

RURAL CITY OF WANGARATTA

Local Area Planning Support Program Final Report (Addendum)

- How the project has made a difference and changed the way council does business

- Outcomes (social, environmental, economic)

The Local Area Planning project for the Rural City of Wangaratta and the Benalla Rural City has provided an integrated planning system which has developed better monitoring and reporting capacity of Council business. The system has also provided better coordinated planning across each of the respective organisations which in turn will benefit the social, environmental and economic outcomes.

The system provides easier access and linking of the vast range of strategic plans operable across Council. In time this will deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness.

- Key learning's

The implementation of the integrated planning system has demonstrated the benefits that can be achieved both operationally and for the community through better planning mechanisms.

A key result of this system has raised the level of knowledge and acknowledgement of the Council Plan. This will inevitably increase awareness of community need as both Councils proceed with a Community Planning Program that will inform the Council's future planning.

- Process

The process has enabled a partnered approach between the two Councils. This has provided and will provide further benefits. Each Council has been able to consider the different practises in place in each Council which has prompted thinking of better and more efficient methods.

Long term this partnership will provide thought provoking and learning, and a peer approach to proceeding with strengthening our planning processes.

- How the project has worked across Council eg involving different departments and levels of council. Indirectly or through collaboration

The integrated planning system is an 'across organisational' process at all levels in all areas. As a consequence it has generated greater parallels and consideration of roles. For example it has been acknowledged that different areas may have a joint role in achieving one of the Council objectives, removing a sole ownership mentality.

- How the project has contributed to capacity development of council

The integrated planning system has contributed greatly to the capacity of the organisations involved. It has replaced a manual a sometime repetitive and outdated method of monitoring and recording planning activity.

The project has also made cross organisational planning easier and more accessible. This improved approach will inevitably improve the links with other levels of Government planning, enabling a more streamlined link to community planning and greater community outcomes as a result.

- Critical decision points in the progress of the project

Both Councils worked closely with the successful provider to tailor a system that met both Councils needs. This included the formatting, reporting and hierarchy mechanisms. These decisions contributed greatly to maximising benefit.

Some reporting formats were determined throughout the project as greater knowledge of the system was achieved.

- How has the project enabled the council to better engage with the community

The integrated planning system will align with community planning processes being undertaken by each of the Councils. Although at this stage at a very preliminary stage it is expected that the system will enable communities to observe and monitor progress of 'their' priorities directly. Both systems need to be developed further within the organisations before this can be achieved.

- How has the project made a difference to the community and other stakeholders

- Outcomes (social, environmental, economic)

The full extent of the benefits of the integrated planning system to other stakeholders has yet to be realised. It is anticipated that the overall benefits will relate to easier access to Council planning information and improved relativity. Improved joint planning mechanisms and learning.

- Process

The selection of the provider for the integrated planning system included consideration of the capacity of the product to link with other levels of Government planning systems. Although this cannot be conclusive given the range of different systems used, the provider was able to demonstrate significant understand and capacity for the product to link and adapt to other systems.

- How the project has contributed to capacity development of the community or other stakeholders

Again this is not yet fully realised but is anticipated that the integrated planning system will enable stronger links with both the community planning and the planning of other organisations.

- How has the project enabled the community to better engage with Council

The integrated planning system will link well with the Councils approaches to community planning and better enable engagement and relativity for

the community with Councils planning. This is being achieved by providing a single system of information that stores, monitors and reports on all aspects of Councils business. This transparency demonstrates to the community that the respective Council is responding to the expressed needs and priorities identified by the community.

- Recommendations to other councils who may be undertaking similar projects

Both the Rural City of Wangaratta and the Benalla Rural City Council have identified with the value of having an electronic integrated planning system. It is important however that work has been undertaken to develop a positive attitude towards organisational planning and relevant unit plans are in place. The integrated planning system is as most computerised databases, that is they are only as good as the information that is inputted.

It is also important to ensure that there is a drive across the organisation to use the tool, this can be seen by some to be an additional time demand however the longer term benefits does improve efficiencies.

- How the project could have a sector wide implementation

It was noted in the research undertaken to determine a 'system' and a provider that many Councils in Victoria have already implemented an integrated planning system and many of these are the same product chosen for this project. That demonstrated the existing recognition of the benefits of an electronic means for integrating, monitoring and coordinating strategic planning across the organisations.

- How State departments are involved in the project

Although some immediate opportunities are already available to better resource the State Government with information through the integrated planning system this can only increase and be improved as the system progresses. Closer links with respective systems and work on community planning will enable the system to impact significantly with respect to the State Government departments.

Limited involvement of the State departments has been achieved to date only due to the stage of the project.

Completed Final Report to be sent to:

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