Community Project Toolkit

Community Collaborations

Contents

About this Toolkit

The aim of the Wellington Shire Community Project Toolkit is to provide a relevant and practical information resource for communities and/or individuals wishing to develop and deliver a community project within Wellington Shire.

This toolkit consists of five (5) sections:

1. **Getting Started** – moving from idea to project.
2. **Project Planning** – writing your project plan
3. **Project Implementation** – managing your project
4. **Project Completion & Evaluation** – project learnings and celebrating project outcomes
5. **Digital Resources and Information Links** – online resources for developing your project

Hot tips

Useful tips have also been included throughout each section – look for the 👉 **Hot Tip** indicator**.**

Where to find out more information

For more information and/or queries regarding any element of Community Collaborations, please email community@wellington.vic.gov.au or contact Council's Sale Service Centre on 1300 366 244 to speak with a Social Planning and Policy team member.

1. Getting Started

Is your idea ready to turn into a community project?

Through careful pre- project planning, working out whether your idea could be a successful community project will save your group a lot of time, resources, and provide clarity about whether there is an actual community need for your project.

Working through the following questions can help clarify whether your idea is ready to become a community project.

- **What is the issue that I am trying to solve?**
  It is important to carefully investigate all facts and build evidence to strengthen the justification for how your project will deliver a solution to a real need instead of a perceived need or want.

  Gathering evidence is about expanding on your 'gut feeling' and looking for documentation, research, observations, or figures to back it up. This is incredibly important, to ensure that your instincts or assumptions are correct, or if in fact you are working with a perceived need as opposed to a real need.

☞ **Hot tip**: Visit **here** to view the latest demographic information about Wellington Shire.

- **What information already exists about this issue?**
  When planning a new project, it is vital to undertake research about any similar projects and/or how any existing projects might be affected by your planned project.

- **Is there enough current interest to form a community project group?**
  It's important to find out whether community members are interested in forming a project group for supporting your project idea.

  Think about:

  - How many people do you think you will be able to get to help you?
  - What skills and talents will they bring?
  - How many hours per week can each person work on the project?
  - How long will the project run for?
  - When do you want to start the project?

- **What positive benefits will this project deliver for our community?**
  Think about:

  - Why does this project need to happen?
  - What are you proposing to do?
  - How are you going to achieve this?
  - What will change because of this project?

- **How will you Resource your project?**
  Resourcing can come in several forms, but the most common are:

  - Cash or grants –Money given to fund the project or specific parts of your project with some acquittal or reporting once project is completed.
  - In-kind – where an organisation, business or individual provides services or goods to support the project.
  - Sponsorship – where an organisation, business or individual provides services or goods to support the project in return for public acknowledgement and publicity.

- **Who else can help and/or work with us on this project?**
  Who do you know that would be likely to have time and energy for working on this project?

2. Project Planning

The following information is provided to assist you in visualising and developing a clear project outline. By working through each section, your project group's knowledge and understanding about the project is strengthened and shared equally.

Stakeholders
A Stakeholder is anybody directly, or indirectly impacted by the project. Throughout the life of a project there may be individuals who begin as external stakeholders who come onboard the project team or committee.

- Think about:

    o   What agencies might have a legal responsibility or interest in the issue or place and what role might they take?
    o   Who might be affected by anything you do to deal with the issue e.g., landowners, neighbours, recreational users, or indigenous groups?
    o   Who has influence or standing in the community (For example: local government Councillors, prominent community group members or indigenous group representatives)?
    o   How and what is important to each stakeholder to the project?
    o   What is their current level of support?
    o   How will you address any difference between stakeholder's current level of support and their importance to the success of the project?
    o   How will you demonstrate where your project aligns to your stakeholders and/or funder's priorities?

Proposed Project Site
You will need to consider:

    o   Do you know whether the property owners have future plans for the site?
    o   Depending on the location and ownership, you may need permits to access and/or use for your project.
    o   How will you conduct a site risk assessment for your project?
    o   Are there any identified risks? Think about how you will mitigate these.
    o   What insurance types and levels will you need for your project and the public?
    o   If your project requires engineer expertise, have you budgeted to cover the cost?

Artwork considerations

Where Artwork is involved in your project, consider the following:

- o How permanent is the artwork?
- o Is the content appropriate for the location?
- o Is it stand-alone or integrated with other infrastructure?
- o Will it incorporate digital technology, such as augmented reality?
- o Have sustainable and durable materials been considered and are they appropriate for the location?

☞ **Hot Tip:** Find digital links to Artist support and resources in Section 5 of this Toolkit

Placemaking

If your project involves locally – led placemaking, you will need to consider:

- o How much equipment will you need for developing and delivering your project
- o Will the project's deliverables (including artwork) reflect the local culture, enhance the space, and add uniqueness and connectedness to the community?
- o Will contractors and/or volunteers be engaged?
- o How many will you need for each part of the project?

Volunteers

Volunteering often brings together a diverse range of people from all walks of life and provides an opportunity to be involved in activities that reflect a personal interest and allows people to use their skills.

Most volunteers offer their services on a regular basis however some volunteers are members of several groups (particularly in regional and/or remote area) and may have limited capacity to be a part of your project. Many people also choose to volunteer their time via phone or computer, which can be especially useful for digital support (emails, website posts, record keeping, designing posters and promotional material etc).

It is wise to conduct a volunteer audit of your group at the pre-planning stage, so that you know what levels of expertise, skills and times that people are available. This will assist you in determining any skill gaps an also provide clarity on when and where people are able to assist.

☞ **Hot Tip:** You can find digital links to Volunteer resources in Section 5 of this Toolkit

Funding and Budgets

An important part of successful community project planning is to identify potential funding sources prior to project start up.

- Think about:

  o What organisations have priorities that align with and/or offer funding?
  o What opportunities are there to generate income to support your project – fundraising, sponsorship, crowdfunding, ticket sales, membership fees, etc.
  o Explore potential project partnerships – these may be mutually beneficial partnerships and strengthen opportunities for the future.
  o How to share the responsibility within your project group for grant seeking.

- Most funding bodies and project partners will request an 'elevator pitch" style summary of your project, that:

  o Tells your project's story in under 250 words
  o Can be delivered in less than 5 minutes
  o Clear, concise language – direct and to the point.
  o Avoids the use of jargon
  o Shows how it will successfully deliver a great community outcome.

☞ **Hot Tip:** You can find digital links to funding resources in Section 5 of this Toolkit

Budget and Expenditure

When developing your budget, you will need to think about:

- The type, quantity, and cost of items that you need.
- Income that you may receive (including grants, monetary donations, sponsorship, in kind support and donations of goods and/or services)
- Practical needs such as transportation and refreshments/sundries required for any volunteers participating.
- How your group will budget and track all project expenses.

☞ **Hot Tip:** You can find digital links to budget resources in <u>Section 5</u> of this Toolkit

Project Maintenance, Removal and Relocation

Project maintenance should be scheduled for any assets will need during the full lifecycle and at closure of the project to ensure it does not become a burden to the community.

- Think about:

  - What costs are likely to be incurred for maintaining, rectifying issues such as vandalism and graffiti?
  - How will you let community and stakeholders know about relocating or removing a project asset?
  - What costs will be associated with the end of life (removal) or relocation of your project? Be sure to factor these into your budgeting.

Project Evaluation Planning

When setting up a project it is important to think about how you are going to evaluate that project or piece of work.

You know why you're starting out on a project and what you're hoping to achieve, so even at the very beginning it's important to consider – 'how will we know this project has made a difference?

☞ **Hot Tip:** You can find digital links to evaluation resources in <u>Section 5</u> of this Toolkit

Holding a project concept meeting

Once that you've established a good level of initial support for your project idea, it may be prudent to host an open meeting where you can discuss more aspects of your project in greater detail and garner people's interest and ideas for support.

By holding an initial meeting, you are also able to identify next steps for turning your idea into a community project. This may include commitment to form a project group.

Generating a shared vision is about looking at what you want in the future - your 'ideal'. It's useful to describe what things could be like in the future, in words or pictures, or both. They key to a shared vision is to find something general enough that people can agree to, without losing the essence of what you want to achieve

It's important to also decide whether your idea should be a community - led project. Community – led projects are when your group is responsible for the project from start to finish. You may also need to explore whether your project group requires an auspice agency/organisation to assist and/or oversee your project.

Pulling it all together into a Plan

Using a workshop for your planning is often the most effective because it gives everyone a chance to be involved and helps to build relationships.

Developing an Action Plan involves working out the tasks required to complete each of the goals and/or objectives of your project. Actions should be specific and assigned to someone to do within a timeframe.

o   Planning and rollout timeframes need to be realistic and agreed upon by all parties involved. Rollouts that are too quick may create unrealistic and possibly cynical community expectations about your project, while those that are too slow risk stakeholder and volunteer declining interest and possible non-support for further projects.

Think about:

o   What capacity does your group have to deliver a community project?
o   resources are required and how they will be provided
o   How and when will coordination, communication, and decision-making take place.
o   Has your budget been fully developed (income and estimated expenditure)?
o   What are the key priorities and/or milestones of your project?
o   What timing is needed for successfully delivering each project milestone?
o   How many types of community consultation should your project undertake?
o   Where and when will your community consultations take place?
o   How, when and to who will you report back to about each community consultation and any issues/decisions that arise from it?

Community Consultation

This is often a widely overlooked and underused component of great project planning. If the broader community doesn't need your project, the chances of them being part or supporting your project are reduced enormously.

It can be quite damaging to your relationship with the community if the project is not actually needed and may result in community feelings of frustration and resentment, so it's vital that you provide several opportunities for people to have input into your plans and learn more about your project.

- Your community consultation plan should outline a schedule of consultation events and communications, ideally coordinated with approval and construction milestones, and regular community events.

- Successful community consultation planning includes:

    - Engaging community members in the development of a strong shared project vision
    - Inform and educates your community about your project and its timelines for delivery
    - Create excitement around opportunities for the community to use and participate in your project
    - Builds a sense of community ownership, pride, and stewardship of the lifecycle of your project.

- When planning your consultation, you will need to give careful thought to the best methods to engage the diversity of individuals and groups in the community with whom you will need to consult. For example, your approach to consulting with parents of young children will likely be different from your approach to consulting with youth in the community.

- Each stage of a project may have its own group of unique players and may require different types of community consultation methods.

  For Example:

  o **Newsletters/Flyers** that can be dropped off on postal walks to all households and businesses in a neighbourhood.
  o **Information Sessions/Public Meetings** provide an opportunity to answer questions from the audience.
  o **E-Bulletins/Social Media Updates** can assist in gathering a list of email addresses and subscribers.
  o **Participating in organised community events** held by other groups by having an information stall.

- How, when and where consultations occur can influence attendance levels. Look through all gathered evidence from your pre-planning activities and think about the following questions:

  o What are the best timeframes (days of week, time of day) for holding a public consultation?
  o What is the best location for a meeting or event?
  o Are there any physical barriers that might prevent community participation?
  o Is all project information provided in a easy to understand, accessible format?
  o Have we provided information in languages that are spoken in this community?
  o What other established groups, clubs and organisations in the community can help encourage people to attend and/or "host" a meeting or event?

  You could set up a consultation for your project by:

  o Having a display in a local, high-foot traffic area
  o Hold an open day or a site visit.
  o Ask to be a guest speaker at meetings of any local clubs, groups and/or organisations in your project's geographical area.
  o Contribute an article or place an advertisement in local noticeboards, newspapers/newsletters (school, clubs/groups, and community), social media sites and local radio stations.
  o Conduct a survey or provide a feedback sheet for people to send comments and suggestions to you.

☞ **Hot tip**: Visit here to find out about how to use Wellington Shire Council's Event Calendar for free public event advertising

Close the Feedback Loop

It is important to communicate the results of your consultation process to your community stakeholders, with clear information about how you reached your decision or processed the consultation materials, and reasons for the direction you've ultimately chosen.

This can be done via:

- o Sending a short bullet list of main points via email to stakeholders and registered participants from each consultation activity
- o Add a project consultation update on your public website and/or social media pages
- o Place a project consultation update in relevant community newsletters/newspapers
- o Host an open house or town hall consultation outcome session

Marketing

Raise the profile of your group and your project within your local and the wider community through targeted marketing.

- Think about the story of your project – how could you describe it to a visitor?

  - o Use words, images and approaches that resonate with your community.
  - o Talk about the specifics of the project, and why you're doing it. Make sure you let them know who is going to benefit from your project.

- How can you promote your project?

  - o Make a list of contacts at TV stations, newspapers, blogs, magazines, and radio stations.
  - o Speak with your stakeholders to see if they have any communication teams/links to help promote the project.
  - o Search websites such as LinkedIn and/or facebook for similar projects
  - o Send out press releases at the appropriate time.
  - o Keep your contacts updated with project milestones or achievements.
  - o Set up a social media account (Facebook and/or Twitter) for the event.
  - o Make up a catchy hashtag you can use when talking about the event, and try to get others to use it as well
  - o Think about how each project stakeholder's contribution will be recognised?

☞ **Hot Tip:** You can find digital links to Community Newsletters in Section 5 of this Toolkit

3. Project Implementation

Documenting a project provides you with valuable information and feedback from workers and participants.

It can be useful for accessing future funding, conveying your message to government bodies and is a wonderful tool to use as part of the celebration with your community when the project is completed.

- Consider:

    o Keeping a detailed record of any consultation activities that your group undertakes. This will provide more evidence that there have been levels of community consultation prior to and during the development of your project. These may also be valuable as a template for future work.
    o Your implementation plan outlines all forms of community consultation and which demographics were reached - these should be aligned with each project milestone.
    o Keep records of any electronic communications, including website posts and/or comments. These can be used as part of your evaluation, while also showing another form of consultation and/or community communications taking place.

4.   Project Completion and Evaluation

Evaluation is a valuable process that assists with insight into the work, its impact and reach. It is also important to funding bodies, our communities, and our own management, because it demonstrates that we are measured, (considered) reflective and thoughtful about our work and its aims.

Once that your project is over, it is important to reflect on project outcomes. With great project management processes in place (including documenting the steps taken along the way of project implementation) you will have a sound record what your group did and how… so it can be shared with others and help to inform future projects.

Equally when things don't work – you want to consider why a project didn't work for your community and record what the learnings are from that.

- When evaluating your project, consider the following questions:

  - What were the outcomes for the community and participants?
  - How do we know if the project outcomes are valued by the community?
  - How well did we implement the project?
  - What worked well and why?
  - What did we learn from the process?
  - How might we do differently next time?
  - What support might we need to make these changes?
  - Overall, is this process worth repeating in the future?

- Explore whether it's possible to develop a digital report of your project and how the projected outcomes have been met.

- Your group has invested a lot of time and effort into developing and delivering a community - make sure that your group takes some time to celebrate!

- Consider also hosting a community event to showcase your project and thank the community for their support and input.

☞ **Hot Tip:** Why not share your project success through the Community Collaborations – Community Project Showcase on *Your Wellington Your Say*

5. Digital Resources and Information and Links

Resource	Description
ABCDE Learning Sites	Provides both a framework and model to seek support and funding to implement community building and strengthening initiatives within any community.
Aon Insurance	Includes an Insurance Puzzle Helper that helps identify the insurance covers needed and allows you to apply online.
Australian Copyright Council	A range of plain-language information and resources about copyright laws.
Bank of Ideas Newsletter	A bi-monthly newsletter that inspires and showcases community creativity including resource links.
Be Connected	An Australia wide initiative with free online learning resources as well as a Network of community partners who offer support so you can develop your digital skills and confidence
Canva	A graphic design platform, including templates that can be used free of charge to create visual content for a variety of uses.
Community Grants	An opportunity to view information and apply for funding to support community assistance, events, projects, and facilities.
Community Profile	Discover information and data about Wellington Shire communities through Council's .id Community Profile tool
Community Workshops	A range of community training and information sessions currently on offer by Wellington Shire Council.
Consumer Affairs Victoria	Information and resources around the different models of community group structure and requirements.
Council Halls and Reserves	A comprehensive list of Council managed/owned public spaces (including their respective contact details) for community use.
Council Libraries	Information and links to each local library within Wellington Shire, including a range of programs, activities, free resources (electronic and hardcopy) that may assist.
Discounted and Donated Technology	Eligible not-for-profits can access free or heavily discounted technology products from providers through the Connecting Up program.
Emergency contacts	A list of services for contacting in the event of an emergency
Event Calendar	A free service by Wellington Shire for listing community events on Council's website – event calendar.

Facilities Maps	An online map platform displaying Council managed facilities, including playgrounds, halls, public toilets, reserves and culturally significant places located across Wellington Shire.
Garage Sale Trail	An Australian wide program that takes place each November in the form of an organised series of local garage sales that help community groups to connect and fundraise.
Gippsland Community Legal Service	A free community education program for community groups about the law and their rights
Google Forms, Documents, Slides and Sheets	A free online resource where you can create, edit and develop a range of different formatted documents.
Grant Finder	A comprehensive list provided by Wellington Shire Council that details known grants and funding opportunities provided by federal and state government bodies, as well as sponsorship programs available for community groups.
Hosting Events	Detailed information and links for successfully hosting a public event within Wellington Shire.
Justice Connect - Not for Profit Law	Free legal help and resources for community groups, organisations, and social enterprises on a wide range of topics including fundraising, advertising, intellectual property, setting up websites, AGMs, Insurance, disputes, handling conflict and working with other organisations, to name a few!
Local Community Newsletters	A range of community newsletters currently supported through Council's Quick Response Grant round.
Local Mobility Maps	Easy Access Mobility Maps for Maffra, Heyfield, Sale, Stratford, Rosedale, and Yarram for people with limited mobility to enable safe and accessible paths of travel.
Mediation Support	Information and Mediation services provided by the Dispute Settlement Centre for Victoria for individuals and eligible incorporated groups
Neighbourhood Houses	Details of where you can find each of the 12 Neighbourhood Houses located within Wellington Shire.
Our Community	Including a range of guides and information links about how to go green, executive positions guides, cyber safety and fraud prevention, grants and tech tools for not-for-profits, budgeting tips and templates, how to host and run an AGM, and a great range of policy templates and online webinars and/or courses to help your community group.

[Regional Arts Victoria – Gippsland](#)	An independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation that also supports regional artists and groups to engage with and promote their communities through the arts.
[Rural Aid Webinars](#)	As series of recorded Community Building Webinars.
[TED Talks](#)	An online portal where you can search for talks on 'community projects' and learn more about them.
[Streatrader](#)	An online portal where community groups may register with their local council for selling food and drinks (permanent or temporarily, including events and mobile service)
[Tips on Starting a Non-Profit Group](#)	A help sheet developed by Our Community Org that discusses starting up a not-for-profit organisation and/or group.
[The Middle of Everywhere](#)	An app that highlights all there is to see and do within Wellington Shire, including community clubs, groups and associated events.
[Volunteer Australia](#)	An online Resource Hub from our National Volunteering peak body that contains over 350 volunteer resources including policy framework and templates, guides on health and safety, managing in emergencies and pandemics, social media, economic impacts of volunteers, recruitment, retention and so much more!
[Volunteering in Wellington Shire](#)	Community volunteering opportunities available across Wellington Shire

Toolkit Feedback

If you have any feedback that you would like to share about this Toolkit or suggestions of resources and/or information for inclusion in future editions, please email community@wellington.vic.gov.au or contact Council's Sale Service Centre on 1300 366 244 (please ask to speak with a Social Planning and Policy team member).

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