



Landcare Notes

Project planning

Landcare groups usually manage a number of projects, both large and small. Project planning will help groups identify what they will do, how they will do it and ways of carrying out these projects successfully.

This Landcare Note outlines the steps involved in planning projects of all sizes to achieve the success the group is aiming for. You can use this information to help you to develop the project, as well as managing it once you have secured the funding and resources you need and the commitment from your group.

What is project planning?

A project plan is a way to work out the 'why, what, how, who and how much' aspects of any project you are tackling. No matter what size project you are working on, you need to know all these factors and establish a beginning and an end to the project.

It may sound simple but it is easy to skip this planning process when you are busy getting things done. Take the time to do it – it will be worthwhile.

The essentials

To create a project plan that will help you cover all the bases, there are several key steps to follow. Planning your projects before you start working on them will help your group to clearly define the scope and objective of the project and identify the resources you need.

What types of activities would need a project plan?

Project plans have a clear objective and are usually limited to a short term (usually one-to-three years) period. Most groups have several projects on the go, such as:

- Removing weed invasions along roadsides
- Undertaking water quality measurements in-stream
- Rabbit control
- Field research and testing of new techniques
- Creating wildlife corridors across properties.

How to do it

Before you go ahead with your plan, be sure the project fits within your group's general objectives and contributes to your strategic and action plans. It sounds simple, but you should also be sure the project will interest and involve most of your members.

Gathering information and initiating the project

Creating a new project and defining what you will do may require a good foundation of relevant information.

For projects such as weed and rabbit control where some technical knowledge may be needed from outside your group, the Department of Primary Industries and Catchment Management Authority could help with access to that type of information.

More sophisticated techniques like computer mapping, soil and water analysis, and fauna surveys may be needed so you can get a clearer picture of what the issues are, and the benefits of implementing a specific project. Alternatively, you might want to pull together this collection of information as part of your project plan, particularly if you need to chase funding or outside help.

Defining the project and creating the plan

You need to be clear about the objective/s and aims of this project and how you are going to do it. The project should:



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- Be able to be measured
- Have a time limit
- Be specific (eg introducing a rabbit control program in Steeles Creek catchment)
- Be realistic and achievable, given the resources you have available.

For example:

- Aim: Protect the waterways in our catchment.
- Objective: To fence six kilometres of Steeles Creek over the next three years.
- Aim: Reduce the impact of rabbits on private property.
- Objective: Implement a coordinated rabbit control program in 2008.

What your plan should include

- What the project is (your objective)
- Where the project is (location)
- When – establish a timeline and include critical timings such as weed spraying or seed collection
- How – what is the breakdown of tasks that must be included
- Who - as in who is involved?

Do this while considering the timeline. It is important to be realistic about how much you can do. It's better to do a smaller project well than set yourself an unachievable task.

Do you need to make a list of the landholders involved? Can you establish a steering group or project team made up of group members and perhaps key people outside the group? Who will help manage the project? Do you need a list of experts or technical people that need to talk to?

- Budget – what things need to be paid for? How much do you estimate? When will you need the money?

- Resources – this can include equipment, people, tools, stationery, printing costs, meeting room, safety equipment, and so on. Note things you do not have access to in case you need to budget for it.
- Monitoring and reporting – i.e. How you will measure the success of the project? (See Landcare Note 5.5: Monitoring and Evaluating Group Activities).
- Funding – how will you finance the project? Sources of finance can come from a range of programs or sponsorships. See Landcare Notes: 3.1 Funding Options for Community Groups; 3.2 Partnerships and Collaborations; 3.3 Sponsorship; 3.5 Local Fundraising.

Other tips

Drawing up a project plan will help you establish the basics you need for funding applications or sponsorship requests. Your plan needs to clearly state how much is needed and when, in reference to money, materials and labour. The plan needs to state the expected outcomes of your project.

Your work needs to be scheduled for times that will get the best results if you are doing activities such as planting or rabbit control. For critical periods, you might need to consider other sources of labour apart from your members such as service clubs, school children, or corporate volunteers.

For detailed planning onsite, please refer to Landcare Note 5.4: Project Site Planning and Management for a useful guide and template.

The results

You will only know how successful your project is, if you set up a measurement at the start. There are several things you can include as a measure:

- What was done on-ground (outputs such as kilometres of fencing)? How many people came to the event? Etc.



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- What are the longer term benefits of the project (outcomes)? This can be more qualitative and observational, based on changes you see, what feedback you receive and so on.
- Did you finish, and within budget? That's a great result!

For more information about how to go about this refer to Landcare Note 5.5: Monitoring and Evaluating Group Activities.

Key tools

Using simple, computer-based programs like Microsoft Excel and Word can be helpful to put information into table form and distribute to your members. They can also be used for your reporting and monitoring as the project progresses.

Most Landcare groups will have a number of projects on the go at any one time. Your individual project plans should feed into the overall plans for your group, including your calendar of activities and annual Action Plans. This will reduce the risk of everything happening at once, as well as giving members a chance to build these group activities into their own calendar.

Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway:
www.landcarevic.org.au

Australian Government, Caring for Our Country: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/>

Chamala, S, and Mortis, P (1990) – *Working Together For Landcare*; Queensland Department of Primary Industries.

Landcare Coordinator in your region – contact your CMA or nearest DPI office.

McFarlane, G, Carpenter, J, and Youl, R (1996) – *Group Skills and Community Action*:
http://web.archive.org/web/20050315170751/www.neon.net.au/community/environment/grp_skills/

Wadsworth, Y (1991) – *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*; Action Research Issues Association (Inc).

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 2.2: Strategic Planning

Landcare Note 2.3: Action Planning

Landcare Note 3.1: Funding Options for Community Groups

Landcare Note 3.2: Partnerships and Collaborations

Landcare Note 3.3: Sponsorship

Landcare Note 3.5: Local Fundraising

Landcare Note 5.1: Project Management

Landcare Note 5.4: Project Site Planning and Management

Landcare Note 5.5: Monitoring and Evaluating Group Activities

Landcare Note 5.6: Planning and Running Events

Acknowledgements

Jude Niemiec: for information provided in a previous Landcare Note on project management (2001).

Compiled by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority's Landcare Support Team



Victorian
Landcare
Program

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 5.2

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ISBN 978-1-76047-265-8 (pdf/online)

Accessibility

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