



DEPT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LOCAL AREA PLANNING SUPPORT PROGRAM

BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL FINAL REPORT

SMILIE (Shared Model for an Integrated Local Information Environment)

Report updated: 5 November 2007

Introduction

Baw Baw Shire Council, working with Latrobe City Council, identified the need to develop an efficient and effective application and associated framework for the ongoing collection and integration of disparate information and data sets that relate to community planning. The application and framework will facilitate and assist community development, planning processes and knowledge sharing within both councils and with their respective communities.

Baw Baw Shire and Latrobe City staff initially held 6 project meetings, with both councils present, starting in May 2006 and extending through to May 2007. During this time a project plan and scope was developed, and a consultant appointed, who also attended project meetings. A representative from the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Department of Premier and Cabinet attended some meetings to present the concept of the I Place project (which was running concurrently) and a representative from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) also attended some meetings. Additional numerous meetings were held amongst Baw Baw staff during the 12 month period to undertake the required work. The I Place project was running during the same period as the SMILIE project and stakeholders discussed the potential alignments of both projects. Although linking the projects had some merit, it was decided that it was not part of the SMILIE project scope.

Resource availability, and continuity of staff from both councils, and continuity of staff from the consultant, caused major time delays and rework. Additionally the original project scope was complex and difficult to implement on the ground. Project management ownership was also an issue. In a progress report to DPCD in 2007 it stated, *This project has been in the balance between abandoning the project and returning the grant or continuing in a redefined manner. This is mainly due to a lack of resources and an understanding of the purpose of the project and its benefits to planning for the future of our respective communities.* It is understood that a formal approach was made to DPCD to abandon the project.

In June 2007 a new project manager was appointed (Director of Community Development, Baw Baw Shire Council) who consulted with all stakeholders to review past work and gain an understanding of the numerous and complex problems that the original project scope encountered. None of the stakeholders were able to satisfactorily explain what the project outcomes would be and how it would change the way they worked in day to day operations. With data from the latest stakeholder consultation the project manager developed a new scope and together with the stakeholders got excited about the new vision for community planning. The new vision was easier to articulate and easier to understand how it would

change the way we worked, on a day to day basis. The project was restarted, from scratch in June 2007.

The New Vision

The original project name SMILIE was so embedded in both organisations it was simpler to keep the name, however the project vision transitioned to a Place Based Information Tool. In simple terms this meant:

- All data and information that was gleaned from community consultations and meetings would be stored and retrieved so it was searchable in numerous ways, by all staff, but the data will be exclusive to community planning.
- All data and information as above would be searchable by locality (town/area), by all (whole of Baw Baw shire), by date ranges, by issues (using key words) and by author.
- All data and information as above could be stored in document management systems, drives, intranets or websites but be retrievable via electronic link back to the Place Based Information Tool, in Baw Baw's case this would be hosted on councils intranet, but using new Microsoft SharePoint software.
- All base statistical information (regarding localities, infrastructure within the localities, demographics and community plans relevant to that locality) would be stored within the Place Based Information Tool.
- All future planned community engagements, consultations or surveys would be easily searched within the same tool to enable staff to check what consultation/engagement activities are planned in the future. This will enable teams to double up with other teams to save time and resources, by working localities together and not over consulting particular localities.
- The tool would be extremely low maintenance, with only uploads required and no updating of information ever necessary.
- The well defined community planning data that would be stored would be beneficial for developing community plans and the council plan, and support councils to evidence adherence to Best Value principles and in Baw Baw's case, the 8 Principles of Business Excellence.
- The tool will also be an excellent resource for Baw Baws Community Engagement Program. The Program has developed Community Plans for 5 localities in Baw Baw with another 13 localities to be completed by the end of 2008, with 3 underway currently. These plans will be under constant review and SMILIE will provide the data in an effective and efficient system for reviewing these plans in the future. The completed plans are currently on Baw Baws website.

Project Implementation

The principles and process of a Placed Based Information Tool were established along with the design of what a users computer screen might look like. Actual implementation needed to be flexible, so that any council could tailor it to their existing core system or to new

software. At a meeting on 11 July between Latrobe City and Baw Baw Shire, it was decided that totally separate implementation would occur as the councils were at different stages both culturally, and with their community planning activities. Baw Baw indicated that they wished to pursue full implementation and share all documentation and learnings with Latrobe. Latrobe indicated that they needed to further work on change management so that the staff culture was more amenable to using a system like SMILIE.

Baw Baw then developed User Requirement Specifications, which included high level technical requirements. From this Baw Baw attended workshops with software providers to develop and design a workable system. A further Proposal Paper was developed which outlined every detail of implementation including staff training requirements. Baw Baw decided on using Microsoft SharePoint, launched from their existing intranet, so that it was easily accessible by any council that used the Microsoft suite of applications. With the introduction of SharePoint, and once the SMILIE project is implemented and running successfully, Baw Baw will consider using SharePoint for other applications. Both the User Requirement Specifications and the Proposal Paper were distributed to Latrobe City.

Baw Baw is undertaking a gradual implementation of the Place Based Information Tool; initially it will be integrated into the Community Planning Team, which is the scope of the SMILIE project. Once established other teams such as Community Care and Development Team, Recreation Team, Environmental Management Team and the Corporate Planning Team, have all shown enthusiasm to have their data included and full use of the SMILIE (SharePoint) system. The SharePoint software will link to all of council's other electronic systems, making it a long term viable system that can be expanded upon into the future.

Changing the way we work

Staff involved in the project, and those who will use the framework and systems as implementation is expanded to the rest of the organisation, were asked to identify how the Place Based Information Tool will change the way they work. Their responses were:

- "Finally we will have a coordinated approach to community consultation and engagement. These activities happen concurrently across the organisation, but with teams not knowing what the other teams are doing and what data they already have on a particular community. We are wasting resources and over consulting some localities and community groups."
- "This framework and tool underpins the systems thinking embraced by the Community Engagement Steering group, and will allow both internal members (staff) and external members (other govt agencies) to work better together in Baw Baw."
- "If I am going out to a community meeting I can do a quick locality search and instantly see all the engagements and consultations that have occurred in that community, within a timeframe I choose. How great to be able to attend a ratepayers association meeting, with all the data about the community engagement work that has gone into that community by this council over the last 12 months. Roads and rubbish are tangible, but it is the intangible work that I need to explain and this will help me."
- "It will be great to be able to glance at the community planning calendar and see what other teams have coming up in the way of community consultation or engagement activities. I might be able to just add a couple of my own questions, relevant to my team, into their surveys or community workshop, so I do not have to

hold my own separate data collection activity. This is going to save us heaps of time.”

Sector wide implementation

The SMILIE project manager has been a member of the LGPRO Corporate Planners Network Group (formerly the South Eastern Region Best Value Network) for the past 6 years. Through participation in this network it has become apparent that numerous councils struggle with efficient and effective ways of storing, retrieving and using community planning data yielded from community consultation and engagements. In addition, councils struggle with over consulting some communities and not knowing what consultation and engagement activities are occurring across their organisations amongst the various teams and divisions. Further the ability to easily use this data to develop council plans or create strategies and business unit plans is a major challenge.

It is intended that the SMILIE framework and application will be demonstrated to other councils within the Corporate Planners network and also to the Gippsland group of councils. If successful, the model could be promoted further in the future.

PART E: DECLARATION AND CERTIFICATION (STATEMENT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER)

I, GLENN PATTERSON, hereby certify that:

- a. all Funding received was spent for the purposes of the Activity and in accordance with the Agreement, and that We have complied with the Agreement;
- b. unless the Activity Period has expired or the Agreement has been terminated, the unspent portion of the Funds (if any) are available for use within the next Reporting period;
- c. the financial information is presented in accordance with the financial Reporting requirements You notified to Us;
- d. at the time the Report or financial statement is provided, We are able to pay all Our debts as and when they fall due and We have sufficient resources to discharge all Our debts at the end of the current Financial Year.

Signature of Authorised Person: 

Name of Authorised Person: Glenn Patterson

Position: Chief Executive Officer

Telephone: 5624 2455

Date: 29-10-2007

Completed Progress Report to be sent to:

Elise Alcordo
Senior Project Officer
Local Government Victoria
Department of Planning and Community Development
GPO Box 2392
Melbourne Vic 3001

Telephone: (03) 9208 3622

Fax: (03) 9208 3577

E-mail: elise.alcordo@dvc.vic.gov.au