How to

Guide

for

Implementing Your Collaborative Project

Developed by Amanda Scott and Simone Blom, Farming Together, 2020

Southern Cross University

Farming Together

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL

NSW GOVERNMENT

INTRO

This Implementation Guide has been developed for farmers and landholders as a step-by-step guide through the stages of planning and implementing a collaborative project.

This resource was created by the Farming Together Program for the Growing Agriculture in the Tweed initiative based on the experiences and learnings of over 500 farmers, fishers and foresters across the country who implemented collaborative projects to grow their businesses and networks.

To get the most out of the implementation process, ensure you work together with others in your group to shape your shared vision, plan your project and act with confidence and cohesiveness. In addition, the Tweed Valley Productive Land Use Group will provide more opportunities for you to connect with others to support your thinking and planning.

With a wealth of free resources and a huge network of connections including industry experts, also know that you have the support and backing of the Farming Together program as you continue on your collaborative journey. Our contact details are:

📞 0404 887 163

✉ farmingtogether@scu.edu.au

🌐 www.farmingtogether.com.au

THE GUIDE
at a glance

This Implementation Guide has 10 steps that outline the best practice to establishing solid foundations for your project. This booklet provides the scaffold to guide you through these steps with a number of key questions for consideration and activities to complete.

The 10-steps are:

1. **Why**: *identify the catalyst.*

2. **Who**: *build the core team.*

3. **What**: *define the objective.*

4. **Where**: *locate the project and its impact.*

5. **When**: *create a timeline of key milestones.*

6. **How**: *resourcing for success.*

7. **How**: *the path for success.*

8. **How**: *scheduling for success.*

9. **How**: *making it measurable.*

10. **How**: *a plan for plan B.*

Enter this process knowing that it will require dedication and commitment, but that the rewards are worth it. Celebrate the wins along the way to achieving your vision. Enjoy!

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WHY?

1. Identify the catalyst

> If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.
>
> Albert Einstein

What problem or opportunity do you want to address?

How does this speak to your passion?

Why is this a problem / opportunity?

What will happen if nothing is done?

WHY?

Address the question in each bubble.

e.g., land use conflict

1.What has created this problem or opportunity?

3. Why do you, and the people you are close to, think that way?

e.g., my farm is not big enough to be profitable

2. What are you thinking and feeling?

WHY?

Hot Tips

- Taking the time at the start of a project to better understand how it is connected more broadly to the community is critical because no project exists in isolation.

- The project is most likely to get traction and buy-in at all levels if the project addresses a solution that significantly helps individual stakeholders as well as the broader community, and this benefit is articulated from the beginning.

Farmer Case Study Example

" *I couldn't understand why almost all of the food produced in the region was being exported. The community should have access to freshly grown local food.* "

Deborah Bogenhuber
Co-founder and Executive Officer of
Out of the Box and Food Next Door

WHO?

2. Build the core team

Consider these four questions when getting your team together. There is space to write your answers below.

1. **Who is interested and willing to invest time working on this solution?** These people will form the core project team.
2. **What skills and experience do they bring to the project?**
3. **How much time will they be able to contribute each week to the project?**
4. **What is their role in a group dynamic?** e.g., team leader, advisor, decision-maker, financial manager, mediator.

Person 1

Name:

Time commitment:

Role in group dynamic:

Skills and experience:

WHO?

Person 2

Name:

Time commitment:

Role in group dynamic:

Skills and experience:

Person 3

Name:

Time commitment:

Role in group dynamic:

Skills and experience:

Person 4

Name:

Time commitment:

Role in group dynamic:

Skills and experience:

Use the notes page if you need to add more people.

WHO?

Notes

WHO?

Tips and Tricks

- **Finding the skills and knowledge gap.** You may need to recruit others into the project who have the required skills or expertise required either as part of the core team, or as a broader project member, an advisor or a mentor.

- **Time is a scarce resource.** Farmers know this better than anyone. Other resources like money and people can fluctuate, but time only moves in one direction. Small steps will help your project keep moving and ensure you and your team are not overloaded.

- **Build trust and a shared vision**. Priortise and commit to developing solid relationships knowing it may take longer than you think. Relationships are CRITICAL for project success and long term impact and are well worth the effort for project sustenance.

Hot Tips from Farmers

" *Focus on working one-on-one with people and developing the capacity of your core people rather than focusing on looking for more members.* "

Deborah Bogenhuber
Co-founder and Executive Officer of
Out of the Box and Food Next Door

WHAT?

3. What do you want to achieve?

What is the project concept?
Give a general overview of what the project is about.

What is the vision you are working towards? A vision may not be achievable during the project but a vision is the ultimate impact you want to achieve longer term through the work of the project.

WHAT?

List three key objectives you want to achieve through this project.

An objective is the specific, tangible outcome(s) that will be produced and delivered by the project.

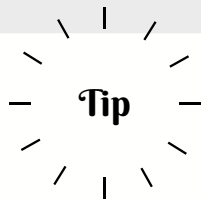**Under each of these, list indicators which will define success.**

Indicators should be easily measurable/ quantifiable and achievable within the project timeframe

Objectives

Tip You want to create a positive point of difference and or a competitive advantage in the goods, services and or products being created.

1

2

3

WHAT?

Objectives

1 **2** **3**

Indicators of success

WHAT?

Who will benefit from your project?
Beneficiaries can include individuals or communities. For example, farmers working in the project, other project members, other farmers in the community, landholders, customers, a whole community or an entire region.

Beneficiary:

Project benefit for them:

How will you get them involved / engaged?

Beneficiary:

Project benefit for them:

How will you get them involved / engaged?

WHAT?

Beneficiary:

Project benefit for them:

How will you get them involved / engaged?

Beneficiary:

Project benefit for them:

How will you get them involved / engaged?

Use the notes page if you need to add more people.

WHAT?

Tips and Tricks

- **Community value:** Collaborative projects are more likely to be successful and sustained if they have community support and deliver some kind of community value. Working out how people can benefit is good intel to use in developing motivation and engagement for project members.
- **Compelling foundations:** The reason to take action in a project must be compelling. People often avoid change as it creates fear and uncertainty, and also requires effort. If they can see strong benefits across multiple scales they may be more willing and open to change initiatives.
- **Objectives:** Objectives signal what matters and convey expectations. They are the vehicle through which buy-in can be tested and confirmed

Notes

WHAT?

Notes

WHERE?

4. Place

Where will the project activities take place ?

Where will the project impact occur?

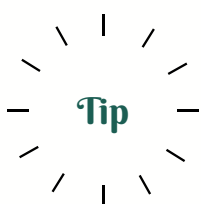**What is unique / special about this area in which the project / project impact will occur?**

5. Project timeframe

What is the project timeframe? How long will it take to achieve the objectives?

When will the project start?

What will you do to get the project started?

Tip

Is it the intention that project activities continue beyond the project timeframe? Yes / No

If yes, consider developing a business plan as part of the project planning to develop the long term approach (see lean canvas template at the back of this document).

HOW?

6. Resourcing for success

Resources are the people, capital and material goods required to complete the project.

1. **What resources do you need for your project to be successful? Jot down everything that comes to mind.**

Material goods e.g., equipment

e.g., marketing skills

People e.g., skills or knowledge?

Capital
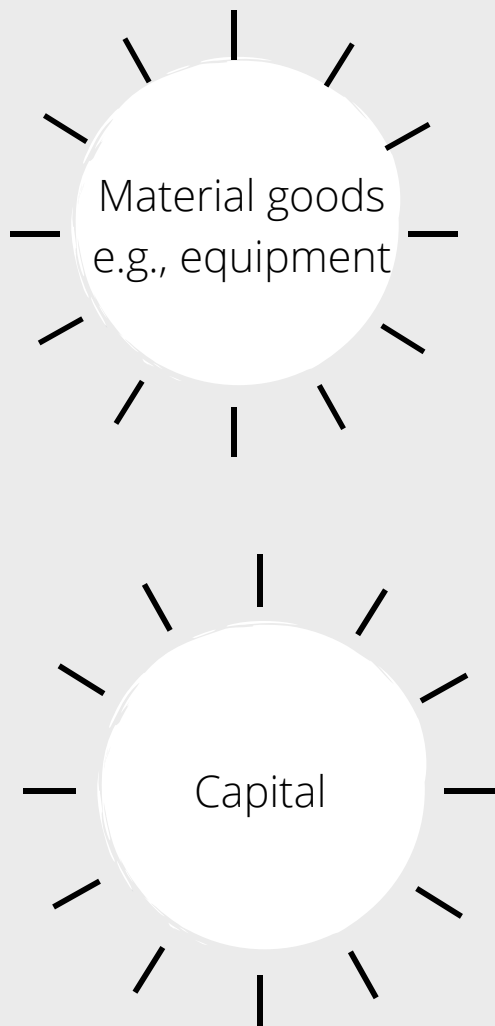
2. Reflect on your responses to question 1 and circle the resources you are currently missing.

HOW?

For each of the resources you circled on the previous page, list them here to identify who you know that could help you access the resources you need and how they can help.

For example, if you are looking for expert advice and don't know who to contact, you could reach out to *Farming Together* for assistance in getting connected with the most suitable expert though our extensive networks. See contact details on page 2 to get in touch.

❝ Projects are more likely to be a success when people have some kind of skin in the game. ❞

Bill Hoffman
Farmer and Consultant, 2020
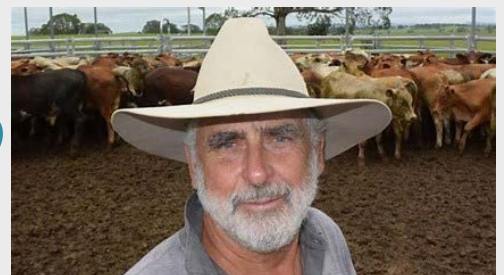
HOW?

Tips and Tricks

- **People are usually good at one of three things: marketing, product or financials**; rarely are they good at all three. So make sure you have one of each in your project working group.

- **In the early stages of undertaking planning or a feasibility study, seek expert advice.** It could save a lot of mistakes down the track!

- **Who are the key collaborators?** Who else could you collaborate with to achieve even greater benefits / outcomes?

Notes

HOW?

7. Setting the path for success

It is important to establish early on how the group will work together. For each question define a few guidelines with a short description for each.

How will the team work together? e.g., will you set up a steering committee / working group? How often will you meet?

How will you communicate? What is the frequency and type of communication? e.g., weekly face-to-face meetings, messaging, newsletters etc.

HOW?

How will you decide who does what?

How will you make decisions as a group? e.g., do you have a framework or decision making tool you could agree upon to utilise within your group?

How will you manage difference of opinion? Will you adopt a process or invite a mediator to work with your group when required?

What core values will underpin all team decisions and actions?

HOW?

Tips and Tricks

- **Adopt a practice and process for managing conflicts.** In collaborative projects there will almost always be differences of opinion. If difference of opinion is managed well it can significantly strengthen a project. If it is not managed well, it can rapidly unravel relationships and the project.
- **Communicate regularly.** Establish frequent check-ins with your stakeholders through their preferred method of communication e.g., Whatsapp is a popular choice for group communications, as is the online meeting facilitation platform such as Zoom. Some people still like to receive a monthly newsletter or a regular phone call. Try and factor in face-to-face meetings wherever possible.

> Prioritise relationships and authentic working together. We didn't say right we're starting a co-op and this is what we're going to do, we said we want to work together, how are we going to do that?
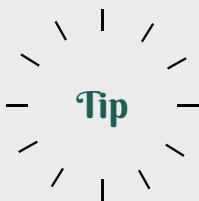>
> **Hugh Finlay**
> Organic Orchardist, 2020.

Notes

8. Scheduling for success

Tip Developing a logical structure and plan for the project that everyone can understand is the next step. Aim not to focus on how it is produced or what template you use. What is important is to 1) **keep it simple** and 2) **clearly link activities to objectives**.

List the key activities and steps that must occur for the project to be a success?

NEXT STEP

Develop a project timeline, a project budget and link activities to these. This includes linking the success indicators you developed earlier. Set milestones for all key activities as well as checkpoints for review.

See the resources section for links to project planning and budget templates to give you inspiration and ideas for getting started.

HOW?

Tips and Tricks

- Before you launch into the project you should have confidence that the concept is feasible. Confidence can be gained through having evidence to support your ideas. Consider: will the project deliver the benefits you are after? Are the benefits of your project economic, social, environmental, or all three?

- Assist your team to undertake some preliminary analysis e.g., a simple cost benefit analysis, case study analysis of a similar project or a feasibility study. This will create a body of evidence to support your proposal. At this point an expert / outside opinion can be very beneficial.

- If you want to turn your concept and idea into a business / formal organisation you should consider developing a business plan.

- Keep track of 'to-do-lists' and tasks with an online tool, software or platform / program such as Monday, Trello or Asana. These programs support visibility and keep everyone updated on project progress.

Hot Tips from Farmers

- **Start from the ground up:** what do you want to achieve?
- **Crunch the numbers first:** what do you need to make a profitable business?
- **Know your strength**: Be confident in your passion and area/s of strength. Focus on bringing this expertise to the arrangement to improve efficiency.

John Gladigou & Robin Schaefer
Bulla Burra Farms, 2020

HOW?

9. Making it measurable

Having an evidence base to provide insight to what is going on in the project can help:
1) early identification of problems,
2) provide data to report to stakeholders on successes, and
3) enable review and improvement.

The objectives and success indicators you have developed for your project so far will form part of your evaluation plan. The next step is to consider the indicators that you will use along the way to tell you that the project is on the right track? How will you collect this data? How will you share this evidence with stakeholders?

Indicator	Data to be collected	When will it be collected

HOW?

Notes
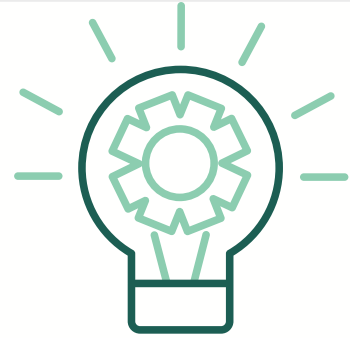
HOW?

10. A plan for Plan B

What are the major risks to the project during the design phase?

What new or different risks are likely to exist during implementation?

How will you deal with these risks?

HOW?

Notes

Resources

What: define the objective
What are Project Objectives?
https://www.clarizen.com/objectives-of-project-management/

How: the path for success
Team diversity: how to work with people who are different to you
https://www.hrzone.com/engage/employees/team-diversity-how-to-work-with-people-who-are-different-to-you

How To Effectively Manage and Engage Project Stakeholders (Checklist)
https://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/project-stakeholder-management/

The Advantages & Disadvantages of Collaborating Conflict Management
https://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-disadvantages-collaborating-conflict-management-36052.html

How: scheduling for success
Basic Project Plan / Schedule
https://www.teamgantt.com/free-scheduling-template#project-scheduling-examples

How: making it measurable
M&E Plan Indicators Table Template
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/sbcc-tools/me-plan-indicators-table-template

M&E Planning: Template for Indicator Reporting
https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/sbcc-tools/me-planning-template-indicator-reporting