

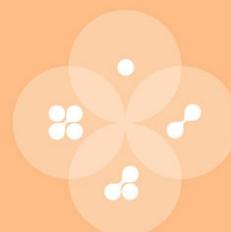
Summary:  
Sustainable Communities  
Learning Group  
15 October 2004



AUCKLAND SUSTAINABLE CITIES PROGRAMME

*A regional partnership with the Sustainable Development Programme of Action*

Sustainable Communities  
workstrand



# Summary:

## Sustainable Communities Learning Group

15 October 2004

### Introduction

This Learning Group was an open-invitation workshop organised by Sustainable Communities to share learnings about sustainable community development and its demonstration projects. It attracted about 30 participants from local and central government organisations and private consultancies.

At the workshop, the Sustainable Communities team presented an overview of the approach taken by the workstrand to sustainable community development, and our learnings from the initial six months' project development stage, which centred around finding appropriate existing projects to build on and establishing project relationships.

Representatives from Project Twin Streams, which at the time was the first project to partner with Sustainable Communities, presented an overview of their project and the value they were seeking from a partnership with Sustainable Communities.

The workshop concluded with interactive sessions based on key questions based around the challenges of taking a sustainable community development approach, and the issues that need to be considered when forming partnerships and acting in partnership:

- What challenges are there in taking a sustainable community development approach?
- What would facilitate or support you and your agency to overcome these challenges and to be a learning organisation?
- What's needed to develop partnerships between local, central government, iwi and community towards sustainability?
- What does it mean to be a representative on a regional body?

The key points from Sustainable Communities' learnings over its first six months and then responses of workshop participants to these questions are presented here.

## ***Presentation: Sustainable Communities***

### **Challenges to date:**

- Articulating the sustainable community development framework
  - We could have been clearer about the SCD framework earlier
  - It's hard to sell a concept without real live examples - "yes, but what will you do?"
  - People don't have time to read lots of information, needed short, sharp summaries, scenarios, diagrams
- Having an in-depth conversation requires a common language
  - Sustainability means something different to everyone.
  - Language is esp. important with the range of organisations involved.
- Lack of ownership of the Programme
  - Some people seem to be observers & are not taking responsibility for championing the Programme in their organisations
- Complexity of relationships in large organisations
  - An attitude that the SC Programme just added another layer to the complexity of relationships
  - Gaining buy in can involve numerous meetings (time), telling the story over and over again
  - Don't expect that because an agency is involved with the Programme that they are briefed and on board.
- It takes time to build trust & credibility
  - Especially amongst agencies that don't traditionally work together
  - Especially important when you're selling a conceptual model
- Balancing getting the process collaboration right with getting results
  - Relationship building takes a lot of time, there are lots of stakeholders, but we need to show progress in "making a difference" to keep people engaged
- Difficult to approach agencies & talk about sustain-ability when they think they're already "doing it"
  - To do things differently suggests that there is something wrong with how we do things now – as institutions and individuals we can find this offensive & therefore be defensive and closed

### **Learnings to date:**

- The concept of morphing our Sustainable Communities Steering Group into steering groups around each demonstration project (and a learning group) hasn't worked because of the lengthy project development phase.
- We haven't always communicated well
- We've been fuzzy on some processes (such as applying the Selection Process)
- Where there are synergies of culture (personal or institutional) progress is easier
- Brokering relationships is a key enabler across all the projects
- Attitude is everything – a sense of humour is so important

## ***Interactive Session 1: Challenges***

### **What challenges are there in taking a sustainable community development approach?**

#### GROUP A

- Creating a single vision for a sustainable community – explaining what it means
- Getting a balance between being too prescriptive as opposed to being too open-ended – not telling the community what is best for them
- Getting the right resourcing and building capacity, particularly to groups that are critical to the development of a community

#### GROUP B

- Dealing with language – e.g. the definition of Sustainability and of Community
- Risk taking: this process is not a straight line – it's important to take some risks – and this is a challenge for big organisations where the environment is risk-averse
- Changing attitudes within organisations to change behaviour and to integrate work

#### GROUP C

- Attitudes to change – identifying current community beliefs/values around sustainability – where are we at with that? What are the “hooks” to move forward; what about sub-communities?
- The lack of integration between key contacts in organisations and the lack of integration towards sustainability, both within and between organisations
- Difficult to balance short-term drivers – consumerism, success, political cycles, jobs, with sustainability which has more of a focus on the long-term and that's not as exciting.

#### GROUP D

- Where is the responsibility for creating sustainable communities – where does that sit within organisations, between organisations, between organisations and the communities?
- Who is involved in making decisions about involvement in Sustainable Communities projects, e.g. Clendon? Is it community or agency driven?
- Some of the learning happens on a practical approach – both institutionally, and in the community

### **What would facilitate or support you and your agency to overcome these challenges and to be a learning organisation?**

#### GROUP A

- Attitude changing through a long term learning programme – paradigm shift
- Evaluation of the things we're doing right already
- Commitment of realistic staff time

#### GROUP C

- Define / identify the range of attitudes and develop win/win outcomes (language)
- Develop a shared 'tool box' – vision. House mixed teams.
- Target quick successes to build momentum and buy in.

## ***Session 2: Partnerships***

**What's needed to develop partnerships between local, central government, iwi and community towards sustainability?**

**What does it mean to be a representative on a regional body?**

### GROUP A

- Honesty, goodwill, trust, respect for each other, common understanding, a common language, positive attitude, and willingness to have this happen
- Leadership is absolutely imperative – and it's at different levels.
- Power and resource sharing by the institutions who have it with those who don't, and equally the ability to develop a capacity to govern and manage resources on the other side.

### GROUP B

- To develop partnerships we need indicators to achieve goals.
- Need to determine why we want the partnership, clarify what it is to achieve, then develop indicators. Then evaluate the consistency of achievements being made against the original goals.
- We have multiple goals with agency partnerships, and when we bring in the community we may have to change tack. Have to embrace the possibility of change and be responsive to change and to the multiple goals of the community.
- Multiple goals with multiple partnerships are often conflicting.
- Need a process to build trust – with communities feeling that they have influence and involvement in the goals – this makes a greater level of trust.

### GROUP C

- Have a process that would help: a shared workspace or transparent toolbox, so people can see the tools that agencies are using with them. A process that enables people to update themselves, so that they don't have to rely on the agency partner to get back to them. How to generate that?
- You need to be clear about conflicts of interest: the extent to which community groups who engage are there for the public interest, versus in it to pick up a contract of work – there needs to be clear boundaries, clear outlines, this can be critical to the success of a community project.
- Make sure there is a champion, leadership and a vision – then the various workstreams and toolboxes can work towards the vision.

### GROUP D

- Agencies are represented by people; it's the people involvement that's key. Building ways of "passing on" relationships to provide continuity as people shift in jobs/roles is important, e.g. re induction of new staff, and recognising that those relationships are valuable.
- Having the right person in the job – people with spark, engaging in relationships, clear strategic thinking