areas?

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The group's role in the wider community?

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4. Would you like more information about the group? Yes  No

5. To what extent have you connected with (name of group)'s activities?

Not at all	Read Group's Public Notices	Financial Support	Participated a Few Times	Regularly Participate
1	2	3	4	5

6. What are the main factors limiting your participation with the group?

- Limited available time
- Lack of awareness about the group
- Lack of interest in the group's focus areas
- Anxiety about integration with the group
- Presumed lack of knowledge or skills to join the group

7. Is there anything about (name of group) that would encourage you to join?

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8. Is there anything about (name of group) that would discourage you to join?

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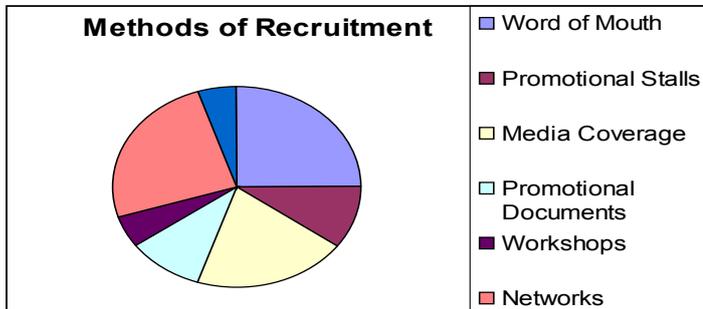
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9. Which of the following group benefits would be most appealing to you?
- Opportunity to network with wider community individuals, groups and organisations
  - Opportunity to (list group activities)
  - Opportunity to meet others with similar interests
  - Opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge
  - Opportunity to work with others to meet goals
10. Are you interested in supporting (name of group)? Yes  No
- If yes, in what way would you like to participate?
- Attend group meetings and activities
  - Receive information about the group such as newsletters and invitations to group events and activities
  - Make a donation of cash or resources
  - Assist with fund raising
  - Other type of support related to your groups activities
11. Do you have any suggestions about ways to enhance the group's profile in the community?
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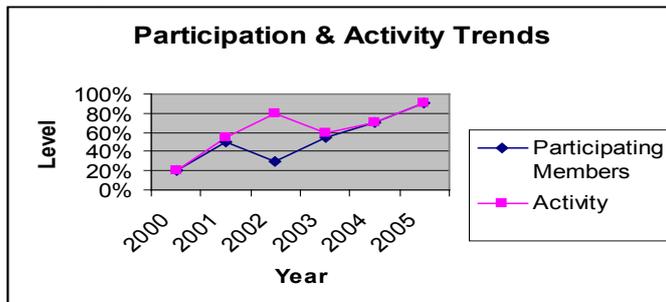
You will then need to collate and analyse the data you have collected to consider the relative merits of various recruitment strategies.

For example:



You could also monitor levels of participation, group activity levels and reasons for changes of these levels. What was different about the activities and group culture?

For Example:



NB. This may be measured in terms of years or months.

At each point of change, identify reasons for the shift in levels of participation or activity. For example, change of leadership, low/high recruitment efforts, lack/strength of group goals and focus, lack/strength of resources.

## ① Retaining Group Members

Two key strategies for motivating, focussing and ultimately retaining group members are to share and build group values and beliefs and to encourage redistribution of knowledge and other resources within the group (Birkeland, 1999). This can be done through group discussion.

## ✂ Outline for Discussion of Group Members' Values & Beliefs

Conduct a group brainstorming session to identify the values and beliefs that are most important to the group members.

- A. Select a particular value or belief and either in a group circle or pairs, encourage individuals to explain what it means to them.
- B. Encourage members to engage in group discussions about the different dynamics/ arguments related to the values and beliefs.
- C. Encourage members to reflect (verbal or written) on how their individual ideas compare with others and how their insights have developed by sharing those with others.
- D. Brainstorm or map any developments needed to build the capacity of groups applying the values and beliefs to practice.
- E. Plan for future group discussion on a selected topic.

## ① Acknowledging and Celebrating Success

- Identify milestones at which the group can acknowledge success
- Document achievements to inform groups of good practices
- Decide whether the document is appropriate for intra-group and/or inter-group learning
- Discuss if and how the achievements will continue for the future
- Acknowledge both the collective group and key individuals

*Refer to "Recognising group and individual achievement" for further tips to acknowledge and celebrate success.*

## ① Group Management

Group Management Processes should be adapted to the purpose and culture of the group and can therefore take many different forms. A group attempting to develop or refine a management process that will be effective and efficient for them will need to:

- Determine the desired group size for most effective group processes
- Identify required roles and responsibilities according to the needs of the members
- Shape the coordination of the group around members' values and preferred ways of working

## **Group Member Reflective Questionnaire**

This could be used as a questionnaire that members fill out individually to allow people to think deeply about their answers, or could be used to facilitate a group process.

1. What is my main incentive to participate in this group?

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2. What values are important to me when working with others ?

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3. In what ways do I express my values?

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4. How could I develop and share my values with the group?

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## **Group Building Checklist**

- Assess the existing levels of productivity and group cohesion
- Assess which work areas require most attention by the group
- Build participation levels among existing group members
- Recruit new members to enhance the existing practices
- Promote sharing amongst the group
- Acknowledge and celebrate success
- Develop group management techniques over time

# RESOURCING GROUP LEADERS AND CATALYSTS

## ? Key Questions

- What are the main strengths of the group?
- How can these strengths be improved or mobilised?
- What resources are needed to do so?
- How can the group's strengths be developed and/or shared with wider networks?
- How would the group benefit from building its capacity?
- Who are the existing known leaders?
- What roles do they play?
- How effective are they in satisfying the requirements of those roles?
- What other existing members have the capacity to become leaders within the group (NB. Capacity can be identified by skills, knowledge, management skills, people skills, negotiation skills, interests, networking, research, marketing, etc.)
- How could they best be included as leaders in the group?
- What is their availability?
- What level of willingness to participate in leading roles do they show?
- How much effort is needed by other members to encourage these potential leaders?
- What, if any, resources are required for enabling the potential leaders to satisfy their roles?
- What are the barriers to utilising the identified potential leaders in the group?
- Is there a need for leaders to join the group from external sources?
- How would the group benefit most from a newly recruited leader?
- What would be the barriers to recruiting a new leader?
- What are the most appropriate sources for recruiting new leaders for the group?

## ① Identifying Leaders and Catalysts

Group Catalysts are people who can help a group develop and build, enhancing the group's ability to work effectively towards meeting goals. Catalysts often lead from behind rather than in front and may work from inside or outside the group. Leadership behaviours can be defined as any behaviours that either assist the group to meet its goals (task behaviours), or, assist the group to develop cohesion (group maintenance behaviours). Many people within the group may be providing leadership.

## ✂ Self Analysis Questionnaire – Do I work as a Catalyst in this group?

Characteristics	*	**	***	Comments
Strong leadership skills				
Self-confidence				
Innovative				
Pro-active				
Shows talent in networking and mobilising resources				
Builds rapport and strong relationships with group members				
Holds strong group values				
Forward thinking				
Knowledgeable				
Skilful				
Shows initiative to build the capacity of others				
Encourages and acknowledges other's talents and achievements				
Openness to change and challenges				
Effective problem solver				
Strong coordination skills				
Loyal to the group				
Respectful/ trustworthy				

- **\* to a small extent**
- **\*\* to a medium extent**
- **\*\*\* to a great extent**

### ① Developing Leaders and Catalysts

Some examples of developmental strategies to use with group leaders and catalysts include:

- Have group discussions to clarify whether the leader's values and goals run parallel with those of the group. This will build trust and cooperation from other members
- Offer training courses or workshops in leadership and/or topics related to the group's work
- Build relationships and partnerships with other groups to share knowledge and resources
- Develop a network for group and community leaders to share their knowledge and experiences
- Schedule regular strategic planning sessions
- Create a group culture that is open to change and encourages and rewards achievement
- Ensure you maintain a balance in the time commitments required for these roles, or it will be difficult to persuade others to take them on
- Develop a knowledge management system that documents processes, learned skills, challenges and achievements for critical reflection

- Be aware of and open to emerging leaders and catalysts in order to diversify and strengthen resources
- Encourage and/or facilitate discussions and interactive activities aimed towards building the capacity of all group members
- Develop Succession Plans and use strategies such as mentoring and developmental delegation to build leadership skills from within

## **✂ Documenting Effective Group Process**

<p><b><u>CASE STUDY: “Celebrating our Success”</u></b></p> <p><u>Brief History of the Group:</u> _____ _____</p> <p><u>Stages of Group Processes:</u> _____ _____</p> <p><u>Barriers Which Were Overcome:</u> _____ _____</p> <p><u>Key Reasons for the Group’s Success:</u> _____ _____</p> <p><u>Benefits of the Success for the Group and Others:</u> _____ _____</p>
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## **① Recognising Group and Individual Achievement**

- Promote effective practices through networks, the media, community events, promotional stalls, and any other available sources
- Celebrate achievements through social gatherings (BBQ’s, social sport, team building activities, group walks, and attending community events together)
- Reward through opportunities for further development such as training, professional development or opportunities to represent the group
- Ceremonial rewards such as certificates or gifts of appreciation

## **① Developing External Group Leaders and Catalysts**

- Build relationships with a variety of informal and formal organisations
- Access leaders for available resources (such as funding, skills, knowledge, time) by:
  - Inviting them as new recruits or guests to the group
  - Creating further networks
  - Generating group or public acknowledgement of external leaders and their achievements
  - Inviting them to develop or facilitate a group planning process.

## **① Developing Existing Group Leaders**

- Assist the group to identify the different leadership styles used by group leaders and assess their appropriateness to different situations
- Research alternative leadership styles and trial them in different situations
- Encourage leaders to alternate or share their roles to develop new insights and practices

## **① Developing potential group leaders**

- Resource or establish a leadership program for existing group members
- Identify and encourage opportunities for people to determine their own values, needs, wants and priorities, and to act on them.
- Conduct a group capacity audit and encourage members to identify areas in which they can contribute skills and knowledge
- Conduct individual and group brainstorming sessions focused on best ways to utilise capacities of existing group members
- Identify barriers to brainstormed strategies
- Trial strategies in different situations, such as buddy systems and collective group efforts
- Document cases of the group's achievements in different formats (such as brochures, posters, books, signs) in order to:
- Raise leaders' profiles through public awareness and acknowledgement.
- Practice developmental delegation by matching participants with tasks that will expand their skills and confidence. Always ensure they are adequately resourced and supported or this will have the opposite effect.
- Encourage potential leaders to identify their networks and establish ideas around reasons and ways to resource these networks.



## Resourcing Leaders and Catalysts Checklist

- Assess the need for Leaders and Catalysts within your group
- Identify existing leaders and catalysts within the group
- Identify and evaluate potential group leaders existing in the group
- Identify and evaluate potential group leaders from external sources
- Provide developmental activities to assist leaders to reach their own and the group's potential
- Develop strategies for empowering all types of group leaders to enhance the group functioning
- Resource and mobilise leaders to develop group processes
- Acknowledge, develop and monitor weak areas
- Recognise and reward catalysts for achievements
- Identify and evaluate how existing group leaders manage themselves and their roles
- Monitor the level of group capacity influenced by the leaders
- Amend strategies to build the capacity of group leaders

# DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE GROUP PROCESSES

## ? Key Questions

- How effective are our group meetings?
- Do we retain new group members?
- Do we spread the workload relatively evenly within the group?
- Are we still feeling excited about the work, or burnt out?
- Are we effective at turning our plans to action?
- Are we able to reach decisions on important points?
- Do we feel comfortable with some disagreement within the group?
- Do we enjoy working together?
- Is the decision making process clear and always followed?
- Does everyone have the opportunity to contribute and participate?

## ① Develop Effective Meeting Procedures

Some tips for effective meetings include:

- Develop and distribute a clear meeting agenda ahead of time
- Allocate time at the beginning of the meeting to confirm the agenda and prioritise actions
- Allocate estimated time periods to discuss topics
- Identify the background information important to each topic
- Identify who is key spokespeople for each meeting item
- Tie agenda items in to organisational goals
- Monitor which meeting techniques work for this group and which need to be improved
- Plan goals for the following meeting
- Create opportunities and procedures for all attendees to be heard
- Have a 'time keeper' to decide and state appropriate times to move forward with the meeting agenda.
- Balance the formal with opportunities for the group to connect informally and enjoy each other

## ① Develop efficient and effective work processes

- Develop group structure, roles and responsibilities
- Develop or clarify group goals
- Align group goals with discussion and planning of activities and roles
- Identify required resources prior to work commencing
- Develop time management and organisational skills

## **i** Develop Group Cohesion

- Create an open and supportive group atmosphere whereby all group members feel a sense of belonging.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction (such as group break activities, social BBQ's, group attendance at community events)
- Encourage all members to acknowledge others when deserved or required
- Encourage group interests
- Develop a facilitative group culture
- Build conflict management skills (Chamala, 1990)
- Apply a balanced approach to task allocation and coordination

## Group Management Checklist

- Assess your group's current management processes
- Identify challenges to efficient and effective group functioning
- Clarify and document roles within the group
- Discuss and document the group's procedure for managing conflict
- Create a group contract that outlines the way in which the group prefers to work together – e.g. respect each other's point of view
- Plan social events to strengthen relationships and cohesion within the group
- Discuss strategies for making meetings more enjoyable

# GROUP DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

## ? Key Questions

- What skills and knowledges currently exist within the group?
- How well are these skills and knowledges utilised and developed by existing group roles and tasks?
- What skills and knowledge does the group need to meet goals or develop capacity?
- Where can the group source these skills or knowledges?
- What developmental activities would assist the group to develop these skills or knowledges?
- What changes would the group like to effect in the skills and knowledges of people outside the group?
- What sort of developmental activities are likely to assist or support these changes?
- What sort of developmental activities are likely to be attractive to people outside of the group?

## i Planning Group Development Strategies

- Conduct a Skills Audit by asking group members about their skills and knowledges and then documenting the results. This can be used for role allocation, future planning and group development activities such as mentoring and skill sharing.
- Conduct a capacity audit by listing skills and activities and determining the skills and knowledges that will be required. The group can then determine which of these the group can already meet and which will need to be sourced from outside the group.
- Build relationships with community members (individual and organisations) who may be able to provide specific resources to the group. This could include universities, training institutions, researchers, practitioners, trainers, business staff, and members of other community groups.
- Actively recruit for the skills and knowledges the group will need.
- Develop a learning culture within the group, encouraging members to share skills and knowledges and to bring back new knowledge to the group by attending training programs and networking events.
- Use networks to identify resources and develop partnerships in order to share resources.
- Access secondary documents addressing required information (such as websites, conference material, journals, books, brochures, case studies and documentaries)
- Develop training programs to meet the group's specific needs
- Develop other learning strategies such as mentoring within and outside of the group and partnering with other groups to learn from them, and build them into your group's structure and procedures.
- Select projects and activities that will expand the skills and knowledge of the group.

## ✂ Skills Audit Template

Consider all the areas of skill required by your group, for example *Develop and work within Community Networks* or *Obtain and Manage Sponsorship* and make these the headings for each of the rows. Then consider the specific tasks involved in each activity. For example, *Obtain and Manage Sponsorship* might involve identifying potential sponsors, analysing the sponsors needs, preparing a Sponsorship 'pitch' etc. List these tasks under the heading within each row. Ask individuals in the group to complete the skills audit and then collate the findings to examine together as a group.

Skill	A Skill I have	A Skill our group has	A skill we need	Not a priority	Comments

## ✂ Capacity Audit Template

Major Project Activities	Project Requirements		Skill/Resources we will need to acquire	Possible Sources of Support (partnerships, funding, sponsorship, in-kind etc.)
	Skills	Resources		



This Community Leadership resource is the result of a partnership project between Volunteering Qld's Education, Research and Policy Unit and the School of Learning and Professional Studies (within the Faculty of Education) Queensland University of Technology. Development of these resources was made possible through a QUT Community Services Grant received in 2002 and 2004.



## ① Identifying Mentors

- Build relationships with group members and their networks to seek mentors from both inside and outside the group
- Acknowledge potential mentors' strengths
- Provide support and information regarding the mentoring process and acknowledge both parties for work undertaken together
- Identify whether group members are currently influenced by potential group mentors

## ✂ Mentor Assessment – Characteristics of an Effective Mentor

Characteristics	*	**	***	Comments
Knowledgeable				
Effective communicator				
Apply mentoring techniques suited to the group, such as discussing case studies which correlate with the group's work				
Open to diversity and change				
Strong inter-personal skills				
Problem solving skills				
Adaptable				
Confidence				
Organisational skills				
Encourages the sharing of knowledge between all group members (peer learning)				
Respect for other's ideas				
Patience				
Forward thinking				

- **a little knowledgeable**
- **very knowledgeable**
- **greatly knowledgeable**

## ① Develop Effective Mentoring Processes

- Identify the nature of mentoring required and the time period. Will this be a one-off session or a series of meetings?
- Provide a non-invasive space to conduct mentoring sessions
- Select the size of the participating group according to the nature of the topics
- Allocate adequate time for mentoring sessions
- Build rapport with and between all participants
- Relate new knowledge to the benefits for the participants
- Gain feedback from participants regarding how well they have acquired the knowledge (verbal or written)
- Allow participants to generate some discussions in order to ensure they are obtaining appropriate knowledge
- Use creative and innovative mentoring approaches

- Inform participants of avenues for further development/ training in the area (such as networks, resources, guides, etc.)

## ① **Developing a Learning Culture**

Adopt a social learning approach and learning culture within your group. Encourage members to constantly share knowledge and experiences by:

- Developing an alternating buddy system
- Conducting regular group discussions during and outside work times
- Have a common space to write new knowledge or hints for others to read (eg. notice boards, posters)
- Developing a group newsletter including effective cases and new knowledge
- Strengthen relationships among group members to build trust and support for members to openly share their knowledge and experience
- Allow opportunities for critical reflection such as group discussions, personal quiet time, a group or individual reflection book or video documentaries of members' actions and thoughts
- Encourage peers to reinforce learned knowledge through additional discussions and repetition in practice

## ✂ **Newsletter as a knowledge management tool**

<b>Community Group Newsletter</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Group Success Stories</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Acknowledgement of Established Networks or Partnerships</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Current Group Projects</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Knowledge to Share with Others</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Quotes of What the Group Means to Individuals</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Record of Past Mistakes: A learning tool</b></li> <li>❖ <b>A Range of Avenues for the Wider Community to Become Involved</b></li> </ul>



## Group Education & Development Checklist

- Identify the group's current skills and knowledge
- Identify broad and specific areas where skills and knowledge need to be developed
- Identify activities and resources that will develop the required skills and knowledge
- Assess the group's need for mentoring
- Access and resource appropriate sources of new skills and knowledge, including educators and secondary sources
- Identify and encourage mentors
- Develop mentoring techniques if required
- Apply acquired skills and knowledge to practice
- Monitor and assess how effective the implementation of new skills and knowledge has been
- Recognise and reward mentors
- Recognise areas for further development

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & NETWORKING

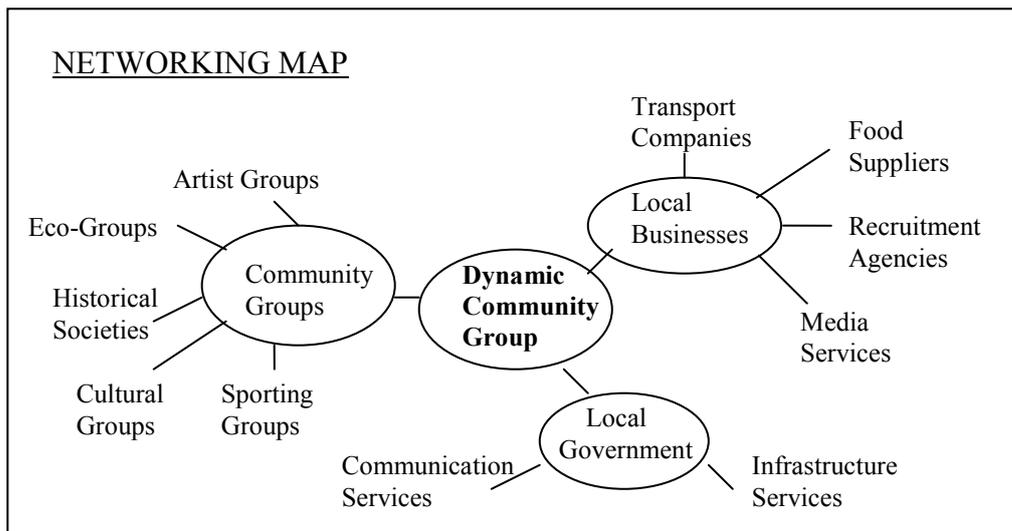
## ? Key Questions

- To what extent does the group network and/or build relationships with other groups and organisations?
- What type of organisations would be most appropriate for the group to build relationships with?
- Who will be the main drivers of building new relationships/networks?
- Over what period of time would be realistic for the group to build the identified new relationships?
- What is the groups' main incentive to build these new relationships?

## i Developing Networks and Partnerships

- Build support and acknowledgement among organisations (both formal and informal)
- Work with other networks and groups to achieve common goals
- Provide opportunities for ongoing partnerships and support
- Share/mobilise information and resources with wider community members
- Develop a list or map of organisations for all to access
- Consult with other groups and organisations about future plans

## ✂ Community Mapping



## ① Building a group profile in the community

Build the profile of your group within your community by promotion of the short-term and long-term benefits of the group's achievements. This can be achieved by:

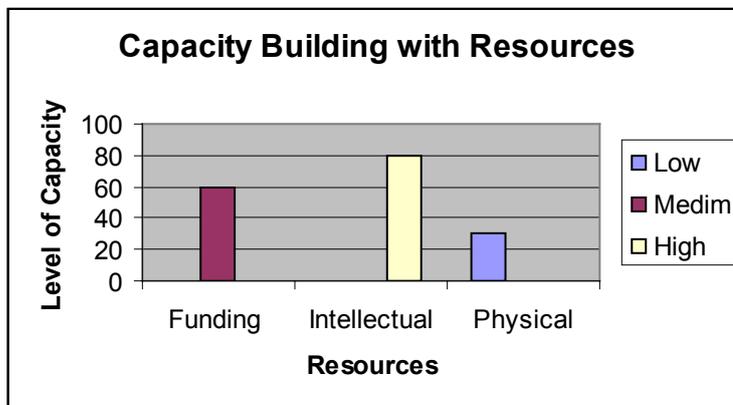
- Accessing the media (television, radio, internet, newspapers)
- Contributing displays at community events and public venues (libraries, shopping centres, local service providers)
- Word-of-mouth
- Attending conferences or events related to the group's work
- Developing a newsletter to members and networks

## ① Building Group Resources

Develop group resources and funding opportunities by networking with a range of organisations

- Access a variety of sources for gaining knowledge and skills (See *Group Development and Education* section above)
- Build relationships/partnerships with sources of physical resources which may assist the group. Sources may include local businesses, educational institutions (eg. schools, TAFEs, colleges and universities) and local service providers
- Develop and illustrate comparisons between the level of capacity built in response the various sources of resources.

## ✂ Graphing your Capacity



## ✍ Community Engagement Checklist

- Assess the group's existing networks and relationships with wider sources
- Assess areas for development of building networks and relationships
- Identify potential groups, organisations and individuals with whom to engage
- Identify the most appropriate strategies for creating and maintaining new links
- Monitor, modify and develop relationships with wider sources
- Communicate regularly and maintain relationships within networks

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

## ? Key Questions

- Decide the number and duration of planning meetings
- Select appropriate members to participate in the planning process
- Select a planning facilitator

## ⓘ Planning Strategies

- Involve people who will be responsible for directly implementing the plan
- Consult stakeholders and networks
- Ensure the plan is realistic
- Organise the overall strategic plan into smaller action plans
- Clarify the group's mission, vision, values, key issues, goals and strategies
- Specify individual's roles and time limits
- Document and distribute the plan
- Conduct a SWOT analysis (including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)
- Make adjustments to the plan if required

## ✂ SWOT Analysis Template

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Strategies for building upon strengths</i>
<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strategies for reducing weaknesses</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Strategies for building on opportunities</i>
<i>Threats</i>	<i>Strategies for reducing threats</i>



## Strategic Planning Checklist

- Assess the current needs and wants of the group
- Decide the focus areas for strategic planning
- Decide how the planning will proceed and who will be involved
- Undertake the planning process
- Implement the plan
- Monitor, evaluate and develop the planning and implementation